



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Place Overview Committee 15 th November 2018

<u>Item</u>
<u>Public</u>

Future proposals for green infrastructure planning

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Summary

All residential developments are required to contribute to community infrastructure needs such as public open space. Current public open space provision is set out within planning policy for each development to provide 30m² of public open space per bed space provided. Each planning application is required to meet this policy, however in reality, only developments of ten houses or more are assessed to provide the 30m² provision, or to make a financial contribution towards other local public open space sites.

The outcome of this is that developments are providing public open spaces that have no connectivity to other open space provision and are not informed about the type of green infrastructure required by the local community within the area. This is because each residential development planning application is considered on the development boundary only and does not take account of the wider environment and any linkages to other types of open spaces.

To address this issue, the council, as part of the Local Plan Review, is developing a green infrastructure mapping system that will assess local community green space needs on a wider catchment area, rather than just on individual development boundaries. The intention, once the agreed land allocations have been confirmed through the Local Plan Review, is to master plan the green infrastructure needs for each area and where it should be located to ensure all new residents have access to green open space. This will provide developers with clearer guidance as to what type, amount, quality and connectivity of open space is required within or around their proposed sites that will meet future open space standards.

Background

The unitary authority of Shropshire Council came into being in 2009 and as such became the planning authority. Before this planning matters were undertaken by five

borough and district councils and Shropshire County Council. With regards to open space provision each borough and district council had its own local plan policies and standards set out below, to meet the then planning policy guidance note PPG17.

Previous open space standards

	Oswestry	North Shropshire	Shrewsbury & Atcham	Bridgnorth	South Shropshire
Supplementary Planning Documents	None	None	Oct 2000	June 2007	April 2005
Thresholds	10+	Implied no threshold	Implied 5+	5+	no threshold
Amenity / Informal open space	30-40m ² per dwelling (3 person) (=10-13m ² per person)	0.8 ha / 1,000 pop (=8m ² per person)		5m ² per person	0.2 ha/ 1,000 pop (=2m ² per person)
Equipped play	5m ² per dwelling minimum (=1.7m ² per person)	15m ² per family dwelling (= 5m ² per person)		3m ² per person	
Outdoor sport / playing fields	40m ² per dwelling (=13.3m ² per person)	1.6 ha / 1,000 pop (= 16m ² per person)		16m ² per person	
Open space (general)			2.43 ha/1,000 pop		2.4 ha/ 1,000 incl 0.2 above (=24m ² per person)
Standardised m ² per person	25-28m²	29m²	24.3m²	24m²	24m²

Prior to unitary status a comprehensive local assessment of all types of open space provision was conducted by consultants in 2008 and 2009, on behalf of all the Shropshire councils. These “PPG17 studies” provided an up-to-date and robust evidence base for determining local needs and setting locally derived standards. These replace the previous standards, variously set in the five local plans, detailed above.

The 2009 report was subsequently used by Shropshire Council to inform their Open Space Interim Planning Guidance (2012). However, in the period between 2009 and 2012 Shropshire Council needed to have a standard policy for public open space. As Bridgnorth District Council had the most recent open space interim planning guidance, this was adopted into Shropshire Council’s public open space interim planning guidance (IPG) 2010. The purpose of the interim planning guidance is to allow developers to predict as accurately as possible the likely contributions they will be asked to make through planning obligations, and therefore to anticipate the financial implications for development projects. Developer contributions would therefore be sought for new provision of recreational public open space, but where appropriate may be used ‘off site’ to help remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of existing provision. The developer funding contribution for open space, sport and recreation provision (PPG17 typologies), if not provided direct by the developer, are derived from Bridgnorth District Council interim planning guidance calculations from 2007 and have been updated each year based on the annual Retail Price Index increase.

In 2012 Shropshire Council adopted a new core strategy for future developments and moved to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) tariff contribution rather than a negotiated S106. CIL is a charge on new development to help fund supporting infrastructure across Shropshire. The rates within the schedule were informed by an economic viability assessment and consultation with both the general public and the development industry. Within Shropshire, CIL applies to all development that involves:

- The formation of one or more new dwellings, (including holiday lets), either through conversion or new build, regardless of size (unless it is ‘affordable housing’); or
- The establishment of new residential floorspace (including extensions and replacements) of 100m² or above.

The CIL fund provides developers with more certainty as to the amount of contribution required based on a cost per meter. To reflect these changes the public open space interim planning guidance was updated in 2012 and provided a quantity standard of 30m² per bed space, which combined and rounded PPG17 typologies in order to provide a single quantity standard, which was considered to be more practical to apply for all residential developments and more reflective of the multi-functional nature of many open spaces.

2015 SAMdev DPD plan set out proposals for the use of land and policies to guide future development to help deliver the vision and objectives of the Core Strategy. For the first time POS requirements were set out in policy and not just as guidance. Under Shropshire Council's SAMDev Plan and MD2 policy requirement, all residential developments will provide adequate open space, set at a minimum standard of 30m² per person (equivalent to 3ha per 1,000 population). For residential developments, the number of future occupiers will be based on a standard of one person per bedroom. The types of open space provided needs to be relevant to the development and its locality and should take guidance from the Place Plans. The ongoing needs for access to manage open space must be provided for and arrangements must be in place to ensure that the open space will be maintained in perpetuity whether by the occupiers, a private company, a community organisation, the local town or parish council, or by Shropshire Council.

If the developer doesn't meet the policy of 30m² per bed space, then in certain circumstances (i.e. existing public open space is within the accessible time standard) an offsite contribution can be negotiated and secured by entering into a S106 agreement. The funding calculator is based the average space of a dwelling (69m²) and the average occupancy (2.3) and how many times this goes into the public open space that is not provided.

In 2016-17 Shropshire Council commissioned Red Kite Network Ltd Consultants to undertake a review of the [counties open space and recreational needs](#). The primary purpose of the report was to provide an updated set of data by Place Plan area that would follow and provide continuity to the findings of previous open space study conducted in 2009. In doing so it has also provided an opportunity to assess how well the scope of 2009 methodology, and the standards informed by it were relevant in 2017.

The review concluded that there is a need to place a much greater emphasis on how open spaces form part of a larger functional network of green infrastructure. Existing standards only consider the proportion of open space within a development and are not designed to assess how well the type and placement of open space fits into a wider green infrastructure network. At present the standards are only linked to residential developments, but in future a wider approach that includes equivalent standards for commercial/industrial developments is likely to be required. A well planned green infrastructure network addresses multiple issues, including physical and mental health, transport and air quality, climate change and biodiversity.

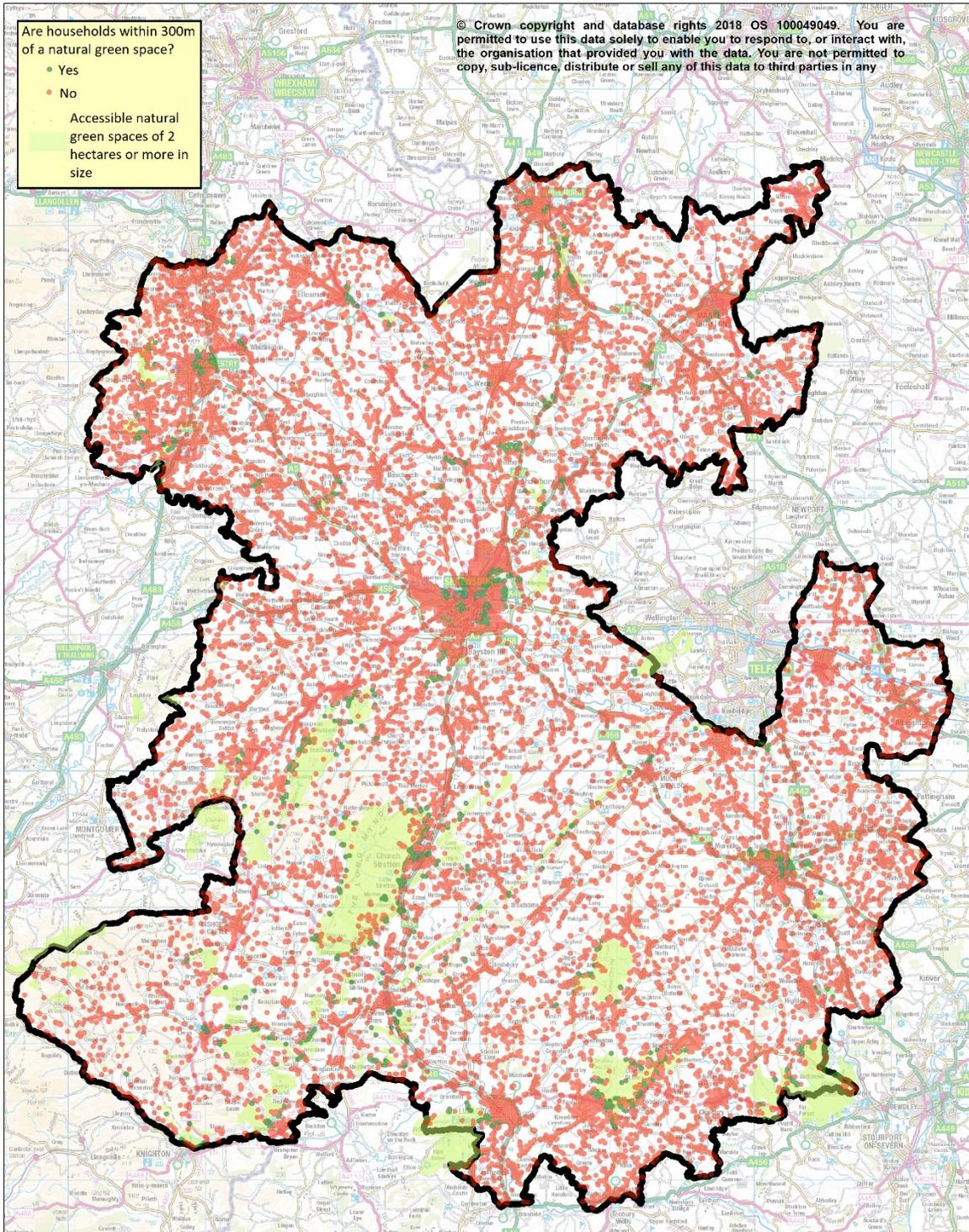
Assessing and planning the overall quality, accessibility, and connectivity of a wider network of open spaces requires a new analytical approach using a different set of criteria to that which informed the Shropshire Open Space Needs Assessment. To this end, the Council are currently conducting a spatial analysis of Accessible Green

Spaces (AGS) in the county and developing a green infrastructure mapping database. The object of this work is to map every formalised accessible green space (including natural spaces, recreation and amenity sites, and parks) over 1.5 hectares in size, including all of the access points for each open space, and then to produce a detailed map showing which households are within the catchment area served by each greenspace, based on 300m walking distance. The output of this work is a map covering every household in the county, revealing in detail where there are gaps in open space provision.

This approach is based on Natural England's Access to Natural Green Space (ANG) Standard, which provides guidance to local authorities to consider the provision of natural areas as part of a balanced policy to ensure that local communities have access to an appropriate mix of greenspaces providing for a range of recreational needs. It recommends that provision should be made of at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

- no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace;
- there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of home;
- there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km;
- there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.

The Council's green infrastructure mapping database has mapped every household and measured it against the natural green space accessibility standards above. The results of mapping both the Natural England access standards, and the broader categories of the access to natural green space survey, show that although Shropshire is a rural county, there are still many places that do not meet the required standards.

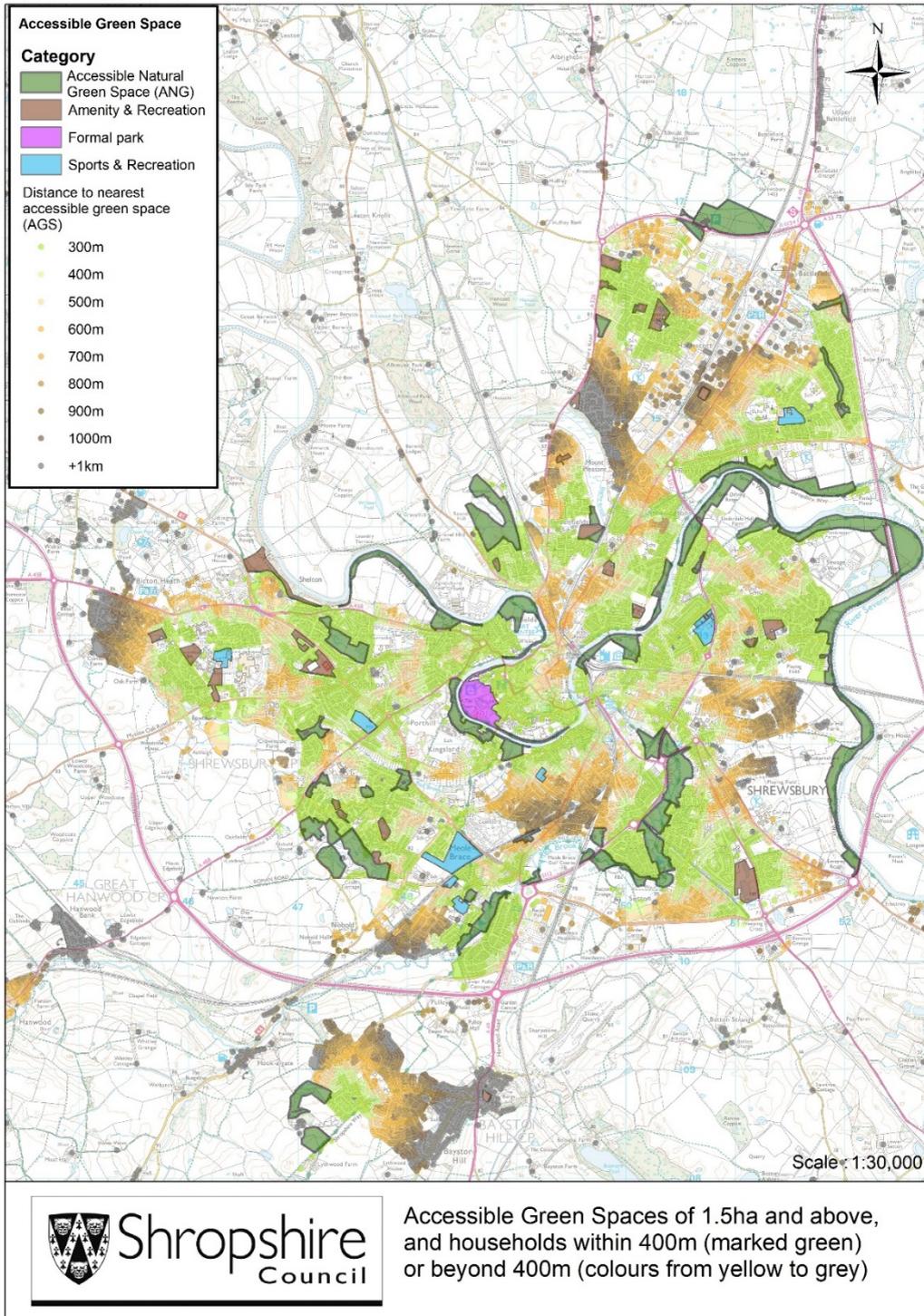


Households within 300m of an area of accessible natural greenspace

Scale : 1:250,000

The green infrastructure mapping database will enable the Council to master plan future developments, so that it can identify the amount of greenspace required and the best location that provides the best access for all new residents.

The green infrastructure mapping system will be presented at the November 2018 Place Overview Committee meeting.



It is anticipated that Central Government will be bring forward a set of national standards for open space, as described in their 25 Year Environment Plan, with the purpose of making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.

These aspirations are included as priorities in the new Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy 2018-28, namely to

- create new supplementary planning guidance to enhance the quality, quantity and connectivity of greenspace in new developments and
- increase the amount of accessible natural greenspace from 1.66ha/ 1,000 population to 2.0ha.

Targets are also included within the Corporate Plan to:

- reduce the number of households with **very high** demand for accessible natural greenspace to 4% [from 5%] and
- reduce the number of households with demand for accessible natural greenspace to 40% [from 42%].

Conclusion

The findings of the Red Kite report and the green infrastructure mapping system as a spatial analysis tool of open space provision, will inform and shape future green infrastructure master plans improving future standards, quality and accessibility of public accessible open space. This evidence base will feed into the Local Plan Review being conducted by the Council so that developers have clearer guidance as to what type, amount, quality and connectivity of open space is required within or around their proposed sites, to meet open space policy requirements.

These aspirations have been reflected in the Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy 2018-28, with priorities that include:

- Adopting a master planning approach through the revised Local Plan.
- Conducting master planning of six market towns to plan countryside access and greenspace provision in response to new housing and employment land development.
- Developing Supplementary Planning Guidance that encourages access, worthwhile greenspace and outdoor activities in new developments.