



South Wiltshire Core Strategy: Green infrastructure in the context of development templates.

Introduction

In our response to the South Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document, Natural England raised a number of concerns with respect to green infrastructure in the context of development templates. While a number of these have been resolved to the satisfaction of Natural England and Wiltshire Council, we have one outstanding concern.

South Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document includes Appendix A: Development templates for strategic growth sites. The development templates have been written in the absence of a Green Infrastructure SPD, and any formal consideration of any access to natural greenspace standards. Consequently Natural England is concerned that as a result, there is the possibility that the absence of these standards in the development templates may prejudice the meeting of these standards at master planning stage.

This paper sets out what we feel should be added to each development template, and the rationale for this.

Background

Green infrastructure is widely regarded as an essential infrastructure requirement of new developments. This has been recognised in South Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Submission Document, as agreed in our statement of common ground. An important element of green infrastructure (and perhaps the most constraining to developers) is the provision of accessible natural greenspace. It is particularly important that this element of green infrastructure is included in the development templates as it has the potential to affect both the quantity of development possible within the site, and the viability of the site.

Natural England has produced a set of access to natural greenspace standards. These are supported by a well developed evidence base¹, and have been adopted by a wide range of local authorities. In

¹ <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/places/greenspace/greenspacestandards.aspx>.

the absence of any local access to natural greenspace standard², we suggest that these should be applied to strategic developments in South Wiltshire, until such time as any local standards are adopted.

The standards consist of 5 elements:

1. No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of accessible natural green space of at least 2ha in size;
2. There should be at least one 20ha accessible natural green space within 2km from home;
3. There should be one 100ha accessible natural green space site within 5km;
4. There should be one 500ha accessible natural green space site within 10km;
5. At least 1ha of statutory Local Nature reserve should be provided per 1000 population.

Where a strategic development, by virtue of its location, does not meet these standards, we feel it reasonable that the development should provide the first two elements of the standards. It may be appropriate for the developments to contribute towards the meeting of the other elements of this standard, but we are not proposing that this should be detailed in the development templates.

We have analysed all the strategic housing sites against these standards, and as a result suggest the following is added to the Green Infrastructure subheading of the Essential Infrastructure Requirements of the development templates:

Hampton Park

Essential infrastructure requirements:

- A significant country park that will be handed to the local community in perpetuity.

Rationale:

- A significant proportion (about half) of the new development will be more than 300m from 2ha of accessible natural green space (according to the current planning application). However, given the 50ha country park provided as part of the current planning application, we suggest waiving this 300m standard.

Fugglestone Red

Essential infrastructure requirements:

- Quality accessible natural green space provision of over 2ha within 300m of all dwellings.
- Contribution to a new >20ha quality accessible natural green space site within 2km of this site

² We note that policy R2 of the Salisbury Local Plan (*New residential development will be required to make provision for recreational open space (comprising facilities for communal outdoor sport and children's play) in accordance with a standard of 2.43 hectares per 1000 population. Additional amenity open space (including landscaped areas, public gardens and roadside verges) will be sought as appropriate*) has been retained, but this pertains to open space rather than accessible natural greenspace.

Rationale:

- There are no 2ha ANGS (Accessible Natural Greenspace) sites within 300m of the site. Depending on site layout, this element of the standard may be able to be provided by one 2ha site on site, and an adjoining 20 ha site.
- There are no >20ha ANGS sites within 2km of this site. Some of the site is within 2km of Old Sarum as the crow flies, but much is not, and the route to Old Sarum as travelled is greater than 2km. This could be provided in association with the UK Land Forces Head Quarters, Wilton site on land between these two sites.

Land at The Maltings and Central Car Park**Essential infrastructure requirements:**

- >2ha of quality accessible natural green space base around and including existing watercourses.

Rationale:

- There are no 2ha ANGS sites within 300m of the site.
- The new country park at Hampton Park (approximately a 50ha ANGS site) is within 2km of the site (as the crow flies), is considerably larger than the ANGS standard, and impracticable to provide anything closer. There may be need a to look at improving access links between this site and the new country park, but this should not form part of the development template.

Churchfields and the Engine Sheds, Salisbury**Essential infrastructure requirements:**

- Maintain and expand quality accessible natural green space along full length of river bank.
- Provide a pedestrian and possibly cycle river crossing.

Rationale:

- Maintain and expand quality accessible natural green space along full length of river bank will provide >2ha ANGS sites within 300m of most or all dwellings on site.
- The proposed broken bridges nature reserve, together with the on-site provision, together with Middle Street Meadows, when connected by the new crossing would provide a >20ha ANGS site within 2km of all dwellings on site. Note, this is conditional on the setting up of the Broken Bridges Nature reserve. Other options for provision would need to be explored if this land is not secured.

UK Land Forces Head Quarters, Wilton**Essential infrastructure requirements:**

- Onsite provision of a ≥2ha quality accessible natural green space site.

- A new >20ha quality accessible natural green space site within 2km of this site (possibly in association with the Fugglestone Red development).

Rationale:

- There is no 2ha ANGS sites within 300m of the site, therefore need to provide this. It may be difficult to provide a 2ha site for the southern element of the site. Given the existing site layout, and benefits to the existing residents of Wilton, a 1 to 2ha site at the south of the development, coupled with a 20 ha site which runs to the edge of the site would satisfy this requirement.
- There is no >20ha accessible natural green space site within 2km of the development. Assume this would be located on ground between this site and the Fugglestone Red development. This could be provided in association with the Fugglestone Red site on land between these two sites.

Land South of Netherhampton Road, Netherhampton

Essential infrastructure requirements:

- Onsite provision of at least one >2ha quality accessible natural green space site to ensure all homes are within 300m of such as site.

Rationale:

- No 2ha ANGS sites within 300m of the site. Number of sites will depend on site layout.
- The proposed broken bridges nature reserve, together with the on-site provision together with middle street meadows, when connected by the new crossing would provide a >20ha ANGS site within 2km of all dwellings on site. Note, this is conditional on the setting up of the Broken Bridges Nature reserve. Other options for provision would need to be explored if this land is not secured.

Longhedge, Old Sarum, Salisbury

- Onsite provision of two >2ha quality accessible natural green spaces.

Rationale:

- No 2ha ANGS sites within 300m of the site, therefore need to provide this. Unlikely that one 2ha site can provide this, given the site is 1100 m long. Two sites will also assist in reducing access deficit of the existing development to the South.
- Two 20ha ANGS sites within 2km of the site. (Old Sarum and Castle Hill proposed country park). Enhancements to make these more accessible may be needed.

King's Gate, Amesbury

Essential infrastructure requirements:

- Onsite provision of three >2ha quality accessible natural green spaces.
- Contribution to the provision of a >20 ha quality accessible natural green space site within 2km of the development.

Rationale:

- There are no 2ha ANGS sites within 300m of the site. Current masterplan shows a circa 10 ha site in the SW, a >2ha site in the SE, and a likely >2ha site in the NW. While this would not allow all new housing to meet the standard, most would, and with a 10 ha site provided, the strict requirement for all housing to meet this target could be waived.
- There is no >20ha quality accessible natural green space site within 2km of the development. Although the current masterplan shows there is considerable greenspace provision on site, (probably over 20ha) much of it is likely to not be of low quality (thin strips along distributor road or A345) or natural (sports pitches). We therefore conclude that this would fail to provide >20ha quality accessible natural green space site within 2km of the development. Exactly how this target could be met would be for discussion.