

8. URBAN GREENSPACE

PART ONE POLICY

POLICY GRE1 - THE PROTECTION OF URBAN GREENSPACE

THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL REGULATE THE SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION OF ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND OTHER LAND WITH AMENITY VALUE BY PROTECTING A NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES WHICH ARE CLOSE TO WHERE PEOPLE LIVE, LOCATED WITHIN A COMFORTABLE WALKING DISTANCE FROM THEIR HOMES, AND WHICH PROVIDE FOR A RANGE OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN EACH AREA OF THE BOROUGH.

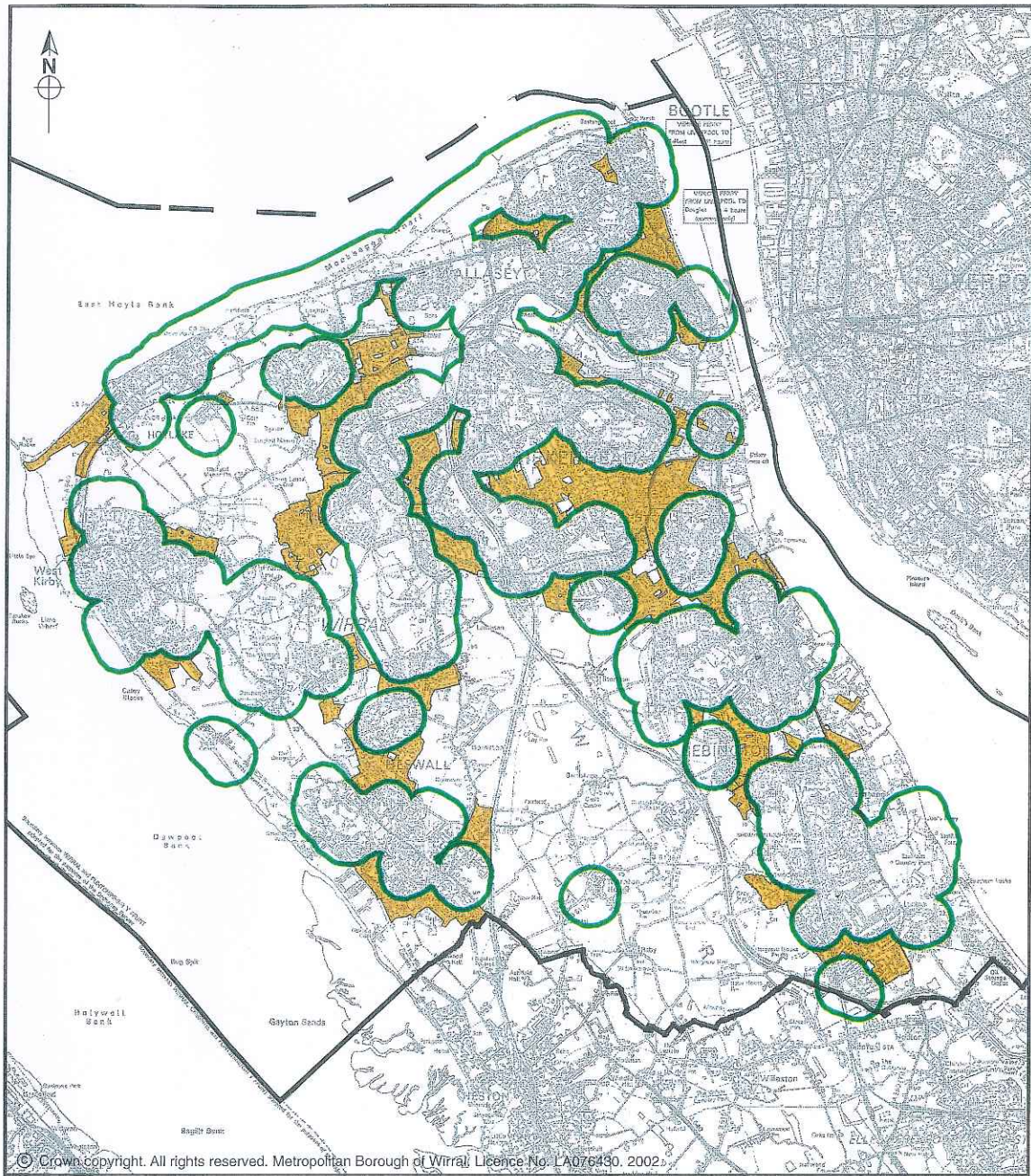
WITHIN THE URBAN AREA THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY WILL IN PARTICULAR PROTECT FROM INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT:

- (i) AREAS OF MATURE PARKLAND;**
- (ii) AREAS SUITABLE TO ACCOMMODATE A RANGE OF FORMAL OR INFORMAL RECREATIONAL PURSUITS, INCLUDING PITCH SPORTS;**
- (iii) LINEAR PARKS AND WALKWAYS GIVING OFF-ROAD ACCESS BY FOOT THROUGH THE URBAN AREA OR LINKING URBAN OPEN SPACES; AND**
- (iv) AREAS OF VISUAL IMPORTANCE TO THE LOCALITY OR WIDER AREA (WITH OR WITHOUT DIRECT PUBLIC ACCESS).**

POLICY GRE1 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.1 The special value of greenspace within the urban area has been increasingly recognised. It has been formally stated in Recommendation R(86)11 of the Council of Europe and is now also reflected within national planning policies. Public consultation has shown it to be of considerable importance to local people. The objective of Policy GRE1 is, therefore, to ensure that the loss of existing greenspace is not permitted unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the local supply of recreational and amenity open space remains adequate. It also provides the framework for more detailed site protection policies found within Part Two of the Plan.
- 8.2 Greenspace can include parks, play areas, playing fields, woodlands, as well as individual trees, hedges, private gardens and other features such as river corridors, road verges, and other smaller amenity areas. Such areas can be of great significance to the character and environment of a neighbourhood, irrespective of their ownership or formal designation as public open space. This significance increases not only in terms of visual amenity but also in terms of the recreational opportunities they may provide.

- 8.3 National policy guidance requires local planning authorities to achieve a reasonable balance between the need to make adequate provision for development and the need to protect land with recreational or amenity value. Policy GRE1, therefore, sets out the general principles that the Council will apply in order to set this balance, and ensure that the community's need for recreational or amenity space is fully taken into account.
- 8.4 The principles contained within Policy GRE1 primarily relate to the amount, distribution and type of greenspace to be protected when considering the pattern of new development. The amount of greenspace is important because the overall supply of space must be adequate to serve the needs of the local population. The distribution of greenspace is important because to be of greatest value such space must be genuinely and easily accessible to local people, especially for children and elderly people. The type of greenspace is important because not all open space is of equal value and because, wherever possible, there should be a variety of different types of greenspace retained within each area of the Borough.
- 8.5 Policy GRE1 also seeks to identify particular features or characteristics which give individual sites a value which would justify their protection from development. Size, visual value, established landscape character and the ability to provide for or accommodate a variety of different recreational pursuits are all important features worthy of retention. So are linear parks and walkways which provide pedestrian linkages throughout the built-up area and which contribute towards a "network" of linked open spaces. Such features are especially important where they combine together in a single site or as part of a linked series of spaces. Once lost they cannot easily be replaced.
- 8.6 National planning policy guidance indicates that land with recreational or amenity value should only be protected from development if it can be demonstrated that there is or would be a deficiency in accessible public open space in the area. No national standard by which to assess deficiency has been prescribed and the Local Planning Authority is required to include the standards it proposes to adopt within the UDP.
- 8.7 The Local Planning Authority will use two quantifiable measures in order to assess the local provision of accessible public open space - a minimum standard for overall supply in order to relate the total amount of land available to the number of people resident within an area, and a network analysis in order to relate the location of available land with its accessibility to local people.
- 8.8 The minimum standard for the supply of accessible public open space is 2.4 hectares for every thousand people and will normally be applied to local areas with a distinct and separate community identity. A local deficiency is



Map 1

Urban Areas Deficient in Accessible Public Open Space

- 400m catchment areas for existing accessible public open spaces (1.5 hectares and above)
- Primarily Residential Areas deficient in accessible public open space

NB: For illustrative purposes only.
Not to scale.

indicated where the total area of accessible public open space available to that community, when compared with the total resident population, falls below this standard.

- 8.9 The network analysis is based upon the principle that no part of the Primarily Residential Area should be further than a comfortable walking distance away from a local park or similar space available for public use. For the purposes of planning policy a comfortable walking distance will be taken to be 400 metres. The basic network is, therefore, defined by drawing 400 metre catchment areas around all accessible public spaces of 1.5 hectares and above. This includes sites within the Green Belt as well as sites within the urban area.
- 8.10 Map 1 outlines the basic network of accessible open space within Wirral and indicates areas of deficiency as those falling outside the catchment of the network. In many cases the basic network may be supplemented by smaller spaces which are intended to serve a more limited catchment area. Such spaces clearly have a secondary role, often as safe local play space for children, which is also worthy of protection. These sites assume an even greater significance where they serve an area otherwise outside the catchment of a local park, but should not be relied upon to provide for the main recreational needs of local residents.
- 8.11 While the implications of both these quantifiable measures will be taken together in assessing overall deficiencies within an area, priority will always be given to maintaining the basic network of accessible public open space.

Policy GR1 - The Protection of Urban Greenspace

On land designated as Urban Greenspace, facilities for visitors, sport or play will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposals would not:

- (i) prejudice the continued use of the site for open air recreation; or**
- (ii) prejudice the visual amenity, landscape character or nature conservation value of the site.**

Development for other purposes on land designated as Urban Greenspace, other than for the re-use of existing buildings, will not be permitted unless alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available.

POLICY GR1 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.12 Policy GRE1 states that the Local Planning Authority will protect accessible public open space from inappropriate development. Policy GR1, therefore, sets out the criteria that will be applied to control development within sites

designated for protection. The objective of Policy GR1 is to ensure that land required to maintain the network of accessible public open space is protected from development which may harm or diminish the continued value of the site for open air recreation.

- 8.13 Policy GR1 does not rule out limited, unobtrusive or small scale developments which are intended to expand, enhance or compliment the recreational use of the site. This would include new facilities for sport and recreation such as sports pavilions and changing rooms, areas for games requiring courts or greens, small car parks, play areas, amenity blocks and other visitor facilities, subject to the intrinsic values of the site as open space being retained. Amongst the intrinsic values to be specifically protected are importance for wildlife, visual amenity and landscape character.
- 8.14 Other development will normally be excluded. The only exceptions are where adequate compensatory or replacement provision is to be made and where new uses are to be sought for an existing building which is itself worthy of preservation. Such uses should, however, remain compatible with the overall objectives of Urban Greenspace designation.

Proposal GR2 - Land Designated as Urban Greenspace

The following sites, shown on the Proposals Map, are designated as Urban Greenspace. Development within them will only be permitted subject to Policy GR1:

1. Hamilton Square Gardens
2. Woodlands Community Park
3. Gallaghers Hill playground
4. Upper Bidston Village Park
5. Tollemache Recreation Ground
6. Gautby Road Recreation Ground
7. Ilchester Square play area
8. Compton Road open space
9. Lennox Lane open space
10. Land to the north of Boundary Road, Bidston
11. Land at Bidston Hall and Bidston Hill, north of Vyner Road North
12. Land at Bidston Hill, south of Vyner Road North
13. Bidston Community Woodland
14. Flaybrick Cemetery
15. Beechwood Drive open space
16. Fender Way open space
17. Holm Lane Recreation Ground and the Arno
18. Solly Recreation Ground
19. Shavington Avenue open space
20. Davenham Avenue open space
21. Audlem Avenue open space
22. Davenham Close open space
23. Farndon Way open space
24. The Grove, Fairview Road
25. Walker Park, Prenton
26. Prenton Hall Road playground
27. War Memorial, Osmaston Road

28. Meadow Crescent, Woodchurch
29. Melford Drive, open space
30. Birkenhead Park
31. Bidston Court Gardens and Vyner Road South open space
32. Wirral Ladies Golf Course
33. Bentham Close open space, Noctorum
34. Olivia Close open space, Noctorum
35. Sorrel Close open space, Noctorum
36. Land at Noctorum Way, Noctorum
37. Victoria Park
38. Cheviot Road Woodland
39. Mersey Park
40. Conway Playing Fields, Knowsley Road
41. Delta Road, Rock Park
42. Former Royal Rock Hotel, Rock Park
43. Grenville Road open space
44. Howson Street/ New Chester Road open space
45. Bedford Place open space
46. Rock Park Esplanade open space
47. Rock Park linear open space
48. The Oval Sports Centre playing fields, Higher Bebington
Recreation Ground and Bebington Cemetery
49. Kings Lane Playing Fields and Dawson allotments
50. Land at Prospect Hill
51. Benty Hey Woodland
52. Mayer Park, Bebington
53. Brookhurst Park, The Chase
54. Marfords Park
55. Dibbins Hey Woodland
56. Wirral Gardens
57. Stanton Road open space
58. Bebington Town Hall frontage
59. Harding Avenue play area
60. Far Field Pond and Woodland, Brimstage Road
61. Dibbinview Grove Woodland, Poulton-Spital
62. Dibbins Green Woodland
63. Colmore Avenue Woodland, Poulton-Spital
64. Sealy Close Woodland, Poulton-Spital
65. Inley Close Woodland, Poulton-Spital
66. Weymoor Green and linear links, Poulton-Spital
67. Poulton Road open space, Poulton-Spital
68. Delves Avenue/ Donne Avenue open space, Poulton-Spital
69. Radford Avenue open space, Poulton-Spital
70. Brome Green, Poulton-Spital
71. Woodslea Park/Dibbinsdale
72. New Ferry Park
73. Bromborough Recreation Ground
74. Shorefields and Mayfields, New Ferry
75. Port Causeway play area
76. Onslow Park
77. Boundary Road bowling green, Port Sunlight
78. Windy Bank open space, Port Sunlight
79. Lodge Lane open space, Port Sunlight
80. Winsor Street open space, Port Sunlight
81. Owen Street open space, Port Sunlight
82. The Ginnel, Port Sunlight
83. The Dell, Port Sunlight
84. Bolton Road bowling green, Port Sunlight
85. Church Drive open space, Port Sunlight
86. The Diamond, Port Sunlight
87. Bradmoor Recreation Ground and allotments

88. The Glen, Kinglass Road
89. Bromborough Road Woodland
90. Land north of Bromborough Road, Bromborough
91. Plymyard playing fields, east of Bridle Road, and Plymyard Cemetery
92. Plymyard playing fields, west of Bridle Road
93. Acre Lane playing fields
94. Allport Common
95. Eastham Rake play area
96. Heygarth Road open space
97. Kelsall Avenue open space and play area
98. Eastham Rake open space
99. Eastham Country Park extension
100. The Breck Recreation Ground
101. Urmson Road play area
102. Mosslands Drive open space, allotments and Wallacre playing fields
103. Burford Avenue Wood
104. Wallacre playground
105. Tower Grounds
106. Vale Park
107. Marine Park
108. Quarry Recreation Ground
109. Earliston Gardens and Wallasey Cemetery
110. St Georges Park
111. The Delph open space
112. Kings Parade, east of Portland Street
113. Kings Parade Recreation Ground
114. Kings Parade, east of Sea Road
115. Kings Parade, west of Sea Road
116. Kings Parade, east of Sandcliffe Road
117. Kings Parade, west of Sandcliffe Road
118. Kings Parade, north of the Minature Golf Course
119. Kings Parade Miniature Golf Course and Derby Pool Picnic Area
120. Harrison Park and Warren Park Golf Course
121. Elleray Park
122. Belvidere Recreation Ground
123. Cross Lane open space, including Wallasey RUFC, Ashville AFC and School Lane playing fields
124. Captains Pit
125. Flynn's Piece
126. St Hilary's Gardens
127. Folly Lane open space
128. Bayswater Gardens
129. Central Park
130. Rycroft playing fields
131. Oakdale Recreation Ground
132. Limekiln Lane Community Park
133. Citrine Park
134. North Seacombe Recreation Ground, Wallasey Town Hall gardens and frontage
135. Seacombe Ferry open space
136. Scottsfield walkway
137. Magazine Promenade plantations
138. Maddock Recreation Ground
139. Egremont Promenade open spaces
140. Sandon Promenade open space
141. Sandon Road Recreation Ground
142. Bridle Road play area
143. Luke Street play area
144. Whiteheath Park, Leasowe

145. Lombard Road/ Yew Tree Green open space, Moreton
146. Birket Avenue open space, Leasowe
147. The Stakes, Leasowe
148. Knutsford Green, Moreton
149. Pasture Road open space, Moreton
150. Lingham Park
151. Paulsfield Drive Woodland
152. Saughall Grange Recreation Ground
153. Berwick Close open space
154. Oak Close open space
155. Carr House Lane open space
156. Arrowe Brook linear park, Moreton
157. Upton Meadow and Arrowe Brook linear park, Brookdale Avenue
158. Arrowe Brook linear park, Girtrell Avenue
159. Arrowe Brook linear park, Whitelands Meadow
160. Arrowe Brook linear park, Sandpiper Close
161. Overchurch Park
162. Warwick Hey Park
163. Norwich Drive Woodlands
164. Weybourne Close Woodland
165. Saughall Massie Road Woods
166. Woodpecker Close open space
167. Headington Road Wood
168. Salacre Crescent Woods
169. Kingfisher Way open space
170. Nuffield Close Woodland
171. Wolferton Close open space
172. Grange Hill, West Kirby
173. Ashton Park and Wirral Country Park - Wirral Way
174. Queens Park, Meols
175. Meols Lower Green
176. Sandlea Park, West Kirby
177. Victoria Gardens, West Kirby
178. Carr Lane Recreation Ground, Hoylake
179. Roman Road open space, Meols
180. Dovepoint Common, Meols
181. Meols Parade Gardens
182. The Grove playground, Hoylake
183. Goose Green, Meols
184. Monkey Wood/ Shaws Drive open space, Meols
185. Meols Parade open space
186. Forest Road open space, Meols
187. Hoylake Promenade open space
188. Orrysdale Road open space, West Kirby
189. Barn Hey Crescent, Meols
190. Coronation Park, Greasby
191. Greenbank Community Park and Cemetery, West Kirby
192. Newton Common, West Kirby
193. Broadway open space, Greasby
194. Hambledon Drive open space, Greasby
195. Hazelwood, Greasby
196. Greasby Road open space
197. Circular Drive open space, Greasby
198. Bromsgrove Road open space and linear link, Greasby
199. Mere Park Road open space, Greasby
200. Thorns Drive Wood and linear links, Greasby
201. Thorns Drive linear open space, Greasby
202. Oakdale Drive open space, Greasby
203. Newbould Crescent open space, West Kirby
204. Grange Farm Crescent open space, West Kirby
205. Ridgewood Park, Pensby

- 206. Irby Recreation Ground
- 207. Caldy Hill
- 208. Coronation Gardens, West Kirby
- 209. Devonshire Road playing field, West Kirby
- 210. Heathbank Avenue open space, Irby
- 211. Whitfield Common
- 212. Poll Hill
- 213. Puddy Dale
- 214. Heswall Dales and land around the former Cleaver Hospital
- 215. The Beacons
- 216. Heswall Pinewoods
- 217. Dawstone Park
- 218. Telegraph Road open space
- 219. Hill House Grounds
- 220. Feather Lane Woodland

PROPOSAL GR2 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.15 Policy GRE1 provides for the protection of a network of accessible public open space throughout the Borough. While the nature of that protection is set out within Policy GR1, Proposal GR2 identifies the individual sites to which this protection will be applied. The boundaries of each site are shown on the Proposals Map.
- 8.16 The protection given to Proposal GR2 sites is based upon the role the site plays within the network of accessible public open space, its contribution to the visual amenity and character of the urban area, and its contribution towards meeting the standards for the provision of space outlined below Policy GRE1. The Proposal GR2 list, therefore, comprises those sites which are considered essential to protect in order to ensure that the network and supply of accessible public open space is not compromised.
- 8.17 While accessible public open spaces falling outside the urban area also form an essential part of the network, they are not included within the Proposal GR2 list because of the additional protection they derive from national Green Belt controls.

Policy GR3 - The Protection of Allotments

Where allotments within the urban area, not listed under Proposal GR2, become surplus to requirements, appropriate development will be permitted unless:

- (i) the site would have significant potential to meet a shortfall in the network of accessible public open space; or
- (ii) the site would have significant potential to meet a shortfall in land available for sports pitches.

In these circumstances the Local Planning Authority will require that an appropriate area of land is retained for open air recreation.

POLICY GR3 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.18 Wirral has approximately 52 hectares of land given over to allotments. This is just below the level suggested by the Thorpe Committee of 0.2 hectares for every thousand people.
- 8.19 In practice, the viability of allotments is closely related to the level of local demand, ground conditions, the adequacy of on-site facilities and security considerations. Where these all militate against the site there is little sense in seeking to perpetuate its use. However, a good allotment site, where local demand can be demonstrated and ground conditions can be proved to be good should normally merit protection.
- 8.20 Most allotment sites have statutory protection under legislation outside the Town and Country Planning Acts and all but 7 hectares are classed as statutory or permanent allotments. This effectively ensures that they continue in use. Statutory allotments cannot be lost without the consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment and unless plot holders can be re-accommodated on another statutory allotment site.
- 8.21 Allotments do not provide accessible public open space in the fullest sense because of their restricted access and so are not automatically protected under Proposal GR2. Nevertheless, when no longer required as allotments, they offer potential to alleviate shortfalls in the network of accessible public open space and in the supply of land for sports pitches, especially where other available open land is limited. In such circumstances the Local Planning Authority will be concerned to ensure that their potential contribution as public open space is fully taken into account, before allowing their release for other uses.

Proposal GR4 - Allotments to be Protected From Development

The following sites within the urban area will be protected from development, subject to Policy GR3:

1. Beaconsfield allotments, New Ferry
2. Bebington Road allotments, Egerton
3. Bedford Avenue allotments, Egerton
4. Buckingham Avenue allotments, Liscard
5. Carrodus allotments, Bidston
6. Church Road allotments, Tranmere
7. Fairview allotments, Oxtou
8. Harris allotments, Egerton
9. Hill Road allotments, Claughton
10. Ilford Avenue allotments, Seacombe
11. Lansdowne Place allotments, Bidston
12. Manor Lane allotments, Rock Ferry
13. Manor Drive allotments, Upton
14. Molyneux allotments, Egerton
15. Mountwood allotments, Egerton

16. Plymyard allotments, Eastham
17. Salacre allotments, Upton
18. Shakeshaft allotments, Bidston
19. Sumner Road allotments, Bidston
20. Teehey allotments, Bebington
21. Belvidere allotments, Wallasey
22. Tollemache Road allotments, Claughton
23. Upton Road allotments, Claughton
24. Wingate Road allotments, Eastham

PROPOSAL GR4 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.22 Policy GR3 provides for allotments not identified within Proposal GR2 to be protected from development where they can alleviate a local shortfall in accessible public open space or land available as playing fields. This is of most importance where allotments are located within areas where available open land is scarce.
- 8.23 All the sites listed fall within the urban area and many are known to fall within areas of recreational deficiency. While they do not provide for the recreational needs of the general public in the fullest sense they are an important local resource and often contribute to the greenspace of the urban environment. They are therefore allocated within Proposal GR4 for protection subject to Policy GR3.

Policy GR5 - Landscaping and New Development

In order to secure the protection and enhancement of visual amenity the Local Planning Authority will require applicants to submit full landscaping proposals before full planning permission is granted. Proposals should:

- (i) include a clear specification of landscaping proposals indicating the species mix, the location, height and density of new planting, as well as areas of new ground modelling or other land features proposed;
- (ii) be appropriate in terms of the nature and location of the development proposed, the visual prominence of the site, the potential visual impact of the development and the character of the surrounding area;
- (iii) provide for new planting and for the protection, replacement or enhancement of existing features such as ponds, trees, bushes, shrubs or hedges including, where relevant, appropriate boundary treatment and provision for the protection of wildlife; and
- (iv) take full account of the effect of proposals on visibility at access points, the effect of local climatic influences and the potential for misuse or erosion which may affect the appropriateness of landscaping proposals.

Layouts that would leave landscaped areas which are not easily supervised or which would prejudice the supervision of other sensitive areas of the site will be resisted.

Planning permission will be subject to conditions relating to the protection of existing features specified for retention, the timing and aftercare of new planting including provision for the replacement of stolen, damaged, diseased or dead plants or trees throughout the period until newly planted stock is established and capable of normal unaided growth.

POLICY GR5 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.24 Landscaping is one of five matters that are to be specifically addressed when considering applications for planning permission and the Local Planning Authority can require appropriate landscaping as a condition of planning consent. The Local Planning Authority also has a legal duty to provide for improvements to the physical environment and to provide for the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the area. Policy GR5, therefore, sets out the considerations that the Local Planning Authority will take into account in the exercise of these powers.
- 8.25 Landscaping is particularly important in relation to regulating the visual impact of new development and requires careful assessment on a site by site basis. Policy GR5, therefore, requires detailed landscaping proposals to be submitted as part of all applications for full permission. This will enable landscaping requirements to be properly considered together with other matters relating to the siting, layout and external appearance of the development, and will prevent landscaping considerations being deferred to some time after consent has been issued.
- 8.26 Policy GR5 also sets out the main considerations that the Local Planning Authority will take into account in assessing the adequacy of landscaping proposals. These primarily relate to the individual circumstances of the site, the location and the nature of the development proposed, and the protection of any characteristic greenspace features already present on the site or within the locality. Special attention will, therefore, be given to landscaping where the site is particularly prominent, where the development would be particularly intrusive or where it is important in order to preserve the character of the site or the area in which it is located.
- 8.27 Special attention will also be given where landscaping is required as a "buffer" to protect the amenity of adjacent property or to protect other features of importance such as water courses, nature conservation sites, wildlife corridors, Conservation Areas, archaeological sites or distinctive landscapes. Control over the species mix within proposals will also be necessary in the vicinity of areas with value for nature conservation, especially where they may introduce invasive or exotic species which may pose a threat to the continued conservation value of the site. Special care will also be applied where

landscaping needs to be more robust to prevent misuse or erosion. Fencing or other suitable boundary treatments must be appropriate to the setting of the area.

- 8.28 Further guidance in relation to landscaping is contained within Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 16. The Merseyside Police Architectural Liaison Officer can also offer advice to ensure that landscaping contributes towards an environment which discourages crime.

Policy GR6 - Greenspace Within New Family Housing Development

Proposals for new family housing development, defined as houses with two or more bedrooms, will be required to provide greenspace at an overall level of 60 square metres for every new dwelling constructed and will be required within this overall requirement, to make specific provision for safe children's play.

Greenspace provided under Policy GR6 should be accessible public open space, clearly set out for the purpose of visual amenity and local recreation and should:

- (i) relate well to the existing network of accessible public open space within the locality;
- (ii) provide for the retention or creation of linear links throughout the area;
- (iii) make provision for the planting of trees, and for the retention and enhancement of existing landscape features such as ponds, trees, and woodlands;
- (iv) incorporate a larger area of open space suitable for active recreational use; and
- (v) be designed and located in order to minimise the potential disturbance to neighbouring property.

The requirements of Policy GR6 will not be held to apply to proposals:

- (a) comprising 35 dwellings or less, unless the proposal forms part of a wider residential development area which would in total exceed 35 new dwellings; or
- (b) where the dwellings constructed would fall within 400 metres of an existing accessible public open space of 1.5 hectares or above.

POLICY GR6 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.28 National policy guidance requires the provision of open space to be properly co-ordinated with new development and that additional provision required to serve the needs of new residents is reasonably related in scale and location

to the development proposed. National guidance also requires the UDP to indicate the level of open space provision that will be expected within new housing areas. Policy GR6, therefore, sets out the standards that the Local Planning Authority will normally apply in order to regulate and standardise the provision of open space within new housing development.

- 8.30 Policy GR6 requires new accessible public open space to be provided at a rate of 60 square metres for every new dwelling constructed. This is directly derived from the Council's standard for the local provision of accessible public open space set out below Policy GRE1, and assumes an average household size of 2.5 people within each dwelling. Exceptional circumstances must be demonstrated in order to depart from this standard.
- 8.31 The space required by Policy GR6 should normally be provided within the layout of the development proposed and in accordance with Government guidance, new family housing developments must also provide suitable areas for children's play. Policy GR6 accepts this provision to be made as part of the overall provision of new open space. Considerations specifically related to the provision of children's play are contained within Policy RE11, which can be found in Section 9 of the UDP.
- 8.32 The Local Planning Authority recognises that it may not be appropriate or desirable to apply this standard to schemes below thirty-five units, in terms of obtaining a meaningful provision of useable open space. Policy GR6 will, therefore, only normally apply to development areas where more than thirty-five dwellings are to be constructed. The Policy GR6 standard will, however, be taken to apply cumulatively.
- 8.33 Where a number of smaller individual proposals would total more than thirty-five units, the Local Planning Authority will apply the Policy GR6 standard to each proposal on a pro-rata basis, as if the area to be developed were to be considered as a whole. Where appropriate, a similar procedure will also be encouraged where larger projects combine to form a single development area, especially where space of greater recreational potential or an enhanced network of linked spaces can be secured. Schemes below the thirty-five unit threshold will, however, continue to be subject to Policy GR5 with regard to the provision of landscaping within new developments.
- 8.34 The justification for requiring new greenspace to be provided only applies where the existing distribution of accessible public open space is inadequate to provide for the legitimate recreational needs of new residents. The local standard for the provision of such space is set out below Policy GRE1. Policy GR6 will only, therefore, be applied where the new dwellings proposed would clearly not be capable of being adequately served by an existing local open space.

Policy GR7 - Trees and New Development

In assessing the protection to be given to trees on development sites the Local Planning Authority will consider the general health, structure, size and life expectancy of trees, their visual value within the locality and their value for nature conservation and will require that buildings, structures and hard surface areas are sited in order to:

- (i) substantially preserve the wooded character of the site or of the surrounding area;
- (ii) provide for the protection of trees of greatest visual or wildlife value and other vigorous healthy trees;
- (iii) ensure that trees to be retained have adequate space in order to prevent damage to their canopy or root structures during construction and to allow for the future growth of canopy and roots to normal mature sizes;
- (iv) prevent the removal of trees by occupiers of the development to obtain reasonable sunlight to habitable rooms, secure an open unshaded garden area, or to remove perceived dangers to life and property; and
- (v) protect trees on adjacent land which may be affected by the development proposed;

Applications should include detailed plans showing the location of individual trees to be affected by the development proposed, together with information related to trunk girth, species mix, height, canopy spread and general health and condition. Trees to be felled should be clearly indicated.

Where development involving the loss of trees is to be permitted, the Local Planning Authority will, as a condition of planning consent, require replacement trees to be planted elsewhere on the site where this is required in order to protect or preserve local amenity.

Planning conditions will include provision for the future maintenance of newly planted stock, including the replacement of failures, until the newly planted stock is established and capable of normal unaided growth; and during the construction period, measures related to the protection of trees to be retained.

Work to trees, including felling, removal, thinning and crown lifting should be completed prior to construction commencing in accordance with a scheme of work agreed in advance with the Local Planning Authority.

POLICY GR7 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 8.35 Trees form a prominent part of the Wirral landscape and comprise an essential feature in the special character of many of Wirral's residential areas. Indeed, even where tree cover is not a distinctive characteristic of a neighbourhood, a single large tree or group of trees can have a significant visual impact within the surrounding area.

- 8.36 Policy GR7 forms part of the Local Planning Authority's wider responsibility to conserve the natural beauty of the area and to provide for physical improvements to the environment. It also reflects the statutory duty to, wherever appropriate, specifically provide for the preservation and planting of trees when granting planning consent. Policy GR7 does not, however, provide a blanket protection for all trees. Instead, it provides for the circumstances of each site to be considered in terms of its importance within the surrounding area. The objective of Policy GR7 is to ensure that issues related to the health, size, visual significance and the wildlife value of trees are properly assessed before development is permitted or refused.
- 8.37 In accordance with Policy GR7, trees or woodlands possessing significant visual or wildlife value will normally be retained. However, where it proves necessary to permit the loss of trees, Policy GR7 also requires applicants to undertake replacement planting, especially in order to preserve the wooded character of a site or neighbourhood or in order to protect the amenity of adjacent property.
- 8.38 The protection, planting and subsequent preservation of trees will normally form the subject of conditions attached to planning consent. These conditions will include provision for the future maintenance of newly planted stock until newly planted trees are properly established and measures to prevent root damage to existing trees from trenches for foundations, cables and other utilities.
- 8.39 It is not, however, only the development process itself that can lead to the loss of trees. Trees planted too close to buildings or site layouts which are too cramped to provide for the normal growth of trees to maturity can often lead to pressure for their subsequent removal. Policy GR7, therefore, also provides that the siting and layout of new development and new planting is carefully regulated in order to prevent the need to remove trees once the development is complete and occupied.
- 8.40 While Policy GR7 will mainly apply to trees affected by development proposals located within the urban area, it will also be held to apply to applications for development within the Green Belt. Indeed, within the Green Belt it will often be more important where the need to preserve rural character and protect the wider landscape from the impact of new development is a priority.
- 8.41 In addition to the powers and duties outlined above, the Local Planning Authority also has the power to issue Tree Preservation Orders where it is "expedient in the interests of amenity". Such an Order provides additional protection to selected trees and woodlands where their removal or cutting would have a significant impact on the environment. While Policy GR7 does not represent a definitive strategy for Tree Preservation Orders, the criteria related to health, size, visual value and nature conservation value will form

primary considerations in the issue of new or revised Orders.

- 8.42 Further advice in relation to Tree Preservation Orders and the presentation of proposals affecting trees is contained within Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 17.