

Local Environment

Introduction

- 10.1 The Borough's natural environment is one of its most defining features with an attractive and diverse coastline, and extensive areas of open space. These characteristics deliver many benefits to the Borough including improved health and wellbeing, enhanced biodiversity and climate change adaptation, and strengthening of the local economy. The policies in this section seek to protect and enhance the local environment (Policies LE1-LE13).

Policy LE1: Open Space

Introduction

- 10.2 Open space is an integral part of the urban fabric of the Borough and makes an important contribution to the quality of life of local residents. The term open space covers a wide variety of forms of private and public spaces and provides for a diverse range of activities which can support physical health and mental wellbeing.
- 10.3 Open space is an essential part of the Borough's heritage and a strong element in the architectural and aesthetic form of the town. It serves a variety of functions including:
- Defining and separating urban areas;
 - Providing linkages between settlements and the countryside;
 - Enhancing the quality and visual amenity of urban areas;
 - Providing opportunities for formal sports, children's play and other leisure activities;
 - Helping to improve people's physical and mental wellbeing;
 - Providing important habitats for flora and fauna;
 - Providing a venue for community contact and events;
 - Providing flood water storage;
 - Reducing the impacts of pollution and noise; and
 - Provides a setting that encourages inward investment.
- 10.4 There are multiple types of open spaces which are covered by the Local Plan, many of which perform a number of functions and represent the predominant element of the Borough's green infrastructure (see also Policies D4, D5, D6 and LE7). This section relates to the following types of open space:
- Parks and Gardens;
 - Outdoor sports facilities including sports pitches;
 - Cemeteries (see also Policy LE2) and churchyards;

- Provision for children and young people;
- Allotments (see also Policy LE3);
- Amenity space;
- Green corridors;
- Natural and semi-natural;
- Greenspaces (See also Policies LE5 - LE7); and
- Civic space.

- 10.5 Open spaces in Gosport Borough contribute significantly to the local distinctiveness of the Peninsula with many having a strong relationship with the adjoining coastal waters of the Solent and Portsmouth Harbour. The Borough has some 618 hectares of open space (excluding private gardens and incidental amenity areas) including natural/semi-natural greenspaces in the Alver Valley Country Park and the extensive coastal areas; formal urban parks such as Crescent Gardens; the Registered Park and Garden at Royal Haslar Hospital; allotments; a range of sports pitches; and small neighbourhood play areas. The full diversity of the open spaces in the Borough including details of their function, quality, value and size is set out in the Council's Open Space Monitoring Report (2026)³¹⁰.
- 10.6 The Borough's open space has an important role to play in enhancing the quality of the environment, creating a place where people want to live, visit and invest. These spaces are highly valued and represent a finite resource that should largely be protected and enhanced in one of the most densely populated districts in the South East region. Key issues relating to open space are summarised below in Box 24.

Box 24: Summary of key open space issues

- The provision of quality open spaces is important in managing and improving health and wellbeing issues in the Borough.
- Open spaces are highly valued within a dense urban Borough and should be protected from inappropriate development and where possible their quality should be enhanced.
- There are limited opportunities to access the wider countryside, particularly for those with restricted access to private transport including those with disabilities, the elderly and the young.
- There are quality and/or quantity deficiencies in a range of open space typologies including allotments, cemetery space, play space and outdoor sports facilities.
- Continued improvements to enhance the accessibility to open spaces for local residents is important.
- Protecting and enhancing important natural habitats and increasing the opportunities to secure net gains in biodiversity within open spaces is crucial.
- Open spaces have a role to play in supporting both nutrient neutrality

³¹⁰ www.gosport.gov.uk/GBLP2042

- and flood risk management measures in response to climate change.
- Many open spaces have the potential to be improved and it is important that new development is well served by a range of open spaces.

10.7 This Section includes the Council's overall approach to protecting, improving and creating new open space provision (Policy LE1).

POLICY LE1: OPEN SPACE

- 1. Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals on existing open space identified on the Policies Map, except where:**
 - a) The redevelopment of a part of the site for recreation and/or community facilities would retain and enhance the existing facilities; or**
 - b) Alternative provision is made available of equivalent or greater community benefit in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility and that the proposed site cannot be used for an alternative form of open space for which there is an identified need.**
- 2. Planning permission will be granted for proposals to create or improve open space provided that:**
 - a) They are designed to achieve the Council's 'good' quality standards;**
 - b) They do not have a significant adverse impact on the amenities of local residents;**
 - c) They have good access for pedestrians and cyclists from the wider community and the open space is accessible for all;**
 - d) They do not have an adverse effect on nature conservation features and incorporate measures to enhance local biodiversity; and**
 - e) If the open space serves a Borough-wide catchment it:**
 - i. is appropriately sited in proximity to public transport; and**
 - ii. has adequate vehicular access and parking arrangements including spaces for disabled people and electric vehicle charging provision.**
- 3. Planning permission will be granted for residential development (Use Class C3) provided that appropriate provision is made for public open space facilities in accordance with the standards set out below:**
 - a) For developments of 50 dwellings or more on-site provision of**

public open space including a 'local park' will be required to a standard of 1.4 ha per 1,000 people and this open space should be provided to the Council's 'Good' Quality Standard. Developer contributions should also include provision for the long-term management of the open space for a period of twenty five years;

- b) In particular circumstances off-site provision may be considered appropriate for sites of 50 dwellings or more provided a financial contribution is secured through a Section 106 agreement. Contributions will be directly related in scale and in-line to the proposed development to reflect the impact the development has on existing green infrastructure. Such funds will be used to improve an existing facility normally within 800 metres of the development site to achieve the Council's 'Good' quality standard.**

For sites of less than 50 dwellings the developer contribution for improving public open space and associated facilities has been calculated as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy and consequently no further contribution is required. However proposals should include green infrastructure elements (see Policies D4 and LE8).

EXPLANATION OF POLICY LE1

Protection of existing open spaces (Point 1 of Policy LE1)

- 10.8 The Council will resist the loss of existing open spaces due to local deficiencies and the important role they play in terms of health and wellbeing, their recreation and amenity value and the opportunities they create for biodiversity, flood management and adapting to, and mitigating climate change.
- 10.9 The Council will normally refuse planning permission for development proposals resulting in a loss of open spaces identified on the Policies Map³¹¹. This policy will also apply to those open spaces that have been created since the Local Plan has been adopted.
- 10.10 The Council's Open Space Monitoring Report (2026) includes an assessment of the quantity, quality and value of open spaces in the Borough. It has been concluded that the protected open spaces are necessary to retain the multifunctional benefits outlined in the introductory text above. It is important to note that existing low and medium value sites have the potential to be enhanced by changing their function to an alternative type of open space, adding a function, or improving their quality.

³¹¹ The 'Existing Open Space' designation relates to most forms of open space, the protection of cemeteries is dealt with by Policy LE2 and allotments by Policy LE3.

Such measures are likely to increase usage particularly where communities have been closely involved with the improvements.

- 10.11 Sites can only be considered genuinely surplus once a full assessment of an individual site's potential has been carried out. In relation to Ministry of Defence, school or college playing fields or other outdoor sports or recreational facilities no longer required for service personnel or school sports, the Council would expect to see the land continue in recreational use for the benefit of the local community. There are other providers of open space such as the church and similarly the provisions of the policy will apply.
- 10.12 Development on part of an existing open space may be acceptable in order to provide a recreational or a community facility needed by local residents. Such uses could include changing rooms or a community hall. In these circumstances particular care will be taken to ensure the nature of the development is in keeping with the character and function of the open space and that the proposal is compatible within existing adjoining uses and safeguards the amenities of local residents. Such facilities have the potential to encourage greater use of the adjoining open space for sports and recreation.
- 10.13 In exceptional circumstances, planning permission may be granted for development of open space, provided that alternative provision of equal or better value can be created to serve the same community. The arrangements of any alternative provision will need to consider the existing site's amenity and recreational value, quality of facilities, ecological characteristics, size and its accessibility to the community it currently serves.
- 10.14 When considering whether an open space should be lost to development it will be necessary to consider all the functions that open space can perform and whether the particular site could be used for an alternative open space function for which a need has been identified.
- 10.15 In relation to schools and colleges, the Council will consider proposals for the redevelopment of a part of an open space for additional buildings to be used in connection with education, recreational or community uses providing the character and the function of the remaining open space is maintained.

Creating and improving open spaces (Point 2 of Policy LE1)

- 10.16 In order to achieve a network of high quality open spaces it is recognised that a strong partnership between the Council, major landowners, developers and other key stakeholders at both a local and sub-regional level is required. The PfSH Green Infrastructure Strategy continues to provide a framework for delivering green infrastructure across the sub-region. Continued cross-boundary working between the local authorities within

PfSH and other key stakeholders will be key in delivering sub-regional networks of strategic open space and green infrastructure (see Policy D4).

- 10.17 Opportunities to improve open spaces have been identified in the latest Council's strategies and studies and it will be important to work with local communities to maximise these opportunities. Furthermore it will be important to work with other key providers of existing open space including the MoD and schools to increase community usage of their open space. The Council will consider the use of Community Use Agreements to assist in securing further community use on sites where appropriate.
- 10.18 The Local Plan contains various proposals for new open space, these are primarily within the Regeneration Areas and include:
- The Alver Valley Country Park (Policy D4)
 - The Ramparts at Priddy's Hard (Policy RA1)
 - Blockhouse and Haslar Gunboat Yard (Policy RA3 and RA5)
 - Royal Haslar Hospital (Policy RA6)
 - Daedalus (Policy RA10)
 - Stokesmead (Policy A4).
- 10.19 Proposals for new open spaces and improvements to existing open spaces will be required to meet the Council's 'Good' Quality Standards³¹². The Council aims to achieve a 'good' rating on all open spaces within the Borough and could use funds from the CIL on priority sites to achieve this.
- 10.20 Proposals for open space which could include associated buildings, such as changing rooms, must be well-designed and have regard to the character of the area in accordance with other relevant policies of the Local Plan. Outside of the urban area, outdoor recreational uses should reflect and enhance the character of the countryside and coast (see Policy D2).
- 10.21 All proposals will be considered in the light of the impact that they will have on the location and on the amenity of adjoining areas and neighbouring residents. In determining proposals the Council will have particular attention to hours of use, noise levels and light emissions including floodlighting (see Policy LE9).
- 10.22 Open spaces should be easily reached by pedestrians and cyclists. Sites should be designed to be accessible for all users of the local community including wheelchair and pushchair users. The most intensively used public spaces should also be served by public transport, and those serving a Borough-wide catchment area should have adequate vehicular access and parking arrangements with electric vehicle charging provision.

³¹² The 'Good' Standard is assessed against the criteria in the Council's Local Open Space Standards which are available online: www.gosport.gov.uk/GBLP2042

Open space associated with new residential development (Point 3 of Policy LE1)

- 10.23 New development places additional demands on existing open spaces, especially in places where there are deficiencies in terms of quality and quantity. It is important that new residential development meets or exceeds the standards set out in Policy LE1 in order to provide adequate open space provision for new residents. If these standards are not achieved the existing deficiencies in quantity, quality and accessibility will be exacerbated. Key elements of the standards are outlined below. The Council's standard includes three key elements: 'Public Open Space' including Local Parks, 'Outdoor Sports Provision', and Allotments (see Table 8).

Table 8: Gosport Borough Open Space Quantity Standards

Type of open space	Standard
Public Open Space standard (includes the 'Local Park' element) To be provided on-site for developments of 50 dwellings or more (see Policy LE1, Point 3). For smaller developments this element is covered by the Community Infrastructure Levy.	1.4 ha per 1,000 people
Outdoor Sports Provision Not normally provided within a development site and could be funded by CIL.	1.1 ha per 1,000 people
Allotments Not normally provided within a development site and could be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy.	0.4 ha per 1,000 people

- 10.24 The Council will require developments of 50 dwellings or more to provide, a total of 1.4 hectares per 1,000 residents or 14 sqm per person of public open space. This provision should be made on-site³¹³. This provision will provide at least one park to serve the development with more required on larger developments. All dwellings should generally be within 400 metres of the park provision. It is considered that the 50 dwellings threshold will enable a useful-sized local park to be provided on-site. The Council will require the on-site provision to achieve the Council's Good Standard³¹⁴. In order to meet the Council's Good Quality Standard it will be necessary to assess it against the criteria set out in the relevant open space scorecard³¹⁴.
- 10.25 The proposed park should include all or most of the elements that make up the park standard, such as play areas, informal recreational elements, formal garden, and natural features. It is recognised that there may be the need to change the emphasis of each element to suit the type of dwellings proposed, the expected age profile, the size of the site, characteristics of the location, the presence of on-site natural features, as well as what other provision is already available in the locality. In some circumstances it may

³¹³ It is estimated that 50 dwellings would accommodate approximately 108 residents (based on an average of 2.16 persons per household). This is multiplied by the 14m² standard resulting in 1,512m² (approx. 0.15 hectares)

³¹⁴ See the Council's Local Open Space Standards: www.gosport.gov.uk/GBLP2042

be appropriate to include outdoor sports facilities (such as a multi-use games areas) or allotment type facilities as part of the on-site public open space standard. In addition, green infrastructure that is required to be provided on-site, could be incorporated as part of the open space provision.

- 10.26 Where an open space is likely to serve only the residents on the development site, transfer to the Council will not normally be appropriate and other arrangements should be made for the on-going maintenance. However in instances where land is transferred to the Council, the developer will be required to provide a developer contribution towards the maintenance (this includes the replacement of equipment) of the open space to cover a period of twenty five years in accordance with the Council's standards. Where the open space provision relates to BNG, there is a requirement to maintain the provision for a period of at least thirty years as set out in Policy LE8. Contributions towards maintenance will be secured through a Section 106 Agreement and monies secured for maintenance will be ringfenced to the site in question.
- 10.27 In certain instances it may be necessary for the developer of a proposal of 50 or more dwellings to provide a financial contribution towards a specified off-site open space proposal in lieu of all or part of the required on-site provision. This could include a new facility or an enhancement to an existing one. This would be secured by a Section 106 Agreement and normally be specific with regard to the site it is intended to be allocated to. In such cases the obligation will need to meet the tests of Government legislation. Exceptional circumstances where an financial contribution may be appropriate may relate to the particular characteristics of the site or that there is an open space facility in close proximity to the development (normally within 800 metres of the development) which would significantly benefit from improvements and help the existing facility to achieve the Council's 'Good' Standard. In certain cases the particular open space may be further than 800 metres from the development if it has the potential to be of sufficient quality and recreational value to attract residents of the new development. The latest indicative costs are published on the Council's website³¹⁵ and updated each year to take into account of inflation which provide an indication of the sum required.
- 10.28 The Council recognises that on small residential developments it is neither desirable nor practical to make provision for open space other than certain elements of green infrastructure as set out in other policies of the Local Plan. Consequently, in most instances the Council will collect a financial contribution in the form of the Community Infrastructure Levy where a proportion of money may be spent on new or enhanced open space provision. These arrangements are set out in the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement³¹⁶.

³¹⁵ www.gosport.gov.uk/article/1220/Pre-application-advice

³¹⁶ www.gosport.gov.uk/infrastructure

- 10.29 In relation to outdoor sports provision and allotment provision (see also Policy LE3), where quality and quantity deficiencies have been identified it is accepted that this provision is not normally suitable to be provided on-site given the characteristics of these uses. Instead this provision can be funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy and has been calculated by using the standards identified in Table 8 to inform the Borough's overall infrastructure requirements. On strategic sites there may be specific requirements which are set out in the respective site allocation policy.

Policy LE2: Cemetery Provision

POLICY LE2: CEMETERY PROVISION

- 1. Development proposals for other uses will not be permitted on existing cemeteries as shown on the Policies Map.**
- 2. Proposals for new cemeteries will be permitted provided that they:**
 - a) Are in keeping with the character of the surrounding area;**
 - b) Do not have an adverse impact on the amenities of local residents;**
 - c) Are appropriately sited in proximity to public transport;**
 - d) Have adequate vehicular access and parking arrangements with suitable provision for disabled users and electric vehicle charging;**
 - e) Will have no adverse impact on the ecological value of the area and opportunities are taken to enhance biodiversity;**
 - f) Do not have an adverse impact on heritage or archaeological interests; and**
 - g) Will have no adverse impact on controlled water (ground water or surface water).**

EXPLANATION OF POLICY LE2

Protection of existing cemeteries (Point 1 of Policy LE2)

- 10.30 The Borough's main cemetery is located at Ann's Hill along with the large Royal Haslar Naval Cemetery in Clayhall Road. There are also a number of smaller cemeteries and churchyards in the Borough. These cemeteries are well-kept tranquil spaces often with historic monuments which add to the local townscape character of the Borough. The Council considers that such sites should be protected for cemetery use.