

WINDSOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Open Space, Natural Environment, Countryside & Leisure Policies and Projects

OS Topic Group V8 DOC (SS) – revised 12/3/15

I. VISION

- I.i** Windsor is a very attractive and popular historic market town which benefits from beautiful streetscapes and heritage buildings; views of Windsor Castle, the Long Walk and surrounding countryside; and many inviting public open spaces including parks and gardens, woodlands, playing fields, “green corridors” and riverside areas which enliven the town. The special quality of its public realm plays a vital role in Windsor’s success as a place in which to live and work, and as an appealing destination for visitors.
- I.ii** Open space, countryside and the natural environment provide the physical context within which all development had originally taken place, and the area available for new development in Windsor as a whole is significantly enhanced — but also constrained — by the presence of Crown Land, Green Belt and the river Thames, all of which are located either within or along the town’s boundaries.
- I.iii** The amount of open space currently provided through development already falls around 50% below the levels required by the RBWM Local Plan to meet the needs of the existing community.
- I.iv** Any additional growth in residential and business provision across the town will exacerbate current pressures on open space and outdoor recreation provision and the shortfall must be comprehensively addressed in order to ensure these essential amenities are robustly supported, provided in the correct balance (a ratio of 2.5% Informal OS to 1.8% Formal OS) and not irrevocably undermined. The development of “brown field sites” AND the identification of new sites for provision of open space must therefore contribute to the overall amount of urban open space which will be required to meet the needs (physical, ecological, emotional, intellectual, psychological, cultural and spiritual), sustainability and health of the wider – and expanding – community.
- I.v** **To ensure Windsor’s long-term environmental quality and sustainability, it is vital that:**
- a) “green infrastructure” is co-ordinated and open space is provided at an optimum quantity and quality for the town’s projected population;**
 - b) existing areas of open space, including “Village Greens”, “Local Green Space (paras 76-77)”, bio-diversity “Stepping Stones” and recreation facilities, are preserved and enhanced with regard to their social usefulness, ecological value and sustainability;**
 - c) the river and riverside areas are made attractive and accessible in order to make best public use of this principal resource;**
 - d) the visual impact of new development on important views within urban, suburban and countryside areas is considered and minimised;**
 - e) “edge-of-settlement” land is treated with care, and that “buffer zones” are preserved between areas of more intensive development to guard against;**
 - f) safe “green routes” for pedestrians and cyclists are created as priority links “to and through” the urban core and open space areas, together with good cycle parking and accessible, reliable public transport;**
 - g) high quality private outdoor space is a feature within all new developments;**
 - h) new developments incorporate SUDS into their designs to address flooding and drainage issues and a “Green Living Plan” is produced to encourage energy efficiency and sustainability;**
 - i) car parking space within the curtilage of new developments is provided at appropriate levels, is designed to fit in with the character of the development and the existing area, and meets the various functions identified within proposed developments (eg. residential and/or commercial and/or community).**

II. EVIDENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

II.i The Open Space TG has undertaken research using the NPPF, RIBA “City Health Check” and the RBWM “Evidence Base” (eg. the existing Local Plan, Open Space Audit, Landscape Character Assessment, PPG17, etc) along with other Neighbourhood Plans, and in conjunction with the observations and concerns of Windsor residents and businesses expressed through the following:

- Ongoing “Post-It Note Survey” (since 2012) and **preliminary residents’ questionnaires**
- **Public awareness-raising events** such as Farmers’ Markets, exhibitions and workshops
- Open Space **Topic Group meetings, discussions and “Walks”** (WENP/CWNP/WNP)
- **SWOT analyses and area character assessments** (including the development of “Local Lists”)
- **“WNP Vision Consultation”** household and local business survey (Nov 2014 - Jan 2015)

II.ii **Evaluation of this information will lead to a range of open space, environment, countryside and leisure policies and projects to address key issues.**

III. POLICY OR PROJECT “KEY ISSUES” AND CONTENT

1- PRESERVING EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND PROVIDING MORE OPEN SPACE

1.1 **As a minimum requirement, ensure the retention of ALL existing open space already provided under the PPG 17 standard of 4.3 ha/1,000 pop., comprising 2.5 ha of “informal” and 1.8 ha of “formal” open space. (NB: This was used to support previous Local Plan open space policies and, so far as we are aware, has now been used as the basis for the new Borough Local Plan relevant policies.)**

1.2 **Through planning policies and suitably scaled development proposals, and from S106, CIL and other sources, ensure that both the land and the funding to provide it are sought in order to maintain appropriate, high standards. This is necessary to enhance and/or provide more open space which is suitable for the community’s needs.**

1.3 **Prevent overdevelopment from “garden grabbing” and excessive, high-density “brown field infill”.**

1.4 **Ensure that sufficient on-site parking is provided in all new development to meet the needs related to each function of incorporated within the respective proposals.**

1.5 **Where brown field development is permitted, ensure that densities are reasonable and that each development makes an acceptable contribution of associated open space.**

1.6 **While some development may be necessary, protect school playing fields from excessive loss.**

1.7 **Protect the Green Belt from undue or inappropriate development and to ensure that “edge-of-settlement” areas are retained.**

1.8 **Any new development near the flood plain should be sited responsibly.**

1.9 **Protect allotments, hedgerows, verges and woodlands from loss or erosion through development.**

1.10 **Avoid the proliferation of gated developments.**

2- ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

2.1 *Maintain and improve all green spaces appropriately.*

2.2 *Support air, water, terrestrial and soil bio-diversity and SSSIs through positive development choices and processes, and enhance and develop “green corridors” to help sustain bio-diversity.*

2.3 *Protect, support and enhance the natural environment by expanding the overall amount of informal open space.*

2.4 *Enhance and increase the provision of formal open space such as equipped play areas, sports pitches and cycle circuits.*

2.5 *Ensure there are sufficient “green lungs” and “buffer zones” to meet the required levels of air quality, safe drinking water, household water supplies, general drainage including storm drainage, and optimum sanitation.*

3- EXTENDING ACCESS “TO AND THROUGH” OPEN SPACES

3.1 *Improve existing footpaths, cycleways, roads, and parking facilities for cars and cycles in order to provide essential access to and through open spaces.*

3.2 *Cycle parking in “key destinations” such as the Great Park, Windsor Farm Shop and in other car parks and suitable areas.*

3.3 *Improve walking and cycling routes linking both sides of the River Thames.*

3.4 *Facilitate awareness of existence of open spaces and access routes through better signage and the use of QR codes, maps, leaflets, advertisements and other means of promoting their amenity use.*

3.5 *Extend provision of cycle paths eg. Brunel railway viaduct, south side of Winkfield Rd (to Ascot), etc.*

3.6 *Identify and enhance “connectivity” of cycle and pedestrian “circuits” / routes to promote the use of open space.*

3.7 *Integrate the Jubilee Walkway and other schemes into the “Open Space Network” to promote a greater awareness and use of open space.*

4- IMPROVING AND PROMOTING OPEN SPACES AS “DESTINATIONS”

4.1 **Stag Meadow** (Crown Property)

- *Develop an additional cycle path to provide access from Windsor to Stag Meadow, connecting with Winkfield and Ascot.*
- *Improve pathway surfaces to enhance visibility and usability by walkers and cyclists.*
- *Ensure greater visibility for links to the wider cycle path network, eg. Nat'l Route 4, other town centre routes, etc.*

4.2 **Alexandra Gardens and Alma Road Coach Park**

- *Provide improved and more attractive, **better signposting - including maps and QR Codes** - to some of areas of the river, and support the possible development of specific walking and cycling “circuits” / “trails”.*
- *Alma Road Coach Park helps provide very good access for visitors to the town but lacks amenity: configure open space and tree planting to enhance air quality and also improve views from Alexandra Gardens.*

4.3 The riverside area

- *Preserve and enhance the utility and amenity of the area encompassing the train stations, riverside routes, the Home Park and the Thames Path as a key part of the “Windsor Experience”.*
- *Address the need for more informative and attractive signposting to direct pedestrians and cyclists towards interesting, efficient routes.*
- *Ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between access and public safety and security.*

4.4 The Long Walk and Windsor Great Park

- *Expand and improve provision of pedestrian and cycle crossings and traffic islands.*
- *Explore opportunities to link cycling with this area by creating or extending cycle routes / cycle-friendly surfaces.*

4.5 Trinity Wildlife Garden, Trevelyan OS (“Green Pocket Squares”) and urban woodland areas such as Clewer Park, Hemwood Dell and Castle Spinney

- *Ensure that the provision of even very small stretches of grass is expanded throughout the town and that these are properly maintained.*
- *Ensure that designated public garden or woodland sites are managed. These provide important visual and environmental respite from built-up areas and as valuable places for “wild” space supporting essential room for bio-diversity.*

4.6 Local [Equipped] Areas of Play (LAPS / LEAPS) including Bachelors’ Acre, Osborne Road, Vansittart Play Area, Longbourn and Imperial Park

- **CASE STUDY** *Bachelors’ Acre includes the equipped children’s area of play (LEAP) closest to Windsor Town Centre. This provides local and visiting families with a secure and safe play area with equipment suitable for 3-8 year olds, a refreshment stand, toilets, and an interactive water feature. As Windsor is a popular tourist destination for families, this park and its facilities provide a vital amenity which should be enhanced and maintained to a much higher standard of care and, ultimately, promoted in tourist guides and other publicity material. Unfortunately, the current state of the park is disappointing and quite hazardous as there are large, dangerous stepping stones at the base of the balance beams. Mud and deep puddles are also a hazard and are present throughout the park for several months of the year. It is not a safe or sufficiently welcoming place at present for either local or visiting families.*

4.7 Vansittart, Clewer Memorial and Imperial Park Recreation Grounds

- *These are currently being managed and improved through the provision of developer funding to provide excellent facilities. Other new sites must be identified and provided, however, to meet the needs of the growing community.*

4.8 Allotments

- *These continue to be very popular, vital spaces in the community and most are extremely well-used. Some are under pressure due to their proximity to previously developed areas but should be retained. The location of one or two make them less suitable for long-term use and could be used for other purposes. Access is an issue to be considered in relation to any COU. Rents should be at levels which ensure allotments remain affordable to users.*

4.9 Edge of settlement areas

- *These important “buffer” zones (“non-urban” character) are valuable natural environment areas located largely away from buildings and people.*

