



PLAN/2018/0337  
Planning CPO Statement  
Open Space Justification  
June 2019

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Sheerwater Regeneration

V1

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## Planning Clarification Report

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared as a summary and justification of the proposed development in terms of the changes to the open space areas within the Sheerwater red line boundary. It predominately relates to planning permission PLAN/2018/0337 granted on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

### **2 Existing Position**

- 2.1 The redevelopment of Sheerwater involves the re-organisation of the open space in the Estate, with the objective to improve the quality of the spaces within the Estate and the proximity of open spaces to all residents of the Estate.

- 2.2 Sheerwater currently has the following range of open spaces:

#### Playing Fields

- 2.3 Sheerwater has a large open playing field situated within the northern part of the Estate, which is bounded by the canal to the north and west, an athletics track to the east and existing residential development to the south.
- 2.4 The existing open space provision within Sheerwater consists of the Sheerwater Recreation Ground and a series of incidental amenity greenspaces are spread throughout the area. In terms of usage, the recreation ground consists of cut amenity grass, a play area, multi-use games area (MUGA), cricket nets and skate park/BMX track. The recreation ground is not formally set out as playing pitches. The existing recreation ground is situated at the north of the estate, with resulting poor accessibility to the majority of the existing homes. It is also poorly overlooked with few residential areas adjacent.
- 2.5 The athletics track is not accessible to the public as it has been rented out to Woking Athletics Club. Sheerwater Football Club plays on the existing adult football pitch in the centre of the athletics track.
- 2.6 Sheerwater is comparatively low lying and the lowest part are the playing fields next to the canal. The low lying nature of the land means that the recreation ground has historically been very prone to waterlogging due to the high water table. The playing fields are most commonly water logged in the winter, when potential team sport usage for football, rugby and other activities would be high. These constraints therefore means that this space is unsuitable for its purpose. These waterlogging issues may stem from the historic Sheerwater lake on the land.
- 2.7 Prior to the approval of the previous masterplan PLAN/2015/1260, low overhead power lines crossed the school playing fields and the Sheerwater Recreation Ground. These have been put underground recently to facilitate redevelopment of the area.
- 2.8 Also included within the range of open spaces in Sheerwater are the playing fields of the Bishop David Brown Secondary School which provide provision for two junior pitches and two 5-a-side pitches and an artificial cricket square. Bishop David Brown Secondary School does not use its pitches in inclement weather and there are no competitive games played on the school facilities outside of school use. Woking Town Football Club uses the school facilities for training purposes only.

#### Play Area Characteristics

- 2.9 The play area is focused on teenagers and does not currently cater for all ages despite being the only formal play facility within the application site and the wider regeneration area.

#### Incidental amenity greenspaces

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2.10 Incidental amenity greenspaces within the regeneration area are generally between areas of housing or on the edge of streets. Whilst some of these spaces are reasonably generous in size, the recreation value they offer to the local community is limited as they largely consist of cut amenity grass and tree planting.

2.11 The following table sets out the existing and proposed publically accessible open space:

Existing Publicly Accessible Open Space	Sub-Total	Total
Parks and gardens, including Sheerwater Open Space	3.763ha	5.237ha
Provision for children & teenagers	0.394ha	
Outdoor sports facilities	1.080ha	
(Note: The above figures represent the Sheerwater Recreation Ground and incidental amenity greenspace within the regeneration area. It excludes 'natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland' 'restricted outdoor sports facilities' 'school and education facilities'.)		
Proposed Publicly Accessible Open Space	Sub-Total	Total
Parks and gardens	4.090ha	6.246ha
Provision for children & teenagers	0.482ha	
Outdoor sports facilities	1.674ha	
(Note: the above figures exclude 'natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland', 'restricted outdoor sports facilities' and 'indoor sports facilities')		

### 3 New Development - Characteristics

3.1 The new development approved under permission 2019/0337 will contain the following open spaces and recreational facilities, which have been developed in close consultation with local residents and WBC Officers:

- 4.090 ha of parks and gardens (informal open space).
- A new Floodlit Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA);
- A Skate/BMX Park;
- 1.85 ha of natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland; and

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3.2 In addition to replacing the existing outdoor facilities there will be;

- A new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) equipped mainly for older children, but with play opportunities for younger children as well;
- Three Locally Equipped Areas Of Play (LEAPS) designed for children who are beginning to go out and play independently (4 - 8 years of age);
- Seven Local Areas of Play (LAPS)/ doorstep Play primarily for children up to the age of six.

3.3 The 2015 planning permission include the following outdoor sports facilities:

- 3G football pitch (floodlit with seating) to cater for FA National League Step 5 requirements (with space for 200 spectators – 100 home and 100 away. Each 100 is to be split 50 seating and 50 standing. Two dugouts will also be provided);
- One grass rugby pitch;
- Markings for a 200m grass running track;
- Two football pitches – one under 16 and one under 13/14 11-a-side pitch;
- A cricket square with a non-turf pitch;
- Two cricket practice nets; and
- Public access to the six existing tennis courts within the Bishop David Brown School grounds

3.4 In addition to the outdoor sports pitches, new indoor sporting facilities are proposed within a new leisure centre building which will be located within the Bishop David Brown Secondary School, between the existing tennis courts and the boundary with Broadmere Primary School. These were approved under the 2015 permission. The following indoor facilities will be provided:

- A 6-lane 25m swimming pool (13m wide) with approximately 50 person spectator seating and a 13mx10m learner pool;
- A shared changing village for both pools which can be operated independently;
- A 5-court sports hall with associated changing facilities;
- Four sets of changing rooms for outdoor pitches;
- Two studio rooms, folding partitions to allow flexible use of the accommodation for different activities e.g. carpet bowls;
- 80 station gym fitness suite; and
- Community sports hub room.

3.5 The following table compares the existing and proposed provision

Type	Existing provision	Previously approved provision (PLAN/2015/1260)	Proposed Provision across regeneration approved (PLAN/2018/0337)
Outdoor Sports (excl. MUGA)	3.924ha (school) 1.087ha (rec. ground)	2.661ha (school - excluding AGP)	2.539ha (school - excluding AGP)
Artificial Grass pitch	-	0.8ha	0.8ha
MUGA	0.077ha	0.076ha	0.069ha

Provision for children and teenagers (Skate/BMX Park, NEAP, LEAP & LAP)	0.317ha	0.348ha	0.469ha
Parks and gardens (informal open space)	3.763ha	3.066ha	4.084ha
Canal woodland area	2.212ha	1.976ha	<b>1.914 ha</b>
Total provision within the application site	13.84ha	8.927ha	<b>9.875ha</b>
Athletics track (Borough facility)	2.460ha (athl. track) Replaced at Egley Road	Replaced at Egley Road	Replaced at Egley Road
2no. Grass football pitches at Egley Road	n/a	1.33ha	1.33ha
<b>Total provision including on site and off site provision</b>	<b>13.84ha</b>	<b>12.357ha</b>	<b>13.305ha</b>

Table x: Open space comparison across whole site including previous hybrid application

#### 4 Justification of Open Space Proposals

4.1 The following aspects confirm that the proposed changes to the open space provision are justified:

Planning Policy

4.2 The relevant planning policy in Woking is policy CS17 of the adopted Woking Borough Core Strategy 2012

4.3 The key elements of this policy are as follows:

*Development involving the loss of open space will not be permitted unless:*

*alternative and equivalent or better provision is made available in the vicinity*

*or the development is directly related to the enhancement of the open space.*

*There will be a presumption against any development that involves the loss of a sport, recreation or play facility except where it can be demonstrated that there is an excess of provision, or where alternative facilities of equal or better quality will be provided as part of the development.*

4.4 Notably, Policy CS17 does not refer to quantity. The policy also makes provision for 'alternative and equivalent' OR better provision.

4.5 Planning permission PLAN/2015/1260 has already established the redevelopment of the existing open space.

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- 4.6 In terms of quantity, there would be a loss of outdoor sports provision within the development site (athletics track and recreation ground pitches). In addition there would be a small reduction in the canal woodland area, a reduction in the parks and garden space and a negligible reduction in the provision of the MUGA..
- 4.7 Although the athletics track and grass pitches (on the recreation ground) would be lost from the development site, these facilities have already been replaced elsewhere within the Borough.
- 4.8 In respect of the athletics track for Woking Athletics Club, this is a Borough wide facility and this has been replaced as part of the new development at Egley Road, Woking (PLAN/2015/0703) which received planning permission on 22nd December 2015. This permitted scheme includes an eight lane all weather track, with areas for track and field sports and two grass sports pitches. It also includes three all weather 5-a-side pitches, two MUGAs and an indoor leisure centre providing a sports hall, gym and studios and the required changing facilities and storage facilities for the proposed outdoor sports provision.
- 4.9 The National Board for Sport, Sport England supported both the 2015 proposals and the recent approved proposals. They concluded that the proposed new sporting facilities together with the proposed replacement are of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the quantitative loss of playing field.
- The proposed leisure centre, including the new pool and the floodlit AGP that form part of phase 1 will meet an identified strategic need, help meet identified sports development priorities and secure sports related benefits for the local community.
  - The athletics track relocation will result in an enlarged and improved facility.
  - The new community facilities will have adjacent changing facilities that will be better than those that exist on the site currently.
  - The new sports facilities that form part of these proposals will all comply with the relevant Sport England and NGB design guidance and will be maintained and managed by the Council
  - The proposals will improve the delivery of sport and physical education on the David Brown school sites and that at the new school at Egley Road.
  - The new leisure centre and other adjacent sports facilities at the David Brown School will help meet the needs of the new residents of the proposed housing development in an accessible location.
  - The Council has made provision for additional playing fields, MUGA and 5 aside artificial pitches at the Egley Road School which will be accessible to the local community.
- 4.10 In conclusion Sport England confirmed:

*Most significantly, whilst the replacement grass playing fields at Egley Road may not be the same in terms of quantity as those that will be lost at the Sheerwater Recreation Ground. (see exception 4). However, given the significant benefits for sport arising from this development combined with the new sports facilities proposed at Egley Road, Sport England is minded not to object to the proposed development, taking into account the special circumstances relevant to this application.*

Open Space

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- 4.11 Paragraph 96 of the NPPF (2018) highlights that “access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities”. The detailed element of the planning application provides a network of various open spaces to support recreational activity to improve access to green space within the site and to the wider network.
- 4.12 To summarise the position, the quantum and distribution of the open space would represent better quality provision in terms of offering significantly enhanced opportunities for outdoor recreation to meet the needs of the local community.
- 4.13 The majority of the parks and gardens space (informal amenity space) would be relocated to the centre of the site to create a large central park spreading east-west through the centre of the development. The central park has increased in size from the previously approved scheme under PLAN/2015/1260 and now forms a significant central green corridor for the new development, connecting the canal towpath in the west to the sports facilities to the east of the application. The whole of the central park classed as parks and gardens would extend to some 2.848ha which is larger than the equivalent parks and gardens space on the existing Sheerwater Recreation Ground (2.044ha). Every new dwelling would be within 300 metres of the closest part of the central park site. The central park will also include the formal play areas, including play spaces for a range of age groups, a skate park and a MUGA and the trim trail. The quantum and distribution of the open space would represent better quality provision in terms of offering significantly enhanced opportunities for outdoor recreation to meet the needs of the local community.
- 4.14 In comparison to the previously approved scheme under PLAN/2015/1260, the current proposed hybrid application would provide more than 1ha of additional parks and gardens open space. This is a significant increase above the previously approved provision. It is also important to note that unlike for the previously approved scheme under PLAN/2015/1260, the current application proposes to increase the overall provision of parks and gardens within the regeneration area as a whole. It should also be noted that the total provision for parks and gardens exceeds the required provision which results from the increased population resulting from this scheme. The proposed recreation and play facilities within the site would form a wide variety of green infrastructure provision which would also enhance the visual quality and ecological value of the application site.
- 4.15 The proposed recreation and play facilities within the site would form a wide variety of green infrastructure provision which would also enhance the visual quality and ecological value of the application site.
- 4.16 The proposed development meets the requirements of Core Strategy Policy CS17 as it would result in the enhancement of open spaces, the provision of attractive open spaces, improved play facilities. The location and accessibility of these spaces would also improve their natural surveillance.
- 4.17 With regard to the canal woodland buffer zone, a significant woodland buffer zone would be retained to the Basingstoke Canal and the northern boundary of the application site. The landscape quality of the woodland buffer zone would be maintained and its value would be enhanced through its on-going management. Moreover, the proposed development would also enhance its enjoyment through the placement of recreation space within the site, resulting in enhanced opportunities for recreation to incorporate the canal towpath. The canal woodland buffer zone would also exceed the buffer zone depths as required by Policy CS17.

## Play areas



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- 4.18 There is only one formal play facility with the application site which is located on the recreation ground. This play area does not cater for children of all ages despite being the only formal play facility. There are no other formal play areas for young and very young children within the application site. In terms of formal play provision, the central linear park would provide a neighbourhood equipped area of play (NEAP), a local equipped area of play (LEAP) and 3no. local areas of play (LAP). In addition the neighbourhood green areas (parks and garden (informal amenity areas)) will also include new play provision in the form of 2no. further local equipped areas of play (LEAP) and 3no. local areas of play (LAP). A further local area of play would also be provided within a separate communal area.
- 4.19 It is considered the provision of the proposed range of play areas would represent a significant improvement above the existing limited provision. The play spaces would be distributed across the proposed development area and would be positioned to maximise their accessibility to children across the development and improve natural surveillance of these areas, a significantly better position than the existing situation.
- 4.20 Overall the proposed development would provide facilities for children and teenagers as required by Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy and would not result in any loss. the proposals represent a significantly enhanced provision in terms of quantity and quality in comparison to the current single play area.

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Woking Borough council have granted planning permission for the redevelopment of Sheerwater in 2016, PLAN/2015/1260 and subsequently in 2019, PLAN/2018/0337.
- 5.2 In the assessment of the existing open space within Sheerwater, we have appraised the provision of open space which is available and usable by the public at the existing position, and open space which will be available and usable by the public at the end of the development.
- 5.3 The combined indoor and outdoor sporting provision will be significantly improved in terms of provision and quality through the development of a new high quality leisure centre and new 3G pitches. There will also be an updating of existing playing pitches at the Bishop David Brown school through the introduction of improved drainage, landscaping and maintenance.
- 5.4 The existing Borough athletics ground, which was not publicly accessible, has already been reprovided elsewhere in Woking.
- 5.5 The new sporting provision was supported by Sports England.
- 5.6 The quantum of parks and gardens are improved both in terms of quantity and quality over the existing range. The location is to be move to a more central position in Sheerwater, which will benefit new and existing residents.
- 5.7 The quantum and quality of play areas is going to be significantly enhanced.
- 5.8 The Borough Council concluded that the proposals satisfied Core Strategy policies regarding open space and recreation in the grant of planning permission.