

INSPECTOR'S NOTE TO PARTIES 29.4.22

VASTERN COURT, READING

APP/E0345/W/21/3289748

OPEN SPACE EVIDENCE

As the Council's open space witness is not now available for the remainder of the inquiry to 13th May, I consider that it may be possible to deal with the Open Space evidence by written representations.

To that end I invite the Council to respond to the following questions in writing. These would have been the questions put to the witness during the round table session which was due to take place earlier this week.

Once I have received the Council's response, I will ask for the appellants' final comments also in writing.

I will give this evidence the same weight as evidence heard orally at the inquiry.

Policy, Amount, Type of Open Space

Local Plan policy EN9 requires appropriate provision of open space based on the needs of the development. The OS Strategy (CD7.10 / 7.11) guides the provision, type and size of open space. The Council also refers to FiT guidelines and the conclusion to Dr Jenkins' proof of evidence (para 6.5) confirms that on site open space of this scale is expected.

The Council's concerns in relation to open space are set out at para 5.4 of Dr Jenkins' proof. This does not include the amount or type of open space to be provided on the site.

Q1. Can the Council therefore confirm that they are satisfied with the amount and type of open space to be provided on the site?

Council's Response:

Notwithstanding the issues identified with regard to the quality, shape and connectivity of the areas of open space within the site the Council is also not satisfied with the amount and type of open space to be provided on site.

As set out in para 2.14 of the Council's CIL Compliance Statement the Open Spaces Strategy (2007, CD7.10), which follows where practically deliverable, the recommendations of the National Playing Fields Association's 6 acre standard (Fields in Trust - CD7.54), envisages that developments of this scale should provide for 1-2ha of local park with sports facilities to serve this new community, which should include the satisfactory provision of children's play areas and neighbourhood parks.

The national benchmark guidelines for formal outdoor space is set out in Table 1 of the Fields in Trust document, copied below, and Table 4 the minimum recommended sizes for each open space typology. These benchmark guidelines provide the basis for the overall quantum sought for the appeal site. As will be noted the amount in hectares is directly related to the size of the population. The maximum number of dwellings proposed would be 1,000 and would comprise a mix of unit sizes, so it would be reasonable to assume that there would be significantly more than 1,000 new residents from the proposed development.

Table 1: Fields in Trust recommended benchmark guidelines – formal outdoor space

Open space typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ² (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards. * Located where they are of most value to the community to be served. * Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community. * Appropriately landscaped. * Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance. * Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time as necessary. * Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, taking into account the level of play, topography, necessary safety margins and optimal orientation³. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Play England Quality Tool.
All outdoor sports ¹	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25 See table 4 for recommended minimum sizes	LAPs – 100m LEAPs – 400m NEAPs – 1,000m	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m	

Table 4: Recommended minimum sizes – formal outdoor space

Open space typology	Minimum sizes	Minimum dimensions	Buffer zones	
Playing pitches	Association football Adult soccer Mini soccer U7/U8 pitch Mini soccer U9/U10 pitch	0.74ha 0.14ha 0.25ha	106 x 70 metres 43 x 33 metres 60 x 42 metres	-
	Rugby Union	0.70ha	100 x 70 metres	-
	Hockey Mini Hockey	0.31ha	65 x 48 metres	-
	Lacrosse	0.66ha	100 x 60 metres	-
	Cricket Senior recreational 12 pitch	1.43ha	111.56 x 128.04 metres	-
	Other outdoor (non-pitch) sports	Athletics 6 lane track	1.51ha	172.03 x 87.64 metres
Tennis courts 1 recreational court 2 recreational courts For each adjacent court		0.06ha 0.11ha 0.05ha	34.75 x 17.07 metres 34.75 x 31.70 metres 34.75 x 14.63 metres	-
Bowling greens Flat green Crown green		0.12ha 0.08ha	34.4 x 34.4 metres 27.4 x 27.4 metres	-
Equipped/designated play areas		LAP	0.01ha	10 x 10 metres (minimum activity zone of 100sqm)
	LEAP	0.04ha	20 x 20 metres (minimum activity zone of 400sqm)	20m min separation between activity zone and the habitable room façade of dwellings
	NEAP	0.1ha	31.6 x 31.6 metres (minimum activity zone of 1,000sqm comprising an area for play equipment and structures & a hard surfaced area of at least 465sqm (the minimum needed to play five-a-side football))	30m min separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	MUGA	0.1ha	40 x 20 metres	30m min separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling

The total quantum of open space proposed is below the required amount and it is not considered that the type of open space proposed would provide the type of recreational activity space, with opportunities for sport, that is sought in accordance with the Open Spaces Strategy. The majority of the proposed open space is described in the Design Code as street or access routes with no evaluation provided of the spaces' ability to provide recreation. The principal role is

considered to be of private landscaping and it would not function as publicly accessible leisure/ parkland, with its size heavily constraining its functionality.

Although the quantum and type of open space on site would not meet policy requirements the Council would be satisfied that the overall quantum and type of open space, in accordance with policy, could be satisfactorily addressed through the open space obligations sought through the S106, and as detailed in the CIL Compliance Statement.

Play facilities

A mandatory requirement of the Design Code (6.1.5) requires play features for 0-5 year olds to be integrated into the landscape. The Code also includes a discretionary indication that play features for 5-11 year olds could be provided. At para 5.10, Dr Jenkins' proof says that these need to be 'private'. However, she then goes on to say that they should make a contribution to the wider neighbourhood.

Q2. Could the Council clarify this point and explain what the concern is in relation to the proposed play facilities.

Council's Response:

Para 5.10 of Dr. Jenkins' proof of evidence sets out that the proposed play space indicated would function as private play space, rather than making a contribution to the wider neighbourhood as policy requires. Play facilities which are closely associated and immediately adjacent to properties tend to be seen as not available to all and hence treated as private facilities. As an example, the Illustrative Landscape Scheme (Section 7 of the DAS CD1.54) refers to the provision of "a combination of playable landscape on the ground floor, and safe, inclusive play features on the podium gardens." However, the Design Code (para 6.1.5) states that "the podium landscapes provide private active and passive amenity space for residents", therefore, these would not provide publically accessible areas for play space.

The Illustrative Landscape Scheme also refers to a number of existing off-site play areas and the ability for young children to "play along the way". Play features are not further defined, but the imagery included, extract below, clearly shows individual play items rather than a formal type of play area.



Figure L50: Play along the way



Figure L51: Play along the way

Albeit such play features would contribute to play, they would not meet the range of types of play space expected for a development of this size as set out in the table below (Table 2 of the national benchmark guidelines for equipped/

designated play space). The information presented in the DAS and Design Code, as described above, does not suggest such proposed proposals would meet this benchmark type or quantity of play space provision.

Table 2: Recommended Application of Quantity Benchmark Guidelines – Equipped/Designated Play Space

Scale of Development	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)
5-10 dwellings	✓			
1-200 dwellings	✓	✓		Contribution
201-500 dwellings	✓	✓	Contribution	✓
501+ dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓

Overhang of plot D

Paragraph 5.7 of Dr Jenkins’ proof sets out that overhead intrusion into the open space area will restrict its use.

However, the Council’s sustainability evidence is suggesting that there should be more use of solar shading (para 43 Mr Crawshaw’s proof).

Q3. Could this overhang be designed to serve this purpose and still operate as a useful part of the open space?

Council’s Response:

The solar shading as referred to in Mr. Crawshaw’s Proof of Evidence relates to the form of the buildings and the use of architectural features to reduce summer overheating. The overhang referred to is with respect to the whole building proposed to project out from the second floor upwards, rather than a specific individual structure.

The projection of the building would create an overly shaded area of open space that would neither provide a pleasant environment for enjoyment nor landscaping which would make a contribution to the energy efficiency of the development as a whole.

In order to be multifunctional, the open space should have been designed to benefit from natural daylight for significant parts of the day, otherwise maintenance and the ability to support green infrastructure would be heavily compromised.