

7 OPTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AN ACTION PLAN

7.1 Options

A requirement of the study is to propose strategic options for the future planning and management of open space, sport and recreation (OS,S&R) facilities. Consideration of these options will help guide future planning for and management of OS,S&R, through both the land use planning process and the development of green space strategies. The principal options are as follows:

7.1.1 New versus Old

Q. In meeting the needs of new development should there be a strategic decision to provide all-new facilities, or should the focus be on upgrading existing facilities?

A. There are many existing OS,S&R opportunities in the study area and it would be often justifiable to secure contributions towards the improvement and maintenance of these existing opportunities (and sustainable access to them) rather than seek to provide major new facilities elsewhere. Such opportunities might also be found within neighbouring local authorities, outside the immediate study area.

With regard to 'built facilities' rather than build new provision, opportunities should be taken to explore possibilities for either expanding the capacity and/or improving the quality of existing venues; and, of opening up school facilities to more community use.

In such cases it should be acceptable to accept financial contributions from developers in lieu of direct (new) provision.

7.1.2 On or off-site provision

Q. In meeting the needs of new development should there be a strategic decision to provide all-new open space and/or facilities on or off the development site?

The study has clearly shown there are certain facilities (such as major parks, natural green spaces, and leisure centres) that could be provided off site but still meet the needs of new residents. For this approach to work effectively it will be necessary for local authorities to work together in planning the provision of new and improved facilities of a strategic nature. Not only will this cooperation be necessary between Christchurch Borough and East Dorset District, but also with other neighbouring authorities whose residents might reasonably enjoy 'shared' benefit of OS,S&R opportunities of a strategic nature.

The main question to ask in this respect is whether in estimating the requirements of new development by applying standards of provision the 'Accessibility' component(s) can be met.

This approach might be pursued in relation to opportunities such as:

- Major 'built' sports facilities;
- Major parks (including country parks);
- Important outdoor sports provision;
- Major accessible natural and semi natural green space; and,
- Important recreation corridors and recreation routes.

In such cases it should be acceptable to accept financial contributions from developers in lieu of direct (on-site) provision.

7.1.3 Change the Development Plan Designations

Q. Is it appropriate to revise the existing development plan designations covering recreation spaces?

A. The current Open Space designations in both the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plans reflect general recreation use of defined sites, but not specific functions. Further, they do not in fact cover some significant recreation spaces. Future development plan designations could perhaps better reflect the particular characteristics and recreation values of each site. This may be problematic for some sites where there is more than one apparent function, in which case either designation could be made by identified primary function; or, sites (especially larger sites) could be broken down for mapping purposes to reflect discrete functions within an overall site. At the very least it is felt that sites should be mapped by primary function.

The electronic sites database accompanying this report, together with the Local Need Area profiles, will assist in assigning new designations to relevant sites.

7.1.4 Scope for rationalisation of space

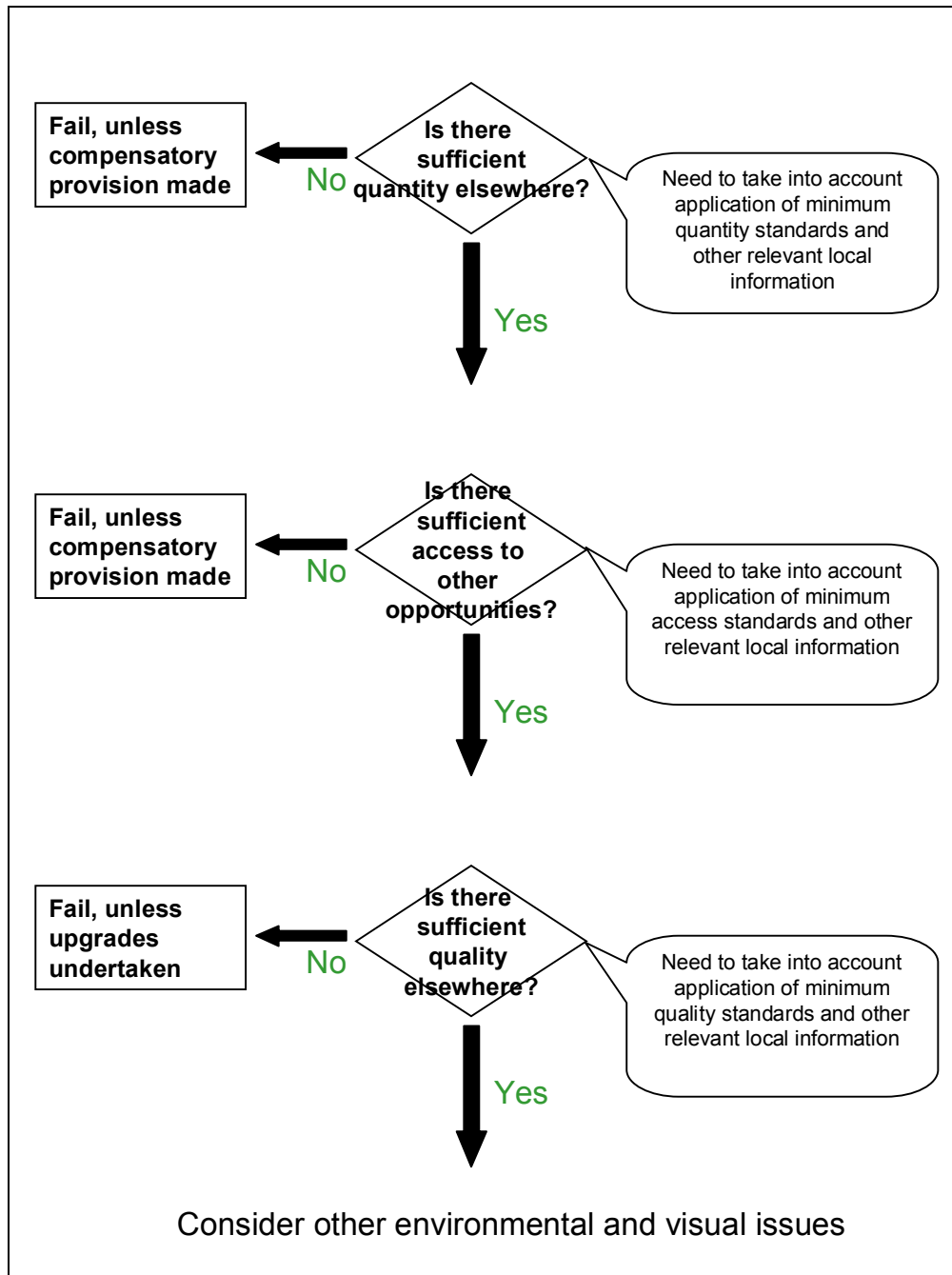
Q. Are there any open spaces that are surplus to recreational requirements?

A. There are important issues to resolve in terms of getting the balance of recreational open spaces right across the study area before any disposal can be contemplated. The Area Profiles in Section 6 of this report suggest that whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in some areas, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that the proposed standards are for *minimum* levels of provision. Factors to be taken into account before any decision to release open space to alternative uses can be taken include:

- The de facto use of a given open space- as it may be a locally popular resource;
- Whether future local development/population growth might generate additional demands for open space;
- Whether there is a demonstrable need for some other type of open space within the locality that a given space (subject to a change of management regime) would be well placed to meet; and,
- Other non-recreational reasons that suggest a space should be retained (which might include ecological and visual reasons).

The following figure suggests an outline decision process to go through before development of an open space can be seriously contemplated.

Figure 7.1: Outline decision making process in relation to the sanctioning the (re)development of open space



A hypothetical example of how this might be applied is as follows as related to an area of informal/amenity space.

Q. Is there sufficient quantity?

A. If the minimum quantitative standard for Informal/amenity space is achieved in a defined geographical area, the relative provision of other forms of open space must then be considered. (Informal open space can in principle be converted into other forms of open space where the need arises). If a) provision meets the minimum quantitative standard; b) there is no significant local information suggesting a need to retain the site; and, c) there is not a perceived lack of other forms of open space. The next question can be addressed.

Q. Is there sufficient access to other opportunities?

A. Within the defined geographical area there may be good overall provision of informal space relative to the quantity standard, but is it in the right place and can it be easily reached? Applying the accessibility component of the minimum standards will help to answer this question. If other similar open space cannot be easily reached, the site's disposal for other uses may be unacceptable.

Q. Are other accessible and similar opportunities elsewhere of sufficient quality?

A. If it can be demonstrated that alternative opportunities are sufficient both in quantity and accessibility, there may still exist issues with the quality of these alternative provisions. The quality component of the proposed standards may indicate that certain improvements to alternative opportunities must be made which should be funded and secured before development is sanctioned.

Even if these three tests are passed there may be other reasons for the site to remain as open space. For example, it may genuinely be nice to look through and over, and/or has a natural habitat value. Such considerations are important, but beyond the scope of this report.

7.2 General Policy Principles/recommendations

Section 2 of this report identified the core themes of both Community Plans, and the following paragraphs convert and link these themes to OS,S&R.Policy Principles.

7.2.1 Christchurch Borough

- **CBC R1** Community Safety – good promotion and management of OS,S&R opportunities can help to reduce crime levels and make people feel safer.

- **CBC R2** Culture, Learning and Lifestyle – imaginative planning and use of OS,S&R opportunities can enhance cultural and educational opportunities.
- **CBC R3** Generations – good planning and management of OS,S&R opportunities can strengthen relationships between people and different generations.
- **CBC R4** Health and Care – access to OS,S&R opportunities can help promote good health, reduce ill health, and support vulnerable groups.
- **CBC R5** High Quality Environment – well planned and managed OS,S&R opportunities have a major role in enhancing the natural and built environment.
- **CBC R6** Affordable Housing –should be available to all housing sectors and local residents as of right. ‘Affordable’ housing should not be synonymous with ‘poor’ housing in terms of the surrounding community infrastructure.
- **CBC R7** Increased Prosperity – well planned and managed OS,S&R opportunities can help bring about economically vibrancy, where people want to live, study, and work.
- **CBC R8** Travel and Access - well planned and managed well planned and managed OS,S&R opportunities can help create a community where travel is efficient, affordable and sustainable.

7.2.2 East Dorset District

- **EDDC R1** Crime and Safety - good promotion and management of OS,S&R opportunities can help improve the local quality of life by reducing levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in a cost effective way.
- **EDDC R2** Housing - high quality community OS,S&R opportunities have a role in meeting the housing needs of all sectors of the community, through providing vital supporting infrastructure.
- **EDDC R3** Health – access to OS,S&R opportunities can help improve people’s health and be a medium for encouraging partnerships amongst the voluntary, private and public organisations to work together to achieve these improvements.
- **EDDC R4** Environment - well planned and managed OS,S&R opportunities are integral to protecting and improving the unique environment of East Dorset.
- **EDDC R5** Traffic and Transport – well planned and managed OS,S&R opportunities have a major role in the development of future local transport options.
- **EDDC R6** Youth – good planning and management of OS,S&R opportunities can help address the needs of young people.

These policy principles form the basis of the following (outline) Action Plan.

Clearly, the themes within the two community plans are similar in many ways and the above policy statements can therefore form the basis of a joint general Action Plan.

7.3 Action Plan

The Action Plan suggests discrete initiatives that both Councils and their partners may wish to pursue. They have been grouped according to the general policy statements to which they best relate. This is logical given the Community Plans' status as the Councils' lead policy documents.

All the action points bear upon the issues and opportunities raised within this study. The principal medium for pursuing these action points will often be through the spatial planning process or through future green space strategies. Other initiatives could be pursued independently of either of these two processes. The Action Plan is put forward in good faith and can be added to or altered, but it should in any event be for the Councils and their partners to prioritise between the various points.

Policy Principle	Action point reference	Description
CBC R1 and EDDC R1: Community Safety	CBC/EDDC R1.1	Future Green Space Strategies should recognise and address the comments highlighted in the consultation underpinning this document about concerns in relation to vandalism, graffiti, and safety in respect of the use of open space.
CBC R2: Culture, Learning and Lifestyle	CBC R2.1	Future Green Space Strategies and Play Strategies should examine the relationship between the provision of equipped space for young people, and service provision (such as linking youth provision with youth 'outreach' and sports development work.)

Policy Principle	Action point reference	Description
	CBC R2.2	Future Green Space Strategies should examine the imaginative 'opening up' of school facilities for wider community use in conjunction with local schools and the Education Authority.
	CBC R.2.3	Future Green Space Strategies should examine management and interpretation of open space in a fashion that promotes greater environmental awareness.
CBC R3 and EDDC R6: Relationship between generations and meeting the needs of young people.	CBC 3.1/EEDC 6.1	Section 6 of this report provides area specific recommendations with regard to the improvement of opportunities for children and young people, and these should be pursued through future Green Space Strategies.
	CBC 3.2/EEDC 6.2	Consider the adoption of the standards suggested in this report through the Local Development Framework (LDF). The recommended standards are based on the results of local consultation and their adoption would provide for a better range of open spaces relative to the needs of the community, compared with existing standards.
CBC R4/EDDC R3: Health	CBC R4.1/EDDC R3.1	Future Green Space Strategies should encourage agencies and local groups to work together to use open spaces and recreation corridors for 'health based' initiatives. Natural spaces, green routes, allotments etc all potentially have a very important role to play in improving levels of health

Policy Principle	Action point reference	Description
		within the community.
CBC R5 and EDDC R4	CBC R5.1/EDDC R4.1	Future reviews of the LDF and possible Supplementary Planning Documentation (SPD) should consider the possibilities for creating both utility and recreation routes for use by foot and bike in both urban and rural areas. Creative application of the Informal Green Space and Accessible Natural Green Space components of the proposed overall standard in respect of new development will be possible.
	CBC R5.2/EDDC R4.2	Future Green Space Strategies should consider the possibility of changing the management regime of some existing spaces (especially in urban areas) that lack access to natural green space within easy walking distance.
	CBC R5.3/EDDC R4.3	Future Green Space Strategies and future reviews of the Development Framework must recognise the need when planning for all types of recreation opportunity to take into account people's preparedness to travel, and requirements for different types of space. For children and young people this means easy access by foot/cycle.
CBC R6 and EDDC R2: Housing	CBC R6.1/EDDC 2.1	Consider the need to develop SPD to aid with the interpretation and application of the standards.
	CBC R6.2/EDDC 2.2	Consider the adoption of the recommended new standards within future Local Development Frameworks.

Policy Principle	Action point reference	Description
		Ensure that the interpretation and application of any adopted new standards embrace the importance of open space being of high quality, both through future SPD and Green Space Strategies.
	CBC R6.3/EDDC 2.3	Consider area specific issues raised in Section 6 of this report in planning new housing development.
CBC R7: Economic Prosperity	CBC R7.1	Work with developers and local business interests to maximise the support for the proposed new standards by the local development industry, in particular. (This will also be essential in EDDC)
CBC R8 and EDDC R5: Transport and access	CBC R8.1/EEDC R5.1	See CBC R5.1/EDDC R4.1