

## Chapter 14: Public Open Space

### Introduction

- 14.1 Open space is an essential part of our places and is needed to provide for the outdoor recreation needs of residents as well as making a significant contribution to setting, character, amenity and biodiversity.
- 14.2 New development adds to the number of people using open spaces. The adopted Local Plans minimum standards for the provision of new open space, that should be delivered on site where appropriate, and where not delivered onsite financial contribution should be made to enable delivery of new spaces or the improvement of existing spaces.

### Policy Context

#### Cambridge

- 14.3 Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 68: requires that all residential development proposals should contribute to the provision of open space and recreation sites/facilities on-site. Alternative off site provision may be acceptable if the proposed development is of insufficient size to make appropriate provision feasible within the site, or in exceptional circumstances, if taking into account the accessibility/capacity of existing open space sites/facilities and the circumstances of the surrounding area the open space needs of the proposed residential development can be met more appropriately by providing either new or enhanced provision off-site. Appendix I of the Local Plan provides detailed guidance on standards and how they should be applied.

#### South Cambridgeshire

- 14.4 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 Policy SC/7 requires all housing developments to contribute towards open space to meet the needs generated and includes minimum standards. Where appropriate, provision will be on-site so that provision is integrated into the development and benefits to the health and wellbeing of new residents are maximised, guided by Figure 10. However, an appropriate contribution will be required for off-site provision of the types of space not provided on-site.
- 14.5 South Cambridgeshire Open Space in New Developments Supplementary Planning Document includes guidance on the design of open spaces. It is

important to note that parts of this SPD are superseded by this chapter, specifically: the table in paragraph 2.8 is superseded by Table 14-10 in this SPD; the table in paragraph 2.14 is superseded by Table 14-11 in this SPD, and the table in paragraph 2.28 is superseded by Table 14-13 in this SPD.

- 14.6 Some site specific policies within the local plans, and in Area Action Plans, provide guidance to open space issues in particular areas. Neighbourhood Plans also form part of the adopted development plan. A number of these plans contain specific policies and requirements in relation to open space within their area.

### **Development types from which Obligations will be sought**

- 14.7 Residential development, and potentially other forms of commercial development.
- 14.8 Large scale commercial developments (above 5,000m<sup>2</sup>) will be required to consider how the needs of their workers and visitors will be met for social and leisure facilities. If the need cannot be met through existing or additional on-site facilities this could mean off site contributions to address the impact on facilities is necessary and will be sought.
- 14.9 Proposals that require the delivery of open space through new development should explain how the proposed on-site provision and off-site contributions comply with Local Plan policies and have taken into account local strategies and projects.

### **Form in which contributions should be made**

- 14.10 The standards are applicable to all new residential units created as a result of development, including conversions. Requirements will also be applied to other forms of resident development, for example aparthotels. Requirements are calculated based on the anticipated number of new residents generated by the development.
- 14.11 In addition to the standards applying to residential development, the Councils may seek open space provision as part of business park, retail and large-scale commercial developments in order to meet the needs of staff and visitors but also to protect local facilities that could be put under undue pressure.
- 14.12 On individual sites negotiation may take place on the types of space provided on site, taking account of the needs and opportunities of the area, existing provision and any identified deficiencies in provision. When considering existing provision, educational establishments without a guaranteed level of

public access and use for the foreseeable future will not be counted. Facilities in educational ownership where community use is secured through written agreement can be included.

## **Outdoor Sports Facilities**

- 14.13 Outdoor sport comprises facilities such as grass pitches for a range of sports, bowling greens, tennis courts, athletics tracks and multi-use games areas plus ancillary facilities such as lighting, car park, changing and storage.
- 14.14 The Cambridge Local Plan requires 1.2 hectares per 1,000 people of playing pitches, courts and greens. Appendix I states that this is an amalgamation of standards for different sports, based on team generation rates and current provision, and provides guidance regarding how this should be addressed.
- 14.15 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan requires a minimum of 1.6 hectares per 1,000. Figure 10 of the Local Plan provides guidance on when different types of provision should be provided onsite, with onsite provision anticipated on sites above 200 dwellings.
- 14.16 The delivery of on-site outdoor playing pitches should be made with regard to the most recently adopted Greater Cambridge Playing Pitch Strategy. NB: An updated study is now underway to inform the Greater Cambridge Local Plan and should be published alongside the draft Plan in 2025. Developers of large windfall sites not accounted for in the study will be required to submit a sports strategy.

## **Provision for Children and Teenagers**

- 14.17 Provision for children and teenagers needs to deliver attractive, safe and creative places where children and teenagers can enjoy physical activity, socialising and quiet contemplation.
- 14.18 The Cambridge Local Plan requires 0.3 hectares per 1,000 of equipped children's play areas and outdoor youth provision. Appendix I includes a play space typology, which establishes expectations regarding the quantity, quality and accessibility of a range of play space types. This should be considered when planning for on-site provision.
- 14.19 In South Cambridgeshire, the standard requires formal Children's Play Space 0.4ha. per 1,000 people comprising formal equipped play areas and provision for teenagers including wheeled sports parks and macadam kick-about areas,

and Informal Children's Play Space 0.4ha. per 1,000 people for informal play, including grass kick-about areas. Figure 10 of the Local Plan provides guidance on when different types of play space should be provided onsite.

### **Informal open space**

- 14.20 The Cambridge Local Plan requires 2.2 hectares per 1,000 of Informal provision, including recreation grounds, parks, natural greenspaces and, in town centres or urban locations, usable, high quality, public hard surfaces. It will not always be possible to deliver this on-site on smaller developments, but amenity greenspace (informal play space used for kickabout and casual play space) should be considered on all developments of 25 dwellings and over. Provision may also be required on developments of less than 25 dwellings subject to design and context considerations. On larger developments, for example 100 dwellings or more, larger types of informal open space, such as urban parks and gardens and larger areas of natural green space, should be considered.
- 14.21 In South Cambridgeshire, the standard requires a minimum 0.4ha. per 1,000 people of informal space. Informal open spaces are used by people of all ages for informal unstructured recreation such as walking, relaxing, or a focal point, ranging from formal planted areas and meeting places to wilder, more natural spaces, including some green linkages.

### **Allotments and Community Orchards**

- 14.22 Allotment and community orchards create multiple benefits for communities, supporting healthy lifestyles and healthy living whilst contributing to the environment and biodiversity. In addition to more traditional allotments, community orchards also provide opportunities linked to the heritage of Cambridgeshire. Other food growing opportunities can also be designed into developments such as roof gardens, raised beds, in schools or care homes, or in the form of temporary provision through meanwhile uses.
- 14.23 Cambridge Local Plan (in appendix I) open space and recreation standards also sets a minimum standard of 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people for allotments. Cambridge Local plan paragraph I.12 identifies issues that should be considered as to whether provision is onsite, and I.9 advises that for many developments, particularly in the built-up area of Cambridge on site provision will be challenging.
- 14.24 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Policy SC/7 requires a minimum of 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people of allotments and community orchards. The

standard stated in the policy is equivalent to 32 allotments per 1,000 households. Figure 10 identified that provision on site will generally be sought above 200 dwellings. The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan specifically references allotments and Community orchards within this element of open space provision. The mix should take account of the opportunities in relation to a specific site.

## Onsite Provision

- 14.25 If provision is made on site as part of the development developers must arrange for the future maintenance and management. For new developments, it is the developer's responsibility to ensure that the open space and facilities are available to the community in perpetuity and that satisfactory long-term levels of management and maintenance are guaranteed. Early consultation and resolution of these matters is recommended to avoid delays in the planning process. The Council will need to be satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place before planning permission is granted.
- 14.26 In Cambridge, open space may be adopted by Cambridge City Council if it meets their thresholds and standards. It is advised to consult the City Services team. Cambridge City Council manages 103 play spaces across the City Council area. The Cambridge City Council Outdoor Play Spaces Investment Strategy (2024) sets out the Council's vision and strategic aims for the provision of outdoor play for children and young people from 2024. Proposals for new open spaces should be considered in consultation with the City Services team.
- 14.27 In South Cambridgeshire, it is strongly advised that in the majority of cases new open spaces and facilities should come under the freehold ownership of the Parish Council or Town Council or a local community organisation or trust that has clear accountability, is properly constituted, represents the best interests of the whole community and appropriate access by the community is guaranteed into perpetuity.
- 14.28 If a developer, in consultation with the City or District Council and Town / Parish Council, decides to transfer the site to a management company, the Council will require appropriate conditions to ensure public access and appropriate arrangements in the event that the management company becomes insolvent (a developer guarantee).
- 14.29 Early delivery of provision will generally be required in order that the needs of residents are met.

- 14.30 If being delivered by the developer onsite provision will need to be of a suitable standard for adoption. The developer will be required to pay for the cost of inspection by a specialist to check that the area or facility is completed to an acceptable quality and is fit for purpose. Such specialists will come from organisations such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA), the Government's Application Programming Interfaces (API) standards, National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and the Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA). If developers are providing additional off-site land to meet their obligations for formal sport or children's play space, this will also be provided with an appropriate capital sum to make the facility "fit for purpose" for the activity in question. For example, for pitches this will involve the cost to level, drain, seed and prepare for sporting use to a standard that is acceptable to the Governing Body of Sport for "club" use.
- 14.31 Allotments will need to be of a suitable standard for adoption and should consider issues including water supply (in particular opportunities for rainwater collection), security and fencing, storage (and potentially communal buildings), suitable soil quality, composting facilities, access and parking. Community orchards should be specifically designed and planted, to provide a suitable environment for effective management and ongoing maintenance as a community resource.
- 14.32 Developers will be responsible for maintaining open spaces and facilities until they have been formally transferred to the managing organisation. They will be required to provide maintenance plans to demonstrate how this will be done, for approval as part of reserved matters applications prior to development. Facilities and land will normally be transferred as freehold. They will also be required to contribute towards the initial burden of maintaining outdoor play space and open space created to meet the needs of the development. A 15-year indexed commuted maintenance fee will be required as well as a replacement cost, although there may be instances where the circumstances of a particular site require a contribution calculated on a longer period where there is sufficient justification.

## Offsite Payments

- 14.33 Where onsite provision is not made, or only partially made, offsite contributions may be required to support the improvement of existing facilities or spaces or delivery of new spaces or facilities to meet the needs generated by the development.
- 14.34 In Cambridge relevant projects will be identified in consultation with service providers. Many facilities provide city wide coverage, and projects may reflect

that. In South Cambridgeshire this will be based on considerations within the village or adjoining area and will be determined in consultation with the Parish and Town Councils. Larger projects identified may require contributions from a number of developments to allow them to be implemented.

14.35 Developers will be required to contribute towards the initial burden of maintaining outdoor play space and open space created to meet the needs of the development. The Council will require a Commuted Maintenance Payment for open spaces provided by the new development. These Commuted Maintenance Payments are intended to fund a stream of index linked revenue payments which will pay for the maintenance of both on-site and off-site open space and facilities where they directly relate to the new community. They will be required to cover a 15-year period.

14.36 Open space costs have been reviewed by the Councils' Infrastructure Delivery Plan Consultants (Atkins and LUC). A land cost of £240,000 per hectare has been included.

## Cambridge

Table 14-1: Summary of Cambridge open space standards

Open space type	Hectares per 1000 people	Square Metres per Person
Outdoor Sport	1.2	12
Provision for Children and Teenagers	0.3	3
Informal open space	1.8	18
Allotments	0.4	4
Total	3.7	37

Table 14-2: Area of provision by dwelling size

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (m2)	Provision for Children and Teenagers (m2)	Informal Open Space (m2)	Allotments (m2)	Total (m2)
1 Bed	14.76	0.00	22.14	4.92	41.82
2 Bed	24.72	6.18	37.08	8.24	76.22
3 Bed	33.96	8.49	50.94	11.32	104.71
4 Bed	39.12	9.78	58.68	13.04	120.62

Table 14-3: Capital costs

Costs	Cost per Square Meter (£)	Cost per person (£)
Outdoor Sport	30.23	362.70
Provision for Children and Teenagers	144.99	434.98
Informal open space	19.86	357.54
Allotments	12.82	51.29
Total per person	207.90	1206.51

Source of costs: Infrastructure Costing Review – Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD July 2025

14.37 Applying the costs to the occupancy rates results in the following requirements.

Table 14-4: Capital costs by dwelling size

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Provision for Children and Teenagers (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	446.12	0.00	439.77	63.09	948.98
2 Bed	747.16	896.06	736.53	105.65	2485.41
3 Bed	1026.44	1230.99	1011.84	145.15	3414.42
4 Bed	1182.40	1418.03	1165.58	167.21	3933.22

Table 14-5: Maintenance costs

Costs	Cost per Square Metre (£)	Cost per person (£)	Cost per person (15 years) (£)
Outdoor Sport	3.14	37.68	565.27
Provision for Children and Teenagers	10.15	30.45	456.73
Informal open space	0.66	11.84	177.61
Allotments	0.45	1.81	27.20
Total per person	14.40	81.79	1226.81

Source of costs: Infrastructure Costing Review – Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD July 2025

Table 14-6: Maintenance costs by dwelling size per year



Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Provision for Children and Teenagers (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	46.35	0.00	14.56	2.23	63.15
2 Bed	77.63	62.72	24.39	3.74	168.48
3 Bed	106.65	86.17	33.51	5.13	231.46
4 Bed	122.85	99.26	38.60	5.91	266.63

Table 14-7: Land costs per dwelling

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Provision for Children and Teenagers (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	354.24	0	531.36	118	1003.68
2 Bed	593.28	148.32	889.92	198	1829.28
3 Bed	815.04	203.76	1222.56	272	2513.04
4 Bed	938.88	234.72	1408.32	313	2894.88

Table 14-8: Total off-site contributions

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Provision for Children and Teenagers (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	1495.64	0.00	1,189.59	214.62	2899.86
2 Bed	2504.90	1985.24	1,992.33	359.45	6841.92
3 Bed	3441.20	2727.30	2,737.03	493.81	9399.34
4 Bed	3964.06	3141.69	3,152.91	568.84	10827.50

## South Cambridgeshire

Table 14-9: Summary of South Cambridgeshire open space standards

Open space type	Hectares per 1000 people	Square Metres per Person
Outdoor Sport	1.6	16
Children's Play space (equipped / formal)	0.4	4
Children's Play space (unequipped / informal)	0.4	4
Informal open space	0.4	4
Allotments and Community Orchards	0.4	4
Total	3.2	32

Table 14-10: Area of provision by dwelling size

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (m2)	Children's Play space (equipped / formal) (m2)	Children's Play space (unequipped / informal) (m2)	Informal Open Space (m2)	Allotments and Community Orchards (m2)	Total (m2)
1 Bed	19.68	0.00	0.00	4.92	4.92	29.52
2 Bed	32.96	8.24	8.24	8.24	8.24	65.92
3 Bed	45.28	11.32	11.32	11.32	11.32	90.56
4 Bed	52.16	13.04	13.04	13.04	13.04	104.32

Table 14-11: Capital costs

Costs	Cost per Square Metre (£)	Cost per person (£)
Outdoor Sport	80.53	1288.47
Children's Play space (equipped / formal)	144.99	579.97
Children's Play space (unequipped / informal)	9.80	39.20
Informal open space	19.86	79.45
Allotments and Community Orchards	12.82	51.29
Total per person	268.01	2038.38

Source of costs: Infrastructure Costing Review – Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD July 2025

Table 14-12: Capital costs by dwelling size

Costs	Outdoor Sport (£)	Children's Play space (equipped / formal) (£)	Children's Play space (unequipped / informal) (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments and Community Orchards (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	1584.82	0	0	97.72	63.09	1745.63
2 Bed	2654.25	1194.74	80.75	163.67	105.66	4199.06
3 Bed	3646.37	1641.32	110.94	224.84	145.15	5768.62
4 Bed	4200.41	1890.70	127.79	259.01	167.21	6645.12

Table 14-13: Maintenance costs

Costs	Cost per Square Metre (£)	Cost per person (£)	Cost per person (15 years) (£)
Outdoor Sport	2.87	45.59	683.82
Children's Play space (equipped / formal)	10.00	39.98	607.97
Children's Play space (unequipped / informal)	0.63	2.52	37.80
Informal open space	0.66	2.63	39.47
Allotments and Community Orchards	0.45	1.81	27.20
Total per person	14.72	93.08	1396.26

Table 14-14: Maintenance costs by dwelling size per year

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Children's Play space (equipped / formal) (£)	Children's Play space (unequipped / informal) (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments and Community Orchards (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	56.07	0.00	0.00	3.24	2.23	61.54
2 Bed	93.91	83.49	5.19	5.42	3.74	191.75
3 Bed	129.01	114.70	7.13	7.45	5.13	263.43
4 Bed	148.62	132.13	8.22	8.58	5.91	303.45

Table 14-15: Land costs per dwelling

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Children's Play space (equipped / formal) (£)	Children's Play space (unequipped / informal) (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments and Community Orchards (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	472.32	0.00	0.00	118.08	118.08	708.48
2 Bed	791.04	197.76	197.76	197.76	197.76	1582.08
3 Bed	1086.72	271.68	271.68	271.68	271.68	2173.44
4 Bed	1251.84	312.96	312.96	312.96	312.96	2503.68

Table 14-16: Total off-site contributions

Number of beds	Outdoor Sport (£)	Children's Play space (equipped / formal) (£)	Children's Play space (unequipped / informal) (£)	Informal Open Space (£)	Allotments and Community Orchards (£)	Total (£)
1 Bed	2898.24	0.00	0.00	264.35	214.62	3377.21
2 Bed	4853.96	2644.92	356.38	442.74	359.45	8657.44
3 Bed	6668.30	3633.55	489.59	608.22	493.81	11893.47
4 Bed	7681.51	4185.64	563.98	700.64	568.84	13700.61

## Exemptions

14.38 Exceptions are set out in Table I.3 of the Cambridge Local Plan, and within policy SC/7 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

## Outdoor Sports

14.39 Cambridge: Not required from Nursing Homes (use class C2). Full provision will not be sought if the accommodation is directly linked to a college or

university by a s106 Agreement and it can be shown that adequate provision of outdoor or indoor sports facilities is made by that college or university.

- 14.40 South Cambridgeshire: Not required from housing provision consisting of Sheltered housing, Extra Care housing, and residential and nursing homes.

### **Provision for Children and Teenagers**

- 14.41 Cambridge: Not required from one bedroom units, retirement housing (C3 where there is an age restriction to over 55's, or C2 nursing homes), non-family student accommodation, student family housing if the development is on a college campus and it can be shown that adequate appropriate open space is provided by the college such that students are unlikely to make significant use of other informal open space.
- 14.42 South Cambridgeshire: Not required from one bedroom units, housing provision consisting of Sheltered housing, Extra Care housing, and residential and nursing homes.

### **Informal Open Space**

- 14.43 Cambridge: Not required from non-family student accommodation or student family housing if the development is on a college campus and it can be shown that adequate appropriate open space is provided by the college such that students are unlikely to make significant use of other informal open space.

### **Allotments**

- 14.44 Cambridge: Not required from non-family student accommodation or student family housing

### **Further guidance**

#### **Cambridge**

- [Cambridge Open Space and Recreation Strategy - Cambridge City Council \(2011\)](#)
- [Cambridge City Council Outdoor Play Spaces Investment Strategy \(2024\)](#)

## **South Cambridgeshire**

- [South Cambridgeshire Open Space in New Developments Supplementary Planning Document \(2009\)](#)
- [South Cambridgeshire Recreation and open space study - South Cambridgeshire District Council \(2013\)](#)
- [Allotment toolkit - South Cambridgeshire District Council](#)

## **Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire)**

- [Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Playing Pitch Strategy 2015-2031 \(2016\)](#)

## **Other Sources**

- [Community Orchards: How to Guide - Communities and Local Government \(2011\)](#)

# **Chapter 15: Indoor Sports, including Swimming**

## **Introduction**

- 15.1 Sports and leisure facilities are important for the health and wellbeing of residents, and to help keep people physically active. New development places additional demand on facilities many of which are already at capacity, and therefore it is important that developers contribute to mitigate these impacts.

## **Policy Context**

### **Cambridge**

- 15.2 Cambridge Local Plan 2018 Policy 68 Open space and recreation provision through new development requires that all residential developments should contribute to the provision of recreation sites/facilities in accordance with the council's Open Space and Recreation Standards. Appendix I includes a standard of one swimming pool for every 50,000 people and one sports hall for every 13,000 people. Policy 73 Community, sports and leisure facilities provides requirements and guidance for provision as part of new developments.

### **South Cambridgeshire**

- 15.3 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 Policy SC/4 Meeting Community Needs require all housing developments to include or contribute to the