

Introduction and background

The study

- 1.1 During July 2007, Broxbourne Borough Council (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake a PPG17 technical study and produce sub-strategy action plans. This report sets out the study findings and includes an assessment of local needs and existing open space, sport, recreation and community provision.
- 1.2 The study will inform the preparation of the Broxbourne Local Development Framework (LDF) and will help to shape the strategic direction for open space in the Borough.
- 1.3 The three overall objectives of the study are to:
 - deliver a robust technical study in line with PPG17 requirements, which evaluates the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and recreational land in Broxbourne and recommends appropriate strategy, policy, standards and specific provision required to meet the Borough's future needs
 - deliver a 'sub strategy' for the Council's priority/directly owned/managed open spaces and community facilities in the form of a deliverable, SMART Action Plan for each typology, informed by the technical study as well as qualitative/value and needs assessments in addition to identifying prioritised activities/tasks to improve local open space and community facilities and better meet local needs – for the next five years.
- 1.4 The findings of this work will enable the Council to adopt a clear vision, priorities for the future (based on local need) and establish a direction for the allocation of resources.
- 1.5 This study is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the updated PPG17, and its Companion Guide published in September 2002. Further details of these documents are set out later in this section.

Why public open space?

- 1.6 Open space and recreation provision in the borough of Broxbourne has an important role to play in supporting the implementation of both national objectives and more locally in the achievement of key Council priorities.

Figure 1.1 Station Road OS (Site ID 33)



- 1.7 The provision of green spaces, sport and recreation facilities is becoming increasingly important on the national stage and the contributions it can bring to both national and local priorities are more readily recognised. The important role of greenspaces to local communities is reflected in the recently published Park Life Report (Greenspace June 2007), which indicates that 92% of all those questioned had visited a park within the last month.
- 1.8 In addition, the recently published *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross Government Strategy for England (2008)*, supports the creation of a healthy society, particularly healthy children, and recognises the role of sport and physical activity in doing this. There is a need for quality, accessible sporting facilities and opportunities as acknowledged in *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (DCSF)*.
- 1.9 PPG17 states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:
 - supporting an urban renaissance
 - supporting a rural renewal
 - promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
 - health and well being
 - promoting more sustainable development.

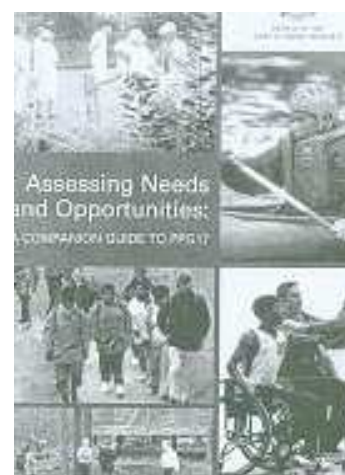
- 1.10 The recent planning white paper (May 2007) highlights minimising climate change and the protection of the environment as some of the key challenges to be addressed through the planning system in future years. The provision of green space will be instrumental in the achievement of these objectives.

Function and benefits of open space

- 1.11 Open spaces can provide a number of functions within the urban fabric of towns and villages. For example, the provision for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between the built environment and/or a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity.
- 1.12 Each type of open space has various functions. For example, allotments for the growing of produce, play areas for children's play and playing pitches for formal sports activities. Open space can additionally perform a secondary function, for example outdoor sports facilities have an amenity value in addition to facilitating sport and recreation. The various types of open spaces can also provide safe places for young people to meet and hang out.
- 1.13 There is a need to provide a balance between different types of open space in order to meet local needs. Not all residents' needs in particular areas will show a demand for open space in the form of playing pitches or allotments, for example. Some areas may have specific local demand for 'green corridor' sites, such as nature walks or bridleways, instead.
- 1.14 Changing social and economic circumstances, changed work and leisure practices, more sophisticated consumer tastes and higher public expectations have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers. While the provision of open spaces can be challenging, open spaces can also promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector. Open spaces should provide residents with places where they are safe in the face of crime and disorder issues within communities.
- 1.15 Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wider range of people than some sport and leisure facilities and are better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation provision is key to an ideal, sustainable and thriving community. The recently completed Park Life Report (Green Space June 2007) highlighted that 83% of those surveyed feel that parks are the focal point of a community. In rural areas, village greens are often the centre for village activity.
- 1.16 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality 'public realm' facilities such as parks and open spaces can assist in the promotion of an area as an attractive place to live, and can result in a number of wider benefits. These are highlighted in Appendix A.

National Policy Context: Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation and Assessing Needs and Opportunities - PPG17 Companion Guide

- 1.17 PPG17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities (paragraph 1). It encourages local authorities to



effectively plan for the future delivery of appropriate open space, sport and leisure facilities.

- 1.18 The document suggests local authorities should undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs and opportunities for new open space and facilities (paragraph 2).
- 1.19 Paragraph 5 states that “The Government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and recreational facilities” and that “local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas”.
- 1.20 The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:
- assessing needs and opportunities - undertaking audits of open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - setting local standards
 - maintaining an adequate supply of open space
 - planning for new open space.
- 1.21 The Companion Guide sets out the process for undertaking local assessments of needs and audits of provision. It also:
- indicates how councils can establish the needs of local communities and apply provision standards
 - promotes a consistent approach across various types of open space.
- 1.22 PMP and the Council have followed the recommendations of PPG17 throughout the study. In following these recommendations, this study has the potential to make a significant difference to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces in the borough of Broxbourne.

Need for local assessments

- 1.23 This assessment of open space and local needs will enable the Council to:
- plan positively, creatively and effectively in identifying priority areas for improvement and to target appropriate types of open space
 - ensure an adequate provision of high quality, accessible open space to meet the needs of the local community
 - ensure any accessible funding is invested in the right places where there is the most need
 - conduct Section 106 negotiations with developers from a position of knowledge with evidence to support such negotiations.
- 1.24 Where no assessment exists, developers can undertake their own independent assessment to demonstrate that open space is surplus to requirements. It is

therefore desirable for the Council to have robust data to protect open space within the borough.

Local features and demographics

- 1.25 The borough of Broxbourne lies in southeast Hertfordshire. It covers an area of 20 square miles and has a population of circa 87,000 (2001 Census). The borough is a mixture of rural and urban areas, with the four main towns of Waltham Cross, Cheshunt, Broxbourne and Hoddesdon lying along the Lee Valley's main roads and railways and the metropolitan green belt (MGB) protecting the surrounding countryside.
- 1.26 The borough is relatively prosperous, compared to the average in England and Wales, as reflected by 2001 Census statistics:
- above average number of people in full time employment and below average levels of unemployment
 - below average long-term illness and poor health
 - above average ownership of two or more cars per household.
- 1.27 Results from the Active People survey indicate that 17.7% of people in Broxbourne are participating in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport or active recreation on at least three days a week, placing it in the lowest quartile of local authorities nationally and far below the current national average of 21.3%. This indicates there is significant potential to increase levels of participation in the borough. As detailed above, open spaces and sport, recreation and community facilities have a key role to play in achieving this.

Structure of the report

- 1.28 This report is split into 15 sections. Section 2 summarises the methodology used to undertake the study and Section 3 provides the strategic context to the study.
- 1.29 Sections 4-15 relate to each of the typologies identified within the scope of the report. Each typology chapter sets out the strategic context to that particular typology, the recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards and the applications of these standards through the geographical areas and value assessments. These are not applicable to all typologies.
- 1.30 There are also a number of appendices that support the report and are referenced throughout.