

**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee  
Cabinet

**DATE:** 11 November 2009  
25 November 2009

**SUBJECT:** Core Strategy: Green Space and Recreation Study (PPG17 Study) and Playing Pitch Strategy

**WARDS AFFECTED:** All

**REPORT OF:** Andy Wallis, Planning and Economic Regeneration Director

**CONTACT OFFICERS:** Steve Matthews – 934 3559  
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**EXEMPT/  
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

This report asks members to approve the Green Space and Recreation Study and Playing Pitch Strategy, which form part of the evidence for the Core Strategy. The Green Space and Recreation Study also forms part of the evidence for the corporate Green Space Strategy for Sefton (2008).

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

Government planning policy requires recreation studies to be carried out as part of the background to preparing Core Strategies.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That **Planning Committee** recommend to Cabinet that they approve the:

- i) Green Space and Recreation Study;
- ii) Playing Pitch Strategy.

That **Cabinet** approve the:

- i) Green Space and Recreation Study;
- ii) Playing Pitch Strategy.

**KEY DECISION:** No

**FORWARD PLAN:** No

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** Upon the expiry of the call-in period following the publication of the minutes of the Cabinet meeting.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

Government planning policy requires recreation studies to be carried out as part of the evidence required in preparing Core Strategies, and so there are no other practicable options.

**IMPLICATIONS:****Budget/Policy Framework:** -**Financial:** There are no direct financial implications.

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2007/ 2008 £</b>	<b>2008/ 2009 £</b>	<b>2009/ 2010 £</b>	<b>2010/ 2011 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

**Legal:** N/A

**Risk Assessment:** The Green Space and Recreation Study provides the evidence for developing a policy approach to green space and recreation issues in the Core Strategy, in accordance with PPG17. The Playing Pitch Strategy is another part of this evidence.

**Asset Management:** The Green Space and Recreation Study and Playing Pitch Strategy will help the Council to take account of green space and green infrastructure issues when making decisions about management of its assets.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

The Directors of Leisure Services and Children's Services have been consulted during the preparation of, and on drafts of, the Green Space and Recreation Study and the Playing Pitch Study.

**CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:**

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Creating Safe Communities	✓		
3	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	✓		
5	Environmental Sustainability	✓		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	✓		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy		✓	
8	Children and Young People	✓		

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' (2002) and the associated Good Practice Guide – see <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicyguidance/ppg17/>

Sefton Council's Green Space Strategy for Sefton (2008) – see <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/greenspacestrategy>

Green Space, Trees and Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2008) – see <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/greenspacespd>

[www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk](http://www.greeninfrastructurenw.co.uk)

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Green space, including recreation space, is essential if we are to provide sustainable communities within a high quality natural and built environment. Green space is also a key component of a wider concept called 'green infrastructure'. Green space offers a number of benefits and opportunities, including:

- Active recreation and quiet enjoyment, leading to better physical & mental health;
- Routes for walking and cycling;
- Community events, and meeting places;
- Attractive environments and a positive image for the area;
- Higher property prices and investment levels;
- Helping to reduce the impact of climate change;
- Places for wildlife to flourish;
- Reducing air, noise and water pollution.

1.2 The corporate Green Space Strategy for Sefton (2008) sets out the Council's commitment to public green space in Sefton. The Core Strategy and other planning documents must make sure that there is sufficient green space and recreational space to meet the needs of those living in, working in or visiting Sefton in the future. Other Council strategies can also help to achieve this (for example the Playing Pitch Strategy, and the Parks and Green Spaces Asset Management Strategy).

1.3 National planning advice on how Core Strategies and other planning documents should deal with green space and recreation is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' (2002), and the associated Good Practice Guide. This stresses the need for local planning authorities to carry out green space and recreation studies.

1.4 More recent regional planning policy set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (2008) emphasises the many functions of green space and introduces the wider concept of 'green infrastructure', which also includes private green spaces such as domestic gardens and farmland as well as public green space.

## **2. The Green Space and Recreation Study**

2.1 The Green Space and Recreation Study is our response to PPG17. The Study, Executive Summary and other information can be seen at <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/greenspacestudy>. It provides an overview of the green space and recreation work which took place between 2005 and 2009 including the audit of urban greenspaces, the Parks and Green Spaces Asset Management Strategy and public consultation regarding green space and recreation issues.

2.2 The Study provides evidence for the Core Strategy and other planning documents, such as the adopted (2008) Green Space, Trees and Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It also provides the detailed evidence to support the quantity, quality and accessibility targets for green space set out in the Green Space Strategy for Sefton, and the Strategy's general assessment of how green space in each Area Committee area compares to these targets.

2.3 This evidence is particularly important in helping us to secure commuted sums or direct provision of green space from major commercial, industrial or leisure development schemes. In practice provision is more likely to be for off-site

enhancements to existing green spaces through commuted sums linked to section 106 obligations, rather than direct provision within schemes.

2.4 It can also help us to assess proposals for development on urban greenspace sites or other outdoor sports sites such as pitches in the Green Belt or bowling greens in the grounds of public houses.

2.5 The Study can also help to guide the Sefton Borough Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy and Sefton Council's asset management, regeneration and investment decisions and funding bids.

2.6 In addition, the Green Space and Recreation Study looks at accessible nature space (nature areas) in Sefton. This ties in to Natural England's recommendations that everyone should have access to nature space.

### ***Key findings about quantity, quality and accessibility of green space***

2.7 Linacre and Derby area has the least green space per thousand population. Formby has the most if coast and countryside parks are included and Crosby the most if they are excluded. Formby has the most accessible nature space per thousand population, and Linacre and Derby area the least.

2.8 Quality has been more difficult to measure, and is varied. In general terms parks and amenity urban greenspace in Formby and to a lesser extent Southport are generally of higher quality. Two Southport parks have Green Flag awards in 2009, so do Coronation Park, Crosby and Thornton Crematorium.

2.9 In accessibility terms, the study looked at two specific types of green space – larger parks and nature areas. Most people living in the urban area are within 15 to 20 minutes walk of a larger park or nature area. However, this is not the case in parts of Blundellsands, Thornton, and Hightown (in relation to parks); north-central Formby (parks); northern Lydiate and western Maghull (parks), plus parts of Aintree and Melling (both parks and nature areas); large parts of central and north Southport (parks and nature areas), and part of Birkdale (nature areas).

### ***Consultation on the Green Space and Recreation Study***

2.10 Extensive consultation took place before and during the preparation of the Green Space and Recreation Study. Views were sought from Parish Councils, Area Committees, children, local voluntary groups and residents via a telephone survey as well as focus groups, and other wider public consultation.

2.11 The Directors of Leisure and Children's Services have been consulted during the preparation of this Green Space and Recreation Study.

2.12 Responses showed that most people believe that the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space in their area is about right, although overall levels of satisfaction with quality were lower than those for quantity and accessibility.

## **3. The Playing Pitch Strategy**

3.1 Sport England is the government agency responsible for sport. They have encouraged Councils to carry out playing pitch studies and have published a good practice methodology for pitch sports studies in "Towards a Level Playing Field" (2003).

3.2 Sefton's Playing Pitch Strategy is based on this Sport England methodology, supplemented by information from local consultation on issues such as quality and peak demand. It looks at the five main pitch sports; football, mini-football, cricket, rugby union and hockey, across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors. It can be seen at <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/pitchstrategy> .

3.3 Action plans identify specific proposals, costs, indicative timetables and possible funding sources for playing pitches. Commuted sums linked to section 106 obligations for development schemes are one possible funding source.

3.4 The Strategy shows a shortfall in football pitch provision, particularly for senior football. Its main conclusions are that the Council should seek to:

- improve the quality of existing pitches by providing better parking and changing facilities and by increasing the quality of playing surfaces.
- increase capacity by working with schools to allow more schools pitches to be used by junior football, rugby and cricket teams out of school hours.

A summary of these conclusions is included in the Green Space and Recreation Study

3.5 The Strategy is also relevant in helping us to set priorities for spending of commuted sums. Both the Green Space Strategy and the Green Space, Trees and Development SPD (2008) make this role clear.

#### ***Consultation on the Playing Pitch Strategy***

3.6 Consultation with local sports clubs and leagues took place during the preparation of the Strategy, and on the draft Strategy document. The draft Strategy has also been available on-line.

3.7 The Directors of Leisure and Children's Services have been consulted during the preparation of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

#### **4. Conclusions**

4.1 Green space, including recreation space, is essential if we are to provide sustainable communities within a high quality natural and built environment, and forms part of Sefton's wider green infrastructure. Green space offers a number of important benefits and opportunities.

4.2 The Green Space and Recreation Study relates specifically to planning requirements set out in government guidance. This Study, together with the Playing Pitch Strategy, will be key information in preparing the Core Strategy. They are essential background for identifying appropriate standards for greenspace which will help to make sure that Sefton is a sustainable community.

4.3 The Green Space and Recreation Study and Playing Pitch Strategy provide evidence which helps us to secure commuted sums or new green space or pitches, in relation to development schemes. Also they help set the priorities for spending of commuted sums.