



Glasgow City Council

Sustainability and the Environment Policy Development Committee

Report by Executive Director of Development and Regeneration Services

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PROGRESS REPORT ON OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

Purpose of Report:

To provide Committee with a progress report on the work being undertaken to develop new open space standards for the City.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee notes:

- the need to bring forward refreshed open space standards in support of the Open Space Strategy and City Development Plan;
- the work undertaken to date to deliver open space standards

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Committee will recall that the work programme presented on 27 August indicated that a progress report on the development of Open Space standards would be brought forward at this meeting. The Report outlines the work undertaken, to date, to bring forward refreshed open space standards for the City.
- 1.2 Standards would define how much open space people in Glasgow should have access to, how far they should have to walk to access it and the quality of that open space. In using the standards, account will have to be taken of the local context. Standards are important in determining current and future open space requirements in an area:
 - by establishing a benchmark to help determine whether the extent and quality of existing provision is appropriate; and
 - by helping guide how new development should provide for open space, whether this be through additional provision or an uplift in the quality of, or better access to, existing open space.
- 1.3 Glasgow's current standards (as set out in policy ENV 2 of City Plan 2), require to be revised to help deliver this objective. The Scottish Government's emphasis on a design-led approach to open space (see para 2.1) means that the new standards, and the outcomes they are intended to deliver, are likely to be quite different from those in City Plan 2.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 2014 states that "Local Development Plans should seek to enhance existing, and promote the creation of new, green infrastructure ... through a design-led approach, applying standards which facilitate appropriate provision, addressing deficits or surpluses within the local context. The standards delivered through a design-led approach should result in a proposal that is appropriate to place, including connections to other green infrastructure assets."
- 2.2 The City's current open space standards are set out in City Plan 2 policy ENV 2: Open Space and Public Realm Provision. At the City Plan 2 Inquiry, the Reporter noted that the standards should be based on an Open Space audit and quality assessment, as required by Planning Advice Note (PAN) 65. As a result, she inserted text into ENV 2, which stated that the standards were "interim requirements subject to review, through the Council's open space strategy".
- 2.3 PAN 65 indicates that an audit that examines both the quantity and quality of the open space resource should be undertaken and that the audit information should "form the basis of an assessment of current and future needs".
- 2.4 Different types of open space require to be considered separately:

- Spaces most suited to a **supply-led approach** include urban parks and gardens, civic spaces, woodland and other natural spaces, where the existing size and distribution of spaces needs to be assessed vis-à-vis their current and future role. Councils should protect these spaces and, where feasible, enhance and extend them as part of a multifunctional green network. This is done through existing City Plan 2 policy ENV 1 and is similarly addressed in the Proposed City Development Plan policy CDP 6: Green Belt and Green Network.
- A **demand-led approach** is suited to those spaces for which a quantifiable demand can be identified, for example, sports facilities and functional spaces such as allotments. Discussions have been held with the LES (allotments strategy) and Glasgow Life (sports pitch strategy) to help determine demand for these types of uses.
- Where the need for a type of space is broadly the same everywhere (e.g. amenity open space associated with residential development), a **standards-based approach** is appropriate. This is important when attempting to predict future community needs in a new development, for example. PAN 65 notes that standards should be carefully tailored to the circumstances of the area and a single standard may not be suitable for all communities within the same local authority.

2.5 PAN 65 indicates that standards should contain three elements:

- **quantity** – an amount of space per house unit or head of population;
- **quality** – a benchmark against which quality can be measured; and
- **accessibility** – distance thresholds for open space. Use of Network Analyst (see para 3.7) allows us to take account of barriers and of actual travel distances rather than straight-line distance.

2.6 Work has, therefore concentrated on gathering the information necessary to inform standards which reflect these considerations.

3 QUANTITY, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

3.1 A **quantitative** audit of open space for Glasgow exists in the form of the Open Space Map (<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=14723&p=0>). The audit identifies around 50,000 individual elements (Ordnance Survey “polygons”) of open space in the City (excluding private gardens), ranging from large public parks and gardens to small areas of amenity space associated with transport (e.g. roadside verges). The categories of open space used are based on those set out in PAN 65.

- 3.2 Identifying and categorising the open spaces was a significant undertaking, and one which highlighted the need for updates to be undertaken on a regular basis (consideration is being given to how best to do this in an efficient and effective manner). The Open Space Map is intended to be a “live” map, one which will evolve as new areas of open space are created and as others are utilised for other purposes – the masterplanning of a new development might, for example, propose a redistribution of open spaces within that area to provide a better “fit” with the needs of the area’s population, and with biodiversity and water management considerations, etc.
- 3.3 More recently, efforts have focussed on recording the **quality** of the City’s open spaces and how accessible they are. Given the number of individual open space elements identified in the audit, a decision was taken to concentrate a quality assessment (QA) on those spaces considered most readily accessible/usable by the public. For the purposes of the QA, these were considered to be the PAN 65 categories of:
- public parks and gardens (more than 100 were surveyed);
 - amenity open space (>0.3 ha) associated with housing (over 400); and
 - children’s play space areas (including multi-use games areas) (over 600).
- 3.4 A simple system for recording the quality of open space was required which could be used by any officer with some basic training. A scoring system for each category was, therefore, developed and agreed by LES, DRS and the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership. Each reflected the types of characteristics considered to affect the quality of that type of open space.
- 3.5 For information, the pro-forma used to assess quality of public parks and gardens is attached as Appendix 1. It identifies obvious considerations, such as litter, dog fouling, vandalism and general maintenance, but also includes considerations relating to, e.g., biodiversity, reflecting their multi-functional (or potentially multi-functional) nature. GIS has been used to record both the sites which have been assessed and the site scores (set out in the GIS attributes table).
- 3.6 Concurrently with the QA, information was collected on points of **access** (gates, paths, entranceways, open access, etc) to each of the surveyed open spaces. This information has also been uploaded to GIS.
- 3.7 Network Analyst software is now being used to help highlight which areas of the City are well served, and which less well so, in terms of access to open space. The software was designed to analyse car journeys and so work is underway to edit the Ordnance Survey Road Network to enable it to be used to analyse pedestrian journeys, by introducing pedestrian links (such as underpasses, routes through parks, etc). In conjunction with the access point information, it will help to provide a detailed illustration of which homes have good access to the most publicly usable areas of open space. It will also help illustrate where open space quality needs to be improved.

- 3.8 Using this information, and working with Greenspace Scotland, work is underway to determine what the refreshed open space standards should be for the City. In Glasgow, in addition to considering *accessibility*, *quality* and *quantity*, it is considered that standards will require to reflect population density and urban form. The City has, therefore, been divided into three zones: the City Centre; the Inner Urban Area; and the Outer Urban Area (Map 1), with a view to different standards being developed for each. Within this context, it may be necessary to make further refinements – e.g. to reflect a higher density of development in and around town centres in the inner and outer urban areas.

The Accessibility Standard

- 3.9 The accessibility standard is intended to ensure that everyone will live within an easy walk (usually specified at 5 minutes) of a publicly usable open space of 0.3 ha or more. A 5 minute walk approximates to a 400m distance and 0.3 ha is considered to represent a site of sufficient size for informal play. Using Network Analyst, work is underway to test whether 400m seems a reasonable distance on which to base the accessibility standard in the Glasgow context, in terms of what is achievable.
- 3.10 The testing is being undertaken using the access data for those publicly usable open spaces which have been QA'd (see para 3.3). However, Greenspace Scotland recognises that there are other publicly usable types of open space (which have not yet been assessed in terms of quality or accessibility), including sites recorded on the Open Space Map as playing fields; green corridors; natural/semi natural greenspace; allotments & community growing spaces; and civic spaces.
- 3.11 Many of these sites will help “plug the gaps” identified, assuming they are, or can be made more, publicly usable and accessible (some playing fields, for example, will not currently be). There will be a longer term need to quality assess and record access points to these categories of open space.
- 3.12 Once an accessibility standard for each of the three “zones” of the City has been identified and agreed, applying this standard will help identify those areas where accessibility is insufficient and would need to be improved, either by the provision of new spaces or enhanced accessibility to existing ones.

The Quality Standard

- 3.13 In basic terms, it is expected that all publicly usable open spaces (whether new or existing) should be of ‘good’ quality. Applying the quality standard to existing open spaces would help identify where investment may be needed to improve spaces to a good standard. Where new spaces are created, the standard would require them to be of an appropriate quality, including arrangements to ensure the quality is sustained over time.

- 3.14 The quality assessment can be used to illustrate the quality of sites relative to those other sites in that category (e.g. parks and gardens). Whilst this is useful in determining what might be relative priorities for investment in existing spaces, a more pro-active approach is required to secure an appropriate quality in new development. This will need to be readily understood and implemented by both the development industry and by development management if it is to be useful in influencing development applications. Further thought requires to be given to the best approach.
- 3.15 The quality standards should also include a requirement that new open space should contribute to the green infrastructure of the city. This would help ensure that new spaces are designed into new development from the outset, as part of a design-led approach.

The Quantity Standard

- 3.16 The Quantity standard is an agreed quantity of publicly usable open space per household (or head of population) against which individual parts of the City can be compared – for example, “all parts of the City should have X hectares of publicly usable open space per 1000 people”.
- 3.17 Greenspace Scotland suggest that the figure must be realistic at a local level and may vary for different types of urban environment. Applying the standard to the existing open space resource allows the identification of areas of surplus (where it may be possible to use some of the lower quality spaces in another way, potentially even for non-open space uses where this would not impact on the wider green network and could help fund an uplift in quality elsewhere in the vicinity) and of deficit (where the creation of publicly usable open space would be a priority). Different standards are also likely to be required for different functions, such as play areas for children and teenagers or informal recreation areas.
- 3.18 In relation to new development, where a development is proposed in an area that has less publicly usable open space than the quantity standard, then the developer will be required to provide open space, equivalent to the quantity standard, to meet the needs of that development (whilst also meeting the accessibility and quality standards). Where the development is in an area which has more publicly usable open space than the quantity standard, then it would only be necessary for the developer to ensure that the accessibility and quality standards are met.
- 3.19 The Open Space Map data is being used to inform this process. The average hectareage of publicly usable (see para 3.10) open space per 1000 people has been calculated for the City Centre, Inner Urban Area and Outer Urban Area:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| City Centre: | 1.4 ha per 1000 population |
| Inner Urban Area: | 2.6 ha per 1000 population |
| Outer Urban Area: | 8.6 ha per 1000 population |

- 3.20 These figures will be used as part of an iterative approach to agreeing new standards, which should also consider the other, multifunctional roles we expect open space to play (see para 4.3). Comparison to the provision in parts of the City which “feel” as if they work well in terms of their open space provision, will also be important. Further discussion on which parts of the City are best to use (examples from both the inner and outer urban areas will be required) will be necessary, but these considerations should help inform the development of quantity standards for the City.

4 LOCAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 In addition to the quality, accessibility and quantity considerations specified in PAN 65, Greenspace Scotland indicate that standards should also include a local context, which allows for local flexibility in interpreting the standard. This would involve the use of the quality, accessibility and quantity standards in helping outline key local priorities to improve access to, and the quality of, open space.
- 4.2 It is proposed that local contexts be produced for 15 sub-city areas: 10 in the outer urban area; 4 in the inner urban area; and the City Centre (Map 1). These local contexts will provide a more place-specific, targeted approach to the delivery of open space to support new development compared to the use of standards alone. Their production will be prioritised to accord with, for example, other pieces of work being undertaken which would both help inform their content and be informed by their aspirations, including the Strategic and Local Development Frameworks identified in the City Development Plan. They will help inform the planning process by, for example:
- identifying where new development would be best served by improving access to open space, or the quality of existing spaces, rather than through the provision of new open space;
 - identifying where new open space should be provided;
 - identifying where existing or new open space requires to be more multi-functional and what types of functions it should support; and
 - setting the use of standards within the context of a placemaking approach to the development of the City.
- 4.3 The local contexts will require input from a wide variety of colleagues and from the public, but they have the potential to pull together, and provide focus to, a range of other work being undertaken by the Council and its partners, in a way which provides a significant degree of added value, including:

- **Placemaking** – which is at the heart of the City Development Plan’s approach to the development of the City;
- **Water Management** – reflecting the opportunities provided for delivering new, or enhancing existing, open space by the need to deliver sustainable water management across the City.
- **Active Travel** – as part of a co-ordinated approach to the provision of open space and green infrastructure, open space networks should help facilitate travel by active modes such as on foot or by bike.
- **Biodiversity, Habitats and Ecosystems** – new and improved open spaces can help enhance, link and expand habitat networks, providing opportunities for key species and wider ecosystems to thrive and adapt to climate change.
- **Maintenance Regimes** – local contexts can help inform where there may be opportunities to utilise surplus open spaces for other open space uses (e.g. biodiversity, water management etc) which may have less intense maintenance requirements.
- **Other inputs** – local contexts will require to be informed by users of open space and will require to take cognisance of, for example, updates to the allotments and sports pitch strategies.

4.4 The standards will be published, and consulted on, as supplementary guidance to the City Development Plan.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken on the development of open space standards for the City. A quantitative audit has been undertaken, and the most publicly usable of the spaces identified in it have been assessed for their quality and accessibility. This data is now being used, together with other considerations, to inform the development of a set of standards for the City based on accessibility, quality and quantity.

5.2 The standards are of importance not only in relation to the Open Space Strategy, but also to the implementation of other key Council strategies, including the Local Development Plan, Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Plan, Cycling Action Plan and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, as part of a wider approach to the delivery of integrated green infrastructure.

5.3 The standards will need to include a series of “local contexts”, which will, when produced, provide a more place-specific, targeted approach to the distribution and use of open space. They will provide an opportunity to co-ordinate a range of related work being undertaken by the Council and its partners in a way which provides a significant degree of added value. This will require input from across the Council and its ALEOs. The standards and local contexts will be used to support better informed decision making for local communities and for the Council and its partners.

5 POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

Financial: The costs of producing the standards will be met through existing budgets. There is the potential to deliver best value in co-ordinating the work of various Council services.

Legal: Scottish Planning Policy, and associated advice, sets out an expectation that local authorities will prepare open space standards for their area.

Personnel: N/A

Procurement: N/A

Council Strategic Plan: Standards support the Strategic Plan in:

Supporting **economic growth**, through setting a context for the creation of better places and improving city infrastructure (including flood management and active travel infrastructure)

Supporting a **world class city** by: making effective use of our natural and cultural assets; and building strong and resilient neighbourhoods.

Supporting a **sustainable city**, by helping deliver a reduced carbon footprint and increased use of green transport.

Supporting a **city that looks after its vulnerable people**, by reducing health inequalities.

Supporting a **learning city**, by providing a green network which facilitates learning through play.

Equality Impacts:

EQIA carried out: Not at this stage

Outcome:

Sustainability Impacts:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Environmental:</i> | The standards will help ensure that the Council's approach to the function, distribution and quality of open space is considered as part of a wider approach to the creation of good places, helping provide a wide range of environmental benefits. |
| <i>Social:</i> | The standards will help ensure that the Council's approach to the function, distribution and quality of open space is considered as part of a wider approach to the creation of good places, helping provide a wide range of social benefits. |
| <i>Economic:</i> | The standards will help ensure that the Council's approach to the function, distribution and quality of open space is considered as part of a wider approach to the creation of good places, helping provide a wide range of economic benefits. |

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee notes:

- the need to bring forward refreshed open space standards in support of the Open Space Strategy and Local Development Plan;
- the work undertaken to date to deliver open space standards

APPENDIX 1 – PARKS AND GARDENS QUALITY ASSESSMENT PRO-FORMA

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--------------|
| Parks and Gardens | | 6.1 | Season, | | |
| Site Name : | | | Date | | |
| City, District or Local Park | | | Weather | | |
| Site Conditions | | | % of site flooded or wet - | Aspect- | |
| | | | | | |
| Quality Assessment Category & criteria | | Good - 3 | Acceptable - 2 | Poor - 1 | Score |
| 1 | Access relative to function | | | | |
| a | Entrances/access points Disability & Disabled Act compliant | Entrance points, inviting, clean, welcoming, well maintained and accessible to all. Disabled parking bays close to entrance. Good wheelchair access throughout, information boards accessible to all | Apparent as an entrance in average condition. Limited disabled parking bays. Some wheelchair access and information re site accessibility | Entrance points not accessible to all, poorly maintained, possibly inappropriately located. No disabled parking bays, wheelchair access, or information boards accessible to all | |
| b | Path surfaces Disability & Disabled Act compliant | Paths in very good condition - level, edges well defined, debris and weed free | Paths generally in good condition and the right place, minor maintenance needed re vegetation etc | Paths generally in poor condition, maintenance needed, desire lines indicate route issues | |
| c | path network supports Parks and Gardens function | Paths provided to and within the site accessing all facilities, amenity and recreational elements for all users. Some crossing of roads required but no safety issues. | Paths provided to and within the site accessing all facilities, and most amenity and recreational elements, some crossing of roads required possible safety issues. | Paths do not provide access for all to facilities, amenity and recreational elements. Safety issues re pedestrian, wheelchair, cycling access | |
| | | | | sub total | |

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--|
| 2 | Physical layout relative to function | | | | |
| a | visual/design balance between elements present | Good balance between amenity and recreational elements creating a sense of harmony | Adequate balance between the uses resulting in a positive experience | An imbalance between the uses, resulting in an unsatisfactory experience | |
| b | appropriate to terrain | Planting & vegetation well laid out, successfully reflecting and enhancing slopes, views, vistas etc | Planting & vegetation competently laid out to reflect and enhance slopes, views, vistas etc | Planting & vegetation fail to reflect and enhance slopes, views, vistas etc | |
| c | supports function of the open space | Planting & vegetation take full account of orientation of sun, slope and prevailing wind | Planting & vegetation take adequate account of orientation of sun, slope and prevailing wind | Planting & vegetation take little account of orientation of sun, slope and prevailing wind | |
| | | | | sub total | |
| 3 | Physical infrastructure relative to function | | | | |
| a | in good condition | All physical infrastructure, paths, seats fencing etc is new, well maintained or undamaged | Most physical infrastructure, paths, seats fencing etc is maintained to a good standard | Most physical infrastructure, paths, seats fencing etc is poorly maintained or damaged | |
| b | usable by all sections of community | There are numerous or large flat areas accessible by path or firm enough underfoot for buggy's etc in dry weather | There are several flat areas of reasonable size accessible by path or firm enough for buggy's etc in dry weather | There are few if any flat areas of acceptable size accessible by path or firm enough for buggy's etc in dry weather | |
| c | range of buildings and/or infrastructure | The physical infrastructure paths, bins, seats depots, cafes, etc fully reflect the nature and scale of the park | The physical infrastructure paths, bins, seats depots, cafes, etc adequately reflect the nature and scale of the park | The physical infrastructure paths, bins, seats depots, cafes, etc poorly reflect the nature and scale of the park | |
| | | | | sub total | |

| | | | | | |
|----------|--|---|--|--|--|
| 4 | Visual & physical experience relative to function | | | | |
| a | quality of maintenance | evidence of regular and appropriate maintenance to a high standard in all areas | evidence of appropriate maintenance to a reasonable standard in key areas | evidence of minimal or poor quality maintenance in most areas | |
| b | perception of safety | No areas of poor visibility or entrapment points | Some areas of poor visibility and entrapment points | Lots of remote areas of poor visibility and remote entrapment points with no escape options | |
| c | open and welcoming/inviting | The high visual amenity associated with the views, vistas, sense of enclosure etc. framed by the planting and landscaping of the park elements creates a sense of wellbeing | The visual amenity associated with the views, vistas, sense of enclosure etc. framed by the planting and landscaping of the park elements creates a sense of comfort | The poor visual amenity associated with the views, vistas, sense of enclosure etc. framed by the planting and landscaping of the park elements creates a sense of discomfort | |
| | | | | sub total | |
| 5 | Management and maintenance | | | | |
| a | soft landscaped areas | All areas are well maintained for the time of year, grass is cut, weeds are controlled & trees and shrubs planted, pruned etc | Evidence of appropriate maintenance for key areas, most grass is cut, most trees, shrubs and weeds are controlled etc | Little evidence of appropriate regular maintenance, signs of neglect etc. | |
| b | control of litter and dog fouling | No fouling/litter | Some limited evidence of fouling/litter, but doesn't detract from the overall usage of the park | Lots of fouling/litter seriously deterring the usage of the site. | |
| c | control of vandalism and graffiti | No vandalism/graffiti | Some vandalism/graffiti which may reduce quality of the experience | Extensive vandalism/graffiti may deter usage | |
| | | | | sub total | |

| | | | | | |
|----------|---|---|---|---|--|
| 6 | Biodiversity contribution to green network | | | | |
| a | diversity of planting which supports wildlife by providing food and shelter | A wide range of berry and nectar rich planting of differing species, height and age structure. High proportion of native species. | A moderate range of planting diversity with moderate proportion of native species | A poor range of planting diversity providing little food or shelter | |
| b | range and quality of habitat types present | A mosaic of different habitats types e.g. broadleaved woodland, species rich grassland, wetland and marshland, which are appropriately managed. | Presence of some habitat diversity but limited and subject to limited management | Little or no habitat diversity | |
| c | habitats present are likely to be part of a wider network | Obviously within reach of other adjacent habitats allowing species movement either by stepping stones (e.g. gardens, smaller habitat patches, street vegetation) or by physical connections (e.g. water courses, hedgerows) | Possibility of species movement via the routes above but not well connected. | Space sits in isolation and is unlikely to be part of a local habitat network | |
| | | | | sub total | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | Total | |

Map 1

