

INFORMATION BULLETIN



Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 28th June 2021

Land Adoptions Policy

Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities.

The [Babergh and Mid Suffolk Open Space Assessment \(2019\)](#) identifies the following types of open space and defines standards for their provision.

- **Allotments** – Places where people grow their own produce and plants. (These are normally controlled via an Allotment Association or similar)
- **Amenity Green Space** – Normally open areas of grass greater in size than 0.15 hectares, fully accessible to the general for informal recreation and activity, but not formally laid out for sport or managed
- **Natural Green Space** - Normally publicly accessible areas such as meadows, woodlands and copses with natural characteristics and wildlife value
- **Parks and Recreation Grounds** – normally bringing together parks and gardens and outdoor sports facilities with multi-functional uses for both formal and informal recreation purposes i.e. Belle Vue Park in Sudbury
- **Play Space (Children and Youth)** – areas suitable for play for children (up to 12 years), youth (13 years plus). Normally with fixed play equipment to suit the age ranges i.e. Swings, slides, climbing frames, skateparks, Multi-use Games areas (MUGAs)

In addition, areas such as school sites, church yards and cemeteries, amenity green spaces (less than 0.15 hectares) and sports club spaces have been identified but no standards set as they are not generally fully accessible to the public i.e. They have an element of control on their use and/or have no recreational value.

There are no legal requirements for Councils to adopt open space arising as part of new development and there is a developing industry presumption towards alternative management arrangements for such areas. Many developers are already implementing options such as employing local land management companies. These alternative options are proving more viable for the developer than paying the substantial commuted sums required by local authorities to adopt and manage the areas. However, they are unpopular with residents, particularly where such arrangements are not communicated as part of the purchase process.

From a public realm perspective there are significant opportunities associated with Council management of publicly accessible open space. For example, a management companies' short mown grassland under Council management can become parkland which still provides open green space, but also provides space for trees, wildflowers and habitat creation.

Process to agree nature of provision and future management.

At the initial stages of the planning process the Council will consider developer proposals for open space within the context of the overall development, including whether they adequately meet the local standards (taking into account surpluses or deficits in existing provision) as included within Local Plan policies at a Parish level.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out policies to guide and facilitate these aspirations being achieved. The adoption policy needs to define Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils principles throughout this process and should clearly outline:

- The criteria by which the Councils decide to adopt, manage and maintain any new open space.
- The procedure for calculating appropriate commuted sums and duration of maintenance agreement.

- Where the Councils decide not to adopt, the hierarchy of offering the open space to other groups for management and the associated commuted sum and maintenance contribution.
- A process for temporary adoption by the Council for a set period which provides time for a local Town, Parish Council, or community group to become suitably able to adopt the land and management responsibility.

Next Steps:

28 th June	Debate the topic at Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee O&S Committee identify individual members to form Task and Finish Group
July to September	Task and finish group of members, supported by officers formulate draft Land Adoptions Policy
14 th October MSDC 18 th October BDC	Draft policy returned to Overview and Scrutiny for recommendations
6 th December	Draft policy presented to Cabinets for formal agreements
January - May 2022	Assets and Public Realm Officers work with Planning team to create Supplementary Planning Document from Adoptions Policy to support delivery of new Joint Local Plan.

Sara Cameron – Corporate Manager, Strategic Property, Assets and Investments

Will Burchnell – Corporate Manager, Public Realm