

## West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

### Policy DM40

#### Public Open Space

Proposals for residential development of 10 dwellings or more will be required to provide high quality public open space.

Wherever possible, on-site provision will be made to a standard of 3 – 4.3ha per thousand population. Where more appropriate to the circumstances of the site or the open space requirements, off-site provision or a financial contribution in lieu of provision will be considered.

Particular regard will be given to;

- a. The location, size, condition and nature of the land;
- b. The attractiveness, interest, multifunctionality, inclusivity and safety of the design, layout and facilities;
- c. The suitability of the site for an appropriate range of recreational activities both formal and informal, including whether there is undue fragmentation into small areas which would limit their recreational value and potential;
- d. The potential impact it has on protected sites or species and the contribution it makes to achieving biodiversity net gain;
- e. The avoidance of undue disturbance or harm to the amenity of adjoining residents and landowners through the design and layout of the space and distribution of activities within it;
- f. Its easy and safe accessibility from adjoining development areas by foot and cycle, and where necessary, public transport; and
- g. Whether the provision meets anticipated demands for participation now and in the future having regard to any national or Council strategies on leisure and sports provision.

### Supporting Text

**12.81** Public open space is land available to satisfy the recreation and leisure needs of the community. It can fulfil a number of functions including amenity land, Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG), play areas, informal recreation and leisure or formal sporting activity. It will also fulfil an important function in supporting the overall green infrastructure in the District.

**12.82** The NPPF requires local planning authorities to plan positively for the creation of open space as part of new developments, because it promotes physical activity, positive mental wellbeing and healthy childhood development.

**12.83** New development places additional demands on the supply and resilience of existing open space. It is important that new residential development meets the standards set out in this policy to provide sufficient public open space for new residents.

**12.84** Proposals for new housing will be acceptable only where they include appropriate public open space and recreational provision, both in terms of space and associated facilities / equipment. Where the proposal is for the redevelopment of a previously developed site which includes existing residential dwellings, the net increase in residents will be calculated so that only the additional pressure on open spaces as a result of the development is taken into consideration.

**12.85** The need for public open space provision will be generated by residential schemes of all types including sheltered housing schemes for older persons. Open space that is provided with the intention of being used exclusively by residents will not be an acceptable alternative to public open space provision. The only exception will be for accommodation for the frail, elderly and care homes (Use Class C2).

**12.86** This policy may be satisfied through on-site provision, off-site provision, financial contributions or a combination of the three, taking into account local circumstances. In general terms, provision on site is preferred, but it is acknowledged that this is not suitable on all sites or for all types of open space. Ideally public open space provision should be grouped into larger 'park areas' where both formal and informal recreation activities can be properly integrated and managed. Particularly smaller sites are unlikely to be able to provide useable good quality space to the required standard. In applying the public open space standard the Council will not normally accept areas of less than 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) in size, unless adjoining an existing area where the total together would exceed the minimum viable size.

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**12.87** Where off-site provision is made, the space must be made permanently available through formal agreement on other land in the applicant's control which is readily accessible from the development site and appropriate for public open space/recreational use.

**12.88** Financial contributions to the Council in lieu of open space provision will be accepted only where it will be possible to provide new public open space or other appropriate recreation facilities easily accessible from the development site within a reasonable period of time.

**12.89** In assessing the suitability of proposed open space provision, the Council expects not only the quantity standard to be met, but will consider the acceptability of the proposed provision. It will do so by reference to the criteria set out in the policy, and in consultation with relevant Council officers and by reference to relevant Council evidence and strategies.

**12.90** Public open space must provide sufficient diversity and quality to fulfil a variety of recreational roles, both formal and informal, with a balance between them that is appropriate to local needs and circumstances. Generally speaking a scatter of small areas has less recreational potential than one or two larger areas.

**12.91** Open space should form a clearly defined focal point for the development, be fully integrated into the design of the scheme and readily accessible to all potential users including for management and maintenance purposes. Any development briefs or masterplans for sites are expected to make the open space one of the central pillars of the design ethos of the scheme.

**12.92** Public open space should be genuinely available in perpetuity to the public at large. The Council will normally seek the transfer of public open space areas into local authority ownership/control in a condition appropriate for such use, and together with a reasonable sum for their ongoing maintenance.