

Open Space

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)



June 2026

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
What is meant by open space in this SPD?	4
The benefits of early engagement and pre-application discussions.....	4
2. Sefton-wide standards for open space provision, accessible nature space and urban greening	5
3. Protection of existing open space	6
a) Sites within Bootle Area Action Plan area	6
b) Local Green Space within Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area	6
c) Open space in the rest of Sefton (i.e. other than Bootle and Formby & Little Altcar).....	7
4. Requirements for new or enhanced open space provision linked to development	12
a) Sites within Bootle Area Action Plan area	12
b) Sites and proposals in the rest of Sefton’(that is, Sefton except for Bootle, as above).....	13
c) Requirements for sites and proposals within the Green Belt to which the Golden Rules apply	15
5. Design principles for new or enhanced open space provision.....	18
Design principles.....	18
Management and maintenance arrangements.....	23
Commuted sum payments	23
Provision of other types of open space /green space	24
Wider Environmental Improvements in Bootle	24
6. Enforcement and monitoring	25
7. Further information and references.....	26
Appendix A: Parks and Countryside Recreation Areas – Areas of deficit.....	28
Appendix B: Planning obligations and commuted sums	29
Appendix C: Priority routes within Bootle Area Action Plan area	31

Note: The commuted sums referred to are shown at 2026-2027 rates (as agreed by the Council) rather than the original 2017-18 rates. Appendix B of the SPD makes clear that these rates rise annually, as agreed by the Council.

Throughout this document the **National Planning Policy Framework** is referred to as ‘the Framework’. Where relevant a distinction is made between the December 2024 [Framework](#) and the government’s [proposed changes to the Framework](#), published in December 2025 and the subject of consultation until 10th March 2026. References to the Framework will also include the final Framework, which it is currently anticipated will be published later in 2026. The SPD will be updated where relevant to reflect correct Framework references once the final Framework has been published.

References to open space in this SPD should be taken also to refer to public green spaces within the Bootle Area Action Plan area, to Local Green Space within the Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area, and to green space in relation to the Framework’s ‘Golden Rules’.

1. Introduction

1.1 The aim of the Open Space Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to provide more detailed guidance to applicants, their agents and other stakeholders about the protection, provision, enhancement and on-going management of open space in relation to the following and local plan policies:

Sefton Local Plan:

- EQ9 'Provision of public open space, strategic paths and trees'
- NH5 'Protection of open space and Countryside Recreation Areas'
- HC7 'Education and care institutions'

Bootle Area Action Plan:

- BAAP11 Public Green Spaces
- BAAP24 Environmental Improvements.

Formby Neighbourhood Plan:

- ESD1: Local Green Space (protection of Local Green Space)
- ESD2: High Quality Design (refers to Local Plan policy EQ9)
- ESD6: Green infrastructure (refers to Local Plan policy EQ9)

1.2 Other local planning policies also inform the implementation of the above policies and provision of open space and public green space and access to it. These include Local Plan policies EQ1 'Healthy Sefton', EQ2 'Design' and NH1 'Natural Assets', Bootle Area Action Plan policies BAAP1 'Design' BAAP8 'Getting Around' and BAAP10 'Healthy Bootle' and other Neighbourhood Plan policies. Lydiate and Maghull Neighbourhood Plans include policies recognising the contribution of open space to residential character and heritage, site-specific policies setting out requirements for new public open space and policy MAG1: 'Priorities for funding Infrastructure Projects' includes provision of a new running track. The National Design Guide also refers to open space and wider green infrastructure provision.

1.3 Once adopted, this updated Open Space SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications and appeals¹. It will replace the 2017 Open Space SPD.

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is also a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications². The Framework's 'Golden Rules' for provision and/or enhancement of green spaces accessible to the public³ are particularly relevant to this SPD.

¹ Planning law states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Sefton Local Plan, Bootle Area Action Plan and Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan are part of Sefton's development plan.

² Paragraphs 48 and Annex 1 paragraph 231 of the December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (the Framework) and paragraphs 1 & 3 and Annex 1 paragraph 1 of the December 2025 proposed changes to the Framework

³ Paragraphs 156 and 159 of the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and draft policy GB8 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the Framework](#)

What is meant by open space in this SPD?

1.5 The 2017 Local Plan designates open space which is defined mainly terms of recreation: public open space (mostly parks), and other outdoor sports and recreation facilities available to the public (such as sports club sites and allotments). The 2026 Bootle Area Action Plan designates public green spaces which include parks, open spaces, playing fields and allotments. Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan designates Local Green Space, where development should be managed in a manner consistent with Green Belt policy.

1.6 References to open space in this SPD should be taken also to refer to public green spaces within the Bootle Area Action Plan area, Local Green Space within the Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area and to green space in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework's 'Golden Rules'.

1.7 The Local Plan identifies open space as part of Sefton's green infrastructure, which is one of Sefton's strategic natural assets. Good quality open space can provide a range of green infrastructure benefits and functions, such as for recreation, physical and mental health, nature, flood risk and surface water management, air quality, design, helping meet the challenge of climate change and other environmental quality. This is reflected by other national and local planning policies and guidance.

The benefits of early engagement and pre-application discussions

1.8 Sefton Council offers a [pre-application service](#) where developers can obtain advice from Planning Officers before a planning application is submitted. We encourage applicants to use this service, as we think that it provides an opportunity to address potential issues before submitting applications and is likely to reduce the chances of refusal or delay. There is a charge for this service.

1.9 Developers are encouraged to carry out pre-application consultation for proposals affecting, providing or enhancing an open space. This includes with the landowner / land manager (whether Sefton Council or others), local people, local Councillors, the Town or Parish Council, 'Friends of' groups, open space users including children and teenagers and local community and other relevant organisations. This is best held at an early stage in developing the scheme. Such pre-application consultation will help identify what local people value and what provision they would want to be given priority.

2. Sefton-wide standards for open space provision, accessible nature space and urban greening

2.1 Sefton's standards for open space provision are largely based on the targets set out in the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Study⁴ and as indicated in Local Plan policy EQ9 'Provision of public open space, strategic paths and trees' and its explanation. They are set out below.

Sefton's local standards for open space and accessible nature space relate to:

- Quantity – 40 sq metres of open space provision per new home, reflecting parks provision at 1.2 ha per thousand population and provision of other open space at the existing rates
- Quality – open space managed to Green Flag standards or principles
- Accessibility – a main park or Countryside Recreation Area and accessible nature space within 2 km (20-30 minutes' walk or 5 minutes' drive, and ideally a neighbourhood park within 1 km (10-15 minutes' walk) and a community (local) park within 400 metres (5-10 minutes' walk).

A multiplier of 0.6 applies to each straight line distance to better approximate to distance on the ground, plus extra adjustments for major transport-related barriers with few crossing points. So, 2 km is mapped as a 1.2 km straight line distance, 1 km as a 0.6 km straight line distance and 400 m as a 300 m straight line distance.

Sefton has no local standard for urban greening.

2.2 Sefton has no local standard for urban greening. Natural England has set out a national approach⁵.

⁴ These are based on the requirements of policy EQ9 of the 2017 Local Plan (www.sefton.gov.uk/localplan) and the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Study (<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/oumlsmsr/open-space-and-recreation-study-smbc-november-2015.pdf>)

⁵ For Natural England's Urban Greening Factor Standard and other standards see 'Green Infrastructure Standards for England – Summary' (2023) <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Green%20Infrastructure%20Standards%20for%20England%20Summary%20v1.1.pdf>

3. Protection of existing open space

3.1 The policies protecting open space and setting out what type of development is acceptable on this open space vary across Sefton, with different policy approaches to protection of open space for sites within:

- a) [Bootle Area Action Plan area](#)
- b) [Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area](#)
- c) The rest of Sefton - [Sefton’s urban areas and Green Belt, except for areas a\) and b\) above](#)

These areas are shown in Figure 3.1 at the end of the chapter. They are also relevant to new or enhanced provision, as set out in section 4.

a) Sites within Bootle Area Action Plan area

3.2 Bootle Area Action Plan policy BAAP11 Public Green Space designates public green spaces (as shown on the Policies Map) and sets the policy approach summarised below.

<p>Sites within Bootle Area Action Plan area Protection of public green spaces (existing open space) - policy BAAP11 summary</p>
<p>The only development which is acceptable on Public Green Spaces is that which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessary for the continued use and improvement of the site for its existing use, <i>or</i> • For alternative sports and recreational provision whose benefits clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

3.3 In terms of determining whether the benefits of alternative sports and recreational provision ‘clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use’, the sections in c) below on [‘What is equivalent or better provision?’](#) and [‘Delivery of equivalent or better provision’](#), are relevant. Local Plan Local Plan policy HC7 ‘Education and Care Institutions’ also applies to designated institution sites in Bootle Area Action Plan area so the sections in c) below relating to [protection of schools, colleges or care institution sites](#) are relevant to Bootle.

b) Local Green Space within Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area

3.4 Policy ESD1: Local Green Space of Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan (2019) designates twenty eight Local Green Spaces, which are protected in line with the policy approach set out below (summary and interpretation).

<p>Sites within Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area Protection of Local Green Space (existing open space)</p>
<p>Development on Local Green Spaces will be managed in a manner consistent with national Green Belt policy (excluding provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land, in line with footnote 45 to paragraph 108 of the Framework)⁶.</p>

⁶ And in line with draft policy HC8 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the Framework](#).

3.5 Applicants proposing development on Local Green Spaces should look at national Green Belt policy to check whether their proposals are likely to be acceptable. In summary, the most relevant parts of this national Green Belt policy are considered to be, firstly, the emphasis on retaining the openness of the Local Green Space - development should give substantial weight to any harm to the Local Green Space, including harm to its openness⁷. Secondly, the limited list of development that is acceptable ('not inappropriate') in the Local Green Space is set out in the Framework⁸ and includes appropriate facilities including buildings for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, and allotments, as long as these preserve the openness of the Local Green Space and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within a Local Green Space. Thirdly, development is likely to be acceptable in principle where 'very special circumstances' exist and the potential harm to the Local Green Space by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations⁹.

c) Open space in the rest of Sefton (i.e. other than Bootle and Formby & Little Altcar)

3.6 Local Plan policy NH5 'Protection of open space and Countryside Recreation Areas' applies to designated open space across the rest of Sefton; that is, outside Bootle Area Action Plan area and Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan area, as shown in Figure 3.1.

3.7 In summary, policy NH5 protects open space from development except the relatively limited circumstances specified and summarised below. These are in line with the Framework¹⁰.

<p>Sites across Sefton (except for Formby & Little Altcar and Bootle) Protection of existing open space - policy NH5 summary and interpretation</p>
<p>The following development proposals are acceptable in principle on designated open space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental improvements which enhance the site’s environmental quality or green infrastructure benefits, including built facilities necessary for the use of the site • Other development proposals, where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows the public open space or outdoor sports facilities to be surplus to requirements; or ○ The public open space or outdoor sports facilities will be replaced by equivalent or better provision (quantity and quality) in a suitable location (equivalent or better accessibility), or ○ The development is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>More guidance about what these bullet points mean is set out below.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning conditions, planning obligations, other legal agreements or mechanisms will be used to secure compensatory provision in a timely manner.

⁷ Paragraph 153 of the December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and draft policy GB6 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#)

⁸ Paragraphs 143 and 154 (especially a, b, d and f) of the December 2024 Framework and draft policies GB2 and GB7 (especially b and f) of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the Framework](#)

⁹ Paragraph 153 and draft policy GB6 2, respectively.

¹⁰ Paragraph 104 and draft policy HC7, respectively

3.8 Local Plan policy HC7 'Education and Care Institutions' takes a similar approach to sites designated as education or care institutions, including in Bootle Area Action Plan area. Policy HC7 aims to protect existing and former school playing fields and institutions whose extensive grounds have a wider green infrastructure or recreation function from inappropriate development.

Sites across Sefton (except for Formby & Little Altcar)

Protection of schools, colleges or care institution sites – policy HC7 summary and interpretation

- On sites currently in use as schools, colleges or care institutions, development proposals are acceptable in principle on open space where key green infrastructure is retained, and where relevant harm to the historic environment and setting is minimised; for:
 - Uses directly related to the existing use of the site or which sustain the viability of the existing use of the site (including retention of existing playing fields)
 - Community-based recreation or sports facilities ancillary to the existing use of the site
 - Environmental improvements which enhance the site's environmental quality or green infrastructure benefits.
- On sites formerly used use as schools, colleges or care institutions, development proposals for alternative uses compatible with the surrounding area are acceptable in principle only where the loss of any public open space or outdoor sports facilities meet the requirements of policy NH5 (*see the box above*).

3.9 There are also other (non-planning) Regulations which place additional restrictions on development on playing fields generally, and school playing fields and former school playing fields in particular; especially those used in the last 5 years and on school playing fields and land used as school playing fields in the last 10 years. As well as complying with planning policies, proposals will also need to comply with these other Regulations.

When are open space, sports pitches or facilities surplus to requirements?

3.10 Policy NH5 and the Framework¹¹ say that open space, sports and recreational buildings and land can only be considered surplus to requirements if an assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows this to be the case. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate this by relying on relevant Council evidence and studies or by carrying out their own assessment, consistent with Sport England or other approved guidance and to the satisfaction of Sefton Council.

3.11 Council evidence and studies include the open space standards set out in section 2 of this SPD, the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Study¹² and the 2023 Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and any 'Annual Review'¹³.

¹¹ Paragraphs 104 of the December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and draft policies GB7 f v & vi and GB2 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#)

¹² See <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/oumlsmr/open-space-and-recreation-study-smbc-november-2015.pdf>

¹³ See <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/evidence-and-studies/playing-pitch-and-outdoor-sports-strategy/>

3.12 Where the applicant can demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Council, that an open space or outdoor sports facility is surplus to requirements, development will be acceptable in principle in relation to policy NH5 and/or the recreation aspects of policy HC7.

3.13 The 2015 Open Space and Recreation Study set out that a surplus of open space would exist in Sefton only if all of the following open space / recreation factors were to be met:

- **Accessibility:** The site or open space is within 2 kilometres of a main park and within 1 kilometre of one or more neighbourhood parks and within 400 metres of one or more community (local) parks; and where there is duplication in the type and range of functions of community (local) and neighbourhood parks.
- **Quantity:** The settlement area has around, at or meets the quantity of open space, and any loss would not have a significantly detrimental impact on the quantity of open space
- **Quality:** It is not possible to have a quality surplus. Quality partly relates to management and maintenance with Green Flag awards representing national good practice. It is not a purely visual issue. High quality nature-based green space, a high quality playing pitch or formal park will each look very different, for example.

3.14 The Council does not accept that any designated public green spaces are surplus to requirements in the Bootle Area Action Plan area. Provision rates for 'all parks' in the plan area are lower than for all of Bootle & Netherton, and for Sefton as a whole. Accessible nature space provision in Bootle is significantly lower than for Sefton as a whole.

3.15 The 2023 Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy and any approved Annual Reviews to date do not identify any clear surplus of pitches for football, cricket, rugby or hockey; there is a shortfall for at least one age or other group. Lapsed, disused, underused and poor quality pitch sites are not seen as surplus to requirements, as there is a need for such playing field land to meet identified pitch shortfalls.

3.16 For tennis courts the 2023 Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy and any approved Annual Reviews indicate no clear surplus, with a shortfall in Formby and parts of Southport, plus a shortfall of padel courts across Sefton.

3.17 For bowling greens the situation is more nuanced. Membership numbers at some clubs, mostly in north and east Sefton, are sufficiently high to indicate that future shortfalls could occur. To help deal with future shortfalls the Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy recommends a strategic reserve of one (disused) green in each settlement area. There are no such disused greens in Formby and Sefton East, three in Southport, six in Crosby and at least four in Bootle. Therefore, applicants would need to carry out additional assessments for proposals involving loss of bowling greens to help determine whether or not there is a local shortfall or surplus. This is critical in Formby and Sefton East. Applicants should also seek the views of the Bowls Development Alliance¹⁴ or other National Governing Body for outdoor bowls. Such assessments would need to be to the satisfaction of the Council and would be used to inform the Council's assessment of planning applications.

¹⁴ See <https://bowlsdevelopmentalliance.com/>

What is equivalent or better provision? (also applies to Bootle)

3.18 In assessing whether proposed replacement provision is equivalent or better than that which would be lost, the Council will consider, taking into account the views of Green Sefton and any relevant community consultation, factors such as the:

- Type, size and quality of the recreation provision to be lost and provided, the respective type and quality of recreation benefits and their importance to the local community
- Potential for quality improvements to rectify quantitative shortfalls; whether enhancing nearby existing provision is an appropriate type of replacement provision
- Accessibility and location of the recreation provision to be lost, and provided (the latter to be at least as accessible)
- Type, accessibility, location, proximity, quality and size of other existing open spaces in the local area and the type of benefits which they provide
- Potential for substantively improved accessibility, such as through substantive enhancements to the walking and cycle network (including the canal towpath if relevant) and strategic green corridors
- Any other relevant considerations, such as those relating to other green infrastructure or 'ecosystem services/ natural capital' benefits
- For outdoor sports, any recommendations in the Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy (PPOSS) and related Council or partner strategies.

Delivery of equivalent or better provision (also applies to Bootle)

3.19 Planning conditions, planning obligations, other legal agreements or mechanisms will be used to secure such equivalent or better compensatory provision in a timely manner.

3.20 Where provision involves a commuted sum payment for new provision or enhancements to existing provision, the amount of the commuted sum will be based on:

- For outdoor sports pitches and/or facilities: the cost of new provision of the facilities (such as pitches, changing accommodation) to be lost, as set out in the most recent Sport England's Facility Costs document (rising over time as Facility Costs documents are updated regularly). Such sums may be used for provision of 3G pitches, enhancements to existing sites such as improved drainage or maintenance regimes, or other strategic enhancements, as set out in the Sefton Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy (PPOSS) or most recent 'Annual Review' or other Council document
- For public open space or public green spaces: in line with the commuted sum set out in Appendix B of this SPD.

Local Plan site-specific policy requirements for compensatory provision

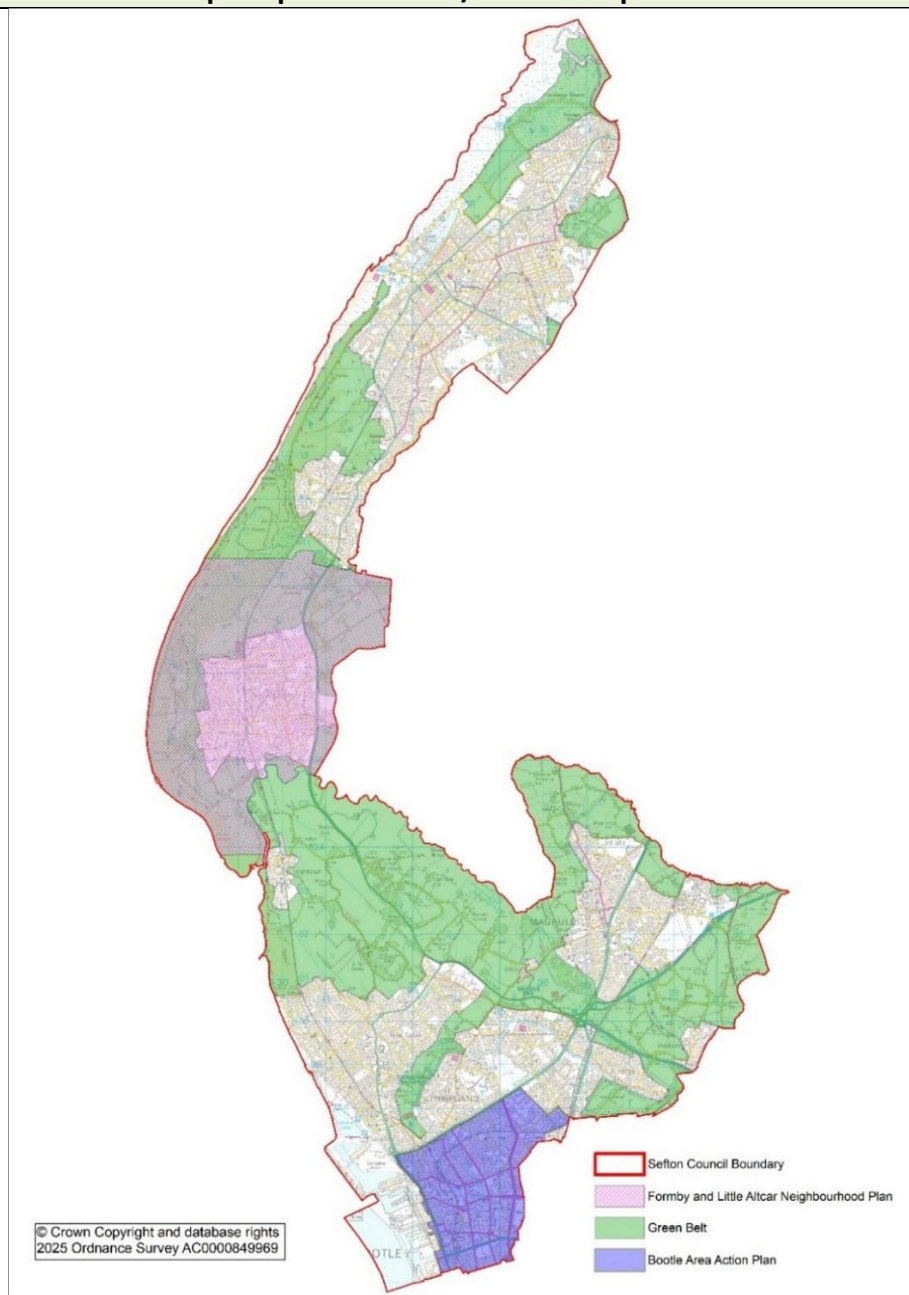
3.21 Three sites allocated for housing in the Local Plan require equivalent or better provision for sports pitches, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Local Plan¹⁵. This compensatory provision is to

¹⁵ Bootle Area Action Plan removes the compensatory provision requirement for the former St Mary's School playing field (Coffee House Bridge).

“be achieved via a commuted sum payment (on a per dwelling basis) towards the provision of a new 3G pitch(es)” either at Litherland Sports Park, or “Meols Park or adjacent land” as specified.

3.22 The Council may consider the provision of 3G pitches at alternative locations in the north and south of the borough to be acceptable, instead of at Litherland Sports Park and/or Meols Park or adjacent land. Such alternative locations would be where the implementation of the most recent Playing Pitch and Open Space Strategy and Annual Review process has shown these other locations to be more appropriate, cost-effective, ‘fit for purpose’ and able to deliver compensatory provision and full community use in a more timely manner than Litherland Sports Park or Meols Park or adjacent land.

Figure 3.1. Overview of areas within Sefton with different policy approaches to protection of open space and new/ enhanced provision



Note that the plan in Figure 3 takes an overview and does not show individual open spaces, Local Green Spaces or public green spaces. These can be seen on the Policies Maps of Bootle Area Action Plan, the Sefton Local Plan and Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Requirements for new or enhanced open space provision linked to development

4.1 The requirements for new open space provision linked to housing development vary between sites and proposals in different parts of Sefton (see Figure 3.1 above) as set out below:

- a) [Sites and proposals within the Bootle Area Action Plan boundary](#), where the emphasis is on enhancing existing public green spaces such as parks, and other environmental improvements.
- b) [Sites and proposals in the rest of Sefton \(that is, Sefton except for Bootle, as above\)](#)
- c) Requirements for [sites and proposals within the Green Belt to which the Framework's Golden Rules¹⁶ apply](#). Here significant emphasis is placed on the need for the close proximity of open space to new homes

The requirements for each of these areas are shown in the sub-sections below.

a) Sites within Bootle Area Action Plan area

4.2 In Bootle the focus is on off-site environmental enhancements (including to existing public green spaces), as set out in policies BAAP11 Public Green Spaces and BAAP24 Environmental Improvements, rather than provide new open space. The box below provides a summary and interpretation:

Proposals for 10 or more dwellings (new-build & conversions) in Bootle
Proposals for any changes of use to hot food takeaways in Bootle
Proposals for non-residential development of 1,000 square m floorspace or more
Summary and interpretation

- Such development should provide a commuted sum for environmental improvements within the Plan area, in line with the approach set out in policy BAAP24 Environmental Improvements:
 - For each dwelling, for each hot food takeaway and for each 100 m2 of non-residential floorspace a commuted sum should be provided at the prices (rates) set out in Appendix B of this document, linked to a Section 106 legal agreement (planning obligation)
- Major development proposals should also create new or improved existing walking and/or cycling links to existing public green spaces, allowing accessibility for all
- On-site environmental improvements will only be acceptable to offset part or all of these off-site requirements if these are substantively over and above normal policy requirements and the Council considers that they provide clear benefits to future residents and the wider neighbourhood, long-term management and maintenance and public access.

All of the above requirements apply.

These requirements are subject to viability considerations.

¹⁶ Set out in paragraphs 156, 158 and 159 of December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and draft policy GB8 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#) .

4.3 If the applicant considers that meeting some or all of this public green space requirement would make their scheme unviable, they must provide a robust financial viability assessment setting out why this is the case. This will be appraised by the Council's independent economic viability consultants in line with usual practice, for example in relation to Local Plan policies for affordable housing and education contributions. The applicant will be required to meet the full cost of this work.

4.4 While the emphasis of part 3 of policy BAAP11 is on environmental improvements to existing public green spaces, the Council accepts that there may be some site-specific circumstances where on-site provision or improvements also may be acceptable, as set out in part 3 of policy BAAP24. The costs of such on-site provision or improvements would be off-set against the commuted sum provision.

4.5 The focus on walking, cycling and accessibility for all, including those with limited mobility, referred to above, requires provision which includes:

- Creating safe, clear and attractive routes through the site to allow easier walking or cycling access to services and facilities on foot or by cycle. Children and young people should be able to safely access areas of public green space from the development site
- Well-designed signage to direct residents to the nearest public green space.
- Where relevant, providing safe, clear and attractive access onto the priority routes for getting around identified in Figure 14 of Bootle Area Action Plan (reproduced in Appendix C of this document).

4.6 The Council intends to provide more detailed and costed priorities for the spend of commuted sums secured under policies BAAP11 and BAAP24, on a rolling programme, once the scale and timing of relevant development and monies are better understood. The Council would intend to carry out public consultation on a draft priorities list. The current intention is for the draft list of potential priorities to include small, medium or larger-scale projects and associated resource needs, and indicate whether they are entirely new or complement, extend or add value to existing or recent initiatives¹⁷.

b) Sites and proposals in the rest of Sefton'(that is, Sefton except for Bootle, as above)

4.7 The open space requirement here is set out in policy EQ9 'Provision of public open space, strategic paths and trees' of the Sefton Local Plan. The box after paragraph 4.8 below provides a summary and interpretation: (Additional requirements for sites and proposals in the Green Belt to which the Framework's Golden Rules apply are set out in c) below).

**Open space provision for housing sites within Sefton (including Formby & Little Altcar):
except in Bootle Area Action Plan area - summary and interpretation**

- Appropriate high quality new open space of at least 40 square metres for each new-build home must be provided for the following developments:
 - Proposals for 150 or more new-build homes

¹⁷ More information is set out in the Environment and Climate Change Topic Paper document and appendices (see references section below).

**Open space provision for housing sites within Sefton (including Formby & Little Altcar):
except in Bootle Area Action Plan area - summary and interpretation**

- Proposals for 11 to 149 new-build homes on sites which are more than 2 kilometres (1.2 km straight line distance) from a main park or Countryside Recreation Area. Sites which are more than 1.2 km straight line distance from a 'main park' or Countryside Recreation Area are classed as 'recreational deficiency areas' and shown in Appendix A of this SPD.
- This new public open space must be provided within the site unless it is agreed that enhancement of off-site open space is more appropriate, in terms of:
 - The type and density of housing development and site size, or
 - Proximity to existing main, neighbourhood and community (local) parks, or
 - Other site-specific factors.
- New or enhanced open space should be of high quality, meeting the design requirements set out in section 5 of this SPD
- The applicant must demonstrate that the open space will be managed and maintained for the lifetime of the development
- Links to or extensions of existing public rights of way, strategic paths or cycleways will be required where they improve the accessibility for an existing community or a development site.

All of the above requirements apply.

These requirements are not subject to viability considerations.

4.8 For proposals of 11 to 149 homes in recreational deficiency areas within the existing urban area, enhancement of existing public open space away from the site may be more appropriate than on-site provision, notably where these open spaces are accessible in relation to Sefton's accessibility standards (see section 3 above). If there are no suitable opportunities for enhancement locally then provision will be required on-site at a rate of 40 square metres per dwelling.

4.9 Elsewhere, off-site provision may also be appropriate for developments of 150 or more new homes if there is an existing public open space close by that is suitable and appropriate for enhancement. A combination of some provision within the site and some enhancement may also be appropriate.

4.10 Where off-site enhancements are made, these improvements will be funded by a **commuted sum payment** as set out in Appendix B, secured by a Section 106 legal agreement or other legal mechanism.

4.11 Neither policy EQ9 nor its explanation allows for reduced open space provision due to viability considerations. Where viability assessments which have been provided by the developer and appraised by the Council (at the developer's expense) indicate wider viability issues, the Council would be likely to consider reduced open space provision as part of the 'planning balance'.

4.12 As well as providing this open space as required by policy EQ9 'Provision of public open space, strategic paths and trees', other site-specific requirements for Proposed Open Space, Ecological Improvement Areas, open space, recreation or outdoor sports infrastructure set out in other Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies should also be met.

c) Requirements for sites and proposals within the Green Belt to which the Golden Rules apply

4.13 As well as b) above, there are additional requirements for open space for sites and proposals within Sefton's Green Belt to which to Framework's Golden Rules apply. The Framework's 'Golden Rules' are for major housing development including both planning applications for major housing development in the Green Belt and on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review. The Golden Rules go beyond most local planning policies, including in Sefton, for example in relation to affordable housing, open space and nature recovery. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications¹⁸. In this context major housing development includes proposals for 10 or more homes or housing sites of 0.5 hectares or more where the number of homes is not stated.

4.14 The Golden Rules¹⁹ require:

"c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces. This provision should:

- i. make a positive contribution to the landscape setting of the development; [and]*
- ii. support nature recovery; and*
- iii. meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan. Where no locally-specific standards exist, development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development (these include Natural England standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria). Where land has been identified as having potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes".*

4.15 Therefore, for new major housing development to which the Golden Rules apply, the Framework is clear both that new open space accessible to the public should be provided and that this provision should be within a short walk of the new homes. This means the exemptions from providing open space on certain housing schemes set out in Policy EQ9 (part 1) do not apply to sites subject to the Golden Rules. Sefton's approach to open space provision in relation to sites and proposals to which the Golden Rules apply is set out below (summary and

¹⁸ Paragraphs 48 and Annex 1 paragraph 231 of the December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (the Framework) and paragraphs 1 & 3 & Annex 1 paragraph 1 of the December 2025 proposed changes to the Framework

¹⁹ Paragraphs 156, 158 and 159 of December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and draft policy GB8 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#) . Quote is from draft policy GB8.

interpretation). This is considered to have regard to Sefton's [local standards](#) set out in section 2 above.

Requirements for major housing development sites and proposals within the Green Belt to which the Golden Rules apply – summary and interpretation

- Appropriate high quality new publicly accessible open space of at least 40 square metres for each new home should be provided
 - This should be provided within the site, except:
 - Where there is a community (local), neighbourhood or main park or Countryside Recreation Area within 400 m (5 -10 minutes' walk) along an accessible off-road route or shared surface. This route may include improved or newly provided links to or extensions of existing pavements, public rights of way, strategic paths or cycleways and any appropriate signage
- and***
- Agreement has been reached to the satisfaction of the Council for this existing provision to be improved and easy and safe non-car access to be provided from the site
 - New or enhanced open space should be of high quality, meeting the design requirements set out in section 5 of this SPD
 - Where the development site or part of the site is identified as an opportunity site/area on the LCR Local Nature Recovery Strategy Local Habitat Map or relates to a species priority set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy Statement of Biodiversity Principles²⁰; the open space or other public green infrastructure must be designed to help deliver the relevant nature recovery priorities and measures set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - The applicant must demonstrate that the open space will be managed and maintained for the lifetime of the development

All of the above requirements apply.

These requirements are not subject to viability considerations.

4.16 To clarify, this means that appropriate high quality new publicly accessible open space of at least 40 square metres per home should be provided within the site or, in some cases, a short walk away, for all major housing development proposals or sites to which the Golden Rules apply. For 150 or more homes, this open space would be required anyway under policy EQ9. However, this provision of 40 square metres per home is also now required for schemes of 10 to 149 homes (new-build and conversions) in line with the above, even where the site is within 2 km (1.2 km straight line distance) of a main park or Countryside Recreation Area. This is because of the additional, recent Framework requirement for accessible open space a short walk away from new homes, for sites and proposals to which the Golden Rules apply.

4.17 Where off-site enhancements are made, these open space improvements will be funded by a **commuted sum payment** as set out in Appendix B, plus any additional maintenance cost,

²⁰ See <https://lcrlistens.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy/>

plus, where appropriate, the cost of the relevant access route improvements. This may include for example the costs of new signage, surfacing, dropped kerbs, dedicated pedestrian crossing of any classified road or other relevant works. Off-site enhancements will be secured by a Section 106 legal agreement or other legal mechanism.

4.18 In line with the material considerations set out in the Framework, provision of publicly accessible open space, green infrastructure and any nature recovery elements should reflect the guidance in section 5 of this SPD and other relevant guidance and should have regard to national standards for urban greening²¹.

4.19 The Framework (see previous footnote) indicates that sites and proposals subject to the Golden Rules should be subject to the viability approach set out in national planning practice guidance on viability²². Currently this indicates that the above requirements are not subject to viability considerations.

²¹ See for example S4 Urban Greening Factor Standard in <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Green%20Infrastructure%20Standards%20for%20England%20Summary%20v1.1.pdf>

²² See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/viability#golden-rules-for-green-belt-development> (paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 10-030-20251216, Revision date: 16 12 2025)

5. Design principles for new or enhanced open space provision

5.1 This section draws together the design requirements for public open space / public green space set out in a number of Local Plan, Bootle Area Action Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies, good practice guidance (including the 2021 National Design Guide²³) and other documents which may be relevant (such as the LCR Local Nature Recovery Strategy or The Mersey Forest Plan).

5.2 The overall aim is to create new or enhanced public open spaces or public green spaces which are well-located, high quality, attractive and safe, supporting social interaction and providing social value. They should provide a variety of landscapes and activities, including play, exercise and movement. Open spaces/ green spaces should reflect and be set within the site and the local context (including green infrastructure, landscape, scope for nature and climate resilience, built and cultural heritage, movement routes and the location of homes, workplaces, services and other facilities).

5.3 An overview of the design principles for new or enhanced public open space / green space in Sefton is set out below. This is followed by more detailed design principles. These are the requirements for the design and provision of new or enhanced public open space / green space in Sefton.

Overview of design principles for new or enhanced public open space / green space

1. Centrally located and integrated open space/ public green space
2. A size which functions effectively as recreation space; at least 0.6 hectares other than for specified exceptions
3. Formal provision for children and young people and for play and outdoor sport
4. Fit-for-purpose, high quality, attractive spaces for recreation, movement and health
5. Integrated with the best of local and site character, heritage and green infrastructure
6. Safe and attractive spaces designed to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
7. Well-considered maintenance and management regimes based on an understanding of the costs involved

Design principles

5.4 These principles apply to new or enhanced public open space / public green space across the Borough, including in Bootle. Where a design principle applies only to a particular circumstance (for example, squirrel-friendly species) this is set out within the principle.

5.5 New or enhanced public open spaces or public green spaces should be designed to be:

1. Centrally located and integrated open space/ public green space

- Located centrally within the development site, unless there are site-specific reasons why the space is likely to serve the community more effectively if located elsewhere

²³ See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602cef1d8fa8f5038595091b/National_design_guide.pdf

- Open and accessible to all local communities, including people with reduced mobility and disabilities²⁴
 - Fully accessible to all - with entrances, ramps, dropped kerbs, paths and other features to provide for wheelchair users, those with limited mobility or sensory impairments
- Integrated into the area it serves and connected to the movement network, providing visual, walking and cycling links to and between new and existing facilities such as homes, schools, bus stops, stations, local shops, health services and existing path networks, and encouraging people to walk and cycle rather than to depend upon cars, particularly for short, local journeys. Improvements to the movement network (such as quality, access for all and signage enhancements) may be sought where this will enhance access to open space
- Access locations should be on well-used roads and access routes should be above ground, have good visibility and sight lines and good natural surveillance
- Appropriate signage within the open space/ public green space, development site and along link routes, including way-marking and interpretation boards if relevant.
- Uses or area which may generate greater noise such as multi-use games areas (MUGAs) or padel tennis should be sited relatively further from people's homes
- For sites to which the Golden Rules apply (major housing development in the Green Belt)²⁵, new residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within 400 m (a short walk) of their home, as set out in section 4 c above, whether onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.

2. A size which functions effectively as recreation space: at least 0.6 hectares other than for specified exceptions

- At least 0.6 hectares in size, so that there is sufficient space for a range of recreational experiences allowing for active exercise and enjoying the outdoors
 - Smaller areas, lines of trees, narrow grass strips or 'left over spaces' *will not count* as public open space provision required by development plan policies, even if together these areas total 0.6 hectares
 - Areas comprising sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) features, including basins and swales, *will not count* as public open space/ public green space provision even if they are located within a larger such space
 - Areas designed to mitigate loss of natural assets elsewhere *will not count* as public open space/ public green space provision where public access is not compatible with the on-going management needs of these natural assets
 - Areas provided as net gains for biodiversity *will not count* as public open space/ public green space provision where public access is not compatible with the on-going management needs of the new or enhanced habitat or its Biodiversity Gain Plan.
- An exception to the 0.6 hectares minimum size threshold is for sites and proposals where the total amount of open space provided at a rate of 40 square metres per home totals less than 0.6 hectares (6000 square metres). However, here all of the required open

²⁴ See for example the Equality Act, Disability Act <https://www.rosaplaysafety.co.uk/advice-information/equality-act-ea/>

²⁵ See *Policy GB8: The Golden Rules* of the December 2025 Proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. These broadly equate to paragraphs 156, 159, 187 and 192 of the December 2024 Framework.

space should be provided as one single block. This relates to sites and proposals which are:

- For 10-149 new-build homes on sites which are more than 2 kilometres from a main park or Countryside Recreation Area (see policy EQ9, part 1 b), *or*
- For fewer than 150 homes where the Framework's 'Golden Rules' apply
- Another exception to the 0.6 hectares minimum size threshold is where a development site includes at least one open space of 0.6 hectares. Here, additional equipped play areas may be allowed on extra, smaller-sized open spaces if appropriate.

3. Formal provision for children and young people (to 17 years of age) and for play and outdoor sport

- Should provide an equipped playground(s) within the open space / green space, to be located:
 - On at least one key walking route through the open space
 - Outside the functional flood plain (Flood Zone 3b) or any areas at risk of deep surface water flooding
 - At a reasonable distance from people's homes
- The equipped playground(s) typically should incorporate:
 - At least 5 pieces of play equipment for the 0-5 age group, meeting BS EN 1176 or successor standards
 - At least 5 pieces of play equipment for the 6-12 age group, meeting BS EN 1176 or successor standards
 - Fencing using steel railings and self-closing gates to keep the area dog free
 - Signage to encourage a smoke-free and vape-free environment
- Equipment and associated structures, street furniture, surfaces and landscaping within the equipped playground must meet approved safety and quality standards.
- The equipped playground should be heat resilient and provide shaded areas²⁶
- On development of a significant scale, should provide for outdoor sports where this is required due to local shortfalls identified in the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy or its 'Annual Review' or in an infrastructure strategy
- May provide other formal play or recreation facilities where the need has been identified following consultation with the local community and others who are interested, such as:
 - Multi-use games areas (MUGAs), skate parks, pump tracks, 'teen shelters', graffiti walls
 - 'Natural play' items such as large boulders, large logs and tree stumps
 - 'Green gyms' / 'outdoor gyms'.

4. Fit-for-purpose, high quality, attractive spaces for recreation, movement and health

- A variety of opportunities for formal and informal play, sport, exercise, rest and relaxation and stimulation that are accessible to all
- Path and access networks, and lighting if appropriate, to provide suitable opportunities for exercise and access and movement to, through and within the space
- Spaces to support social interaction, appealing to a wide range of different groups, able to accommodate people with different needs and help combat social isolation and loneliness.

²⁶ See for example <https://ltd.org.uk/project/climate-ready-school-grounds-technical-areas/>

- A high quality of design, materials and species, that should be suitable for the site and area, fit for purpose and durable, with:
 - Path networks with high quality surfacing designed to meet the intended use (pedestrians, cyclists, etc). Appropriate permeable surfaces will be encouraged
 - Street furniture (e.g. benches, bins, signage, gates, lighting in some cases) and structures (e.g. walls, gates, fencing and access controls, cycling parking), which should reflect the best of design character in the surrounding area or development site
 - New public spaces next or close to the canal should allow public enjoyment of the canal and a sense of arrival and access, to provide opportunities for leisure activities and appropriate access to the towpath where it is on the same side of the canal or is a key route to the public open space network in the local area
 - Appropriate management of surface water run-off and drainage, and flood storage where relevant
- Provision of tree and other planting, soft landscaping and varied habitat or character areas within the open space, to secure the mental and physical health and other benefits linked to such green infrastructure
- Applicants should formally consult with the existing open space manager regarding new spaces next to or on the opposite side of a road or path from existing open spaces, nature areas or sustainable drainage systems. This should include consultation and cooperation regarding access points, linked path networks, signage and other ownership matters. Such managers include Green Sefton, Parish or Town Councils and other bodies.

5. Integrated with the best of local and site character, heritage and green infrastructure

- A variety of well-designed, high quality natural, semi-natural and designed landscapes for everyone, integrated into the wider green infrastructure network for the site and wider area with suitable tree and other species including to provide nature, health, climate change and other benefits:
 - A variety of trees and shrubs, open grassed and other landscaped areas, with open views around access points and key movement routes
 - Taking appropriate opportunities for new tree planting within open spaces, with a view to helping increase tree cover within built-up areas, and at the urban fringe consistent with the rural ²⁷area's landscape character
 - Red squirrel friendly tree and shrub species in the Red Squirrel Refuge Area and Buffer Zone, as set out in the Nature Conservation SPD
 - Species resilient to the impacts of climate change; landscape design and features to provide benefits which help adapt to or mitigate climate change (such as shade, shelter, surface water run-off reduction)
 - Where the site has been identified as having particular potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within the LCR Local Nature Recovery Strategy or LCR Nature Improvement Area, landscape design and species choice on the open space / green space should take relevant opportunities to contribute towards these outcomes
 - Any water features should maintain, and where possible, enhance water quality
- Designed to complement the best of the area's distinctiveness and incorporate existing natural or historic/ cultural features where possible, such as:
 - Trees, hedgerows, changes in ground levels, water features
 - Historically or culturally important walls, gateways or ornamental features

²⁷ See <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1992/landscape-character-assessment-of-sefton.pdf>

- For sites to which the Golden Rules apply (major housing development in the Green Belt), improvements to green spaces required as part of the Golden Rules should contribute positively to the landscape setting of the development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision. Where land has been identified as having particular potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within the LCR Local Nature Recovery Strategy, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes.

6. Safe and attractive spaces designed to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour (with linked health benefits)

- Overlooked by the principal frontages of new dwellings or active frontages of other buildings, to provide natural surveillance and security and help to overcome crime and the fear of crime. This is particularly important for children's play areas, formal play facilities such as multi-use games areas (MUGAs) or skateparks and for access points
- Well-designed public spaces that feel safe for their users, passers-by and people who occupy the buildings around them, without the need for additional security measures
- Layout, design, landscaping/ planting and management and maintenance regimes to increase personal safety and reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour and fear of this, and to avoid or mitigate impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and general amenity
- Spaces designed to meet the needs of their users including their most vulnerable users
- Appropriately designed and sited lighting, wi-fi coverage and CCTV, if this is considered proportionate, so that its visual impact and impacts on neighbouring properties are reduced
- Safety from hazards²⁸, including formal risk assessment (carried out by applicants) where required, to take into account of issues such as closeness to highways, rail lines, watercourses. The applicant should formally consult the appropriate organisation at the design stage:
 - Any public open space /green space that is provided next to a railway line should be designed to prevent trespass. Applicants should consult with Network Rail about how best to do this.
 - Applicants should consult with the Canal and River Trust regarding spaces next to a canal or main river, and also with the Environment Agency for main rivers. This relates especially to access for maintenance, limits on planting or other works and the structural integrity of the canal and watercourses
 - Applicants should consult with the Lead Local Flood Authority regarding spaces next to ordinary watercourses
 - Applicants should consult with the Highway Authority regarding spaces next to or containing public rights of way, permissive paths or roads.

7. Well-considered maintenance and management regimes based on an understanding of the costs involved

- High quality spaces and planting, designed to be appropriate to the site, durable, robust and adaptable over time so that they remain fit for purpose and are able to be managed and maintained for continuous use with ease and at a reasonable cost
- On-going management and maintenance regimes considered from the design stage

²⁸ In line with paragraph 102 of the December 2024 [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and draft policy P5 of the December 2025 [proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](#)

5.6 There will be additional design requirements for open space which is to be a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) away from the Sefton Coast, within the context set by Local Plan policy NH2 'Nature', Sefton's Nature SPD and Sefton's Information Note: Managing and mitigating the impact of recreation pressure on the Sefton Coast - Sefton's Interim Approach for housing development²⁹ or any subsequent Liverpool City Region (LCR)-wide approach. The views of Natural England are relevant to the design of such SANGs³⁰.

Management and maintenance arrangements

5.7 Where public open space, playgrounds, outdoor sports facilities or other public green space is to be provided within the site, a comprehensive plan to include landscaping and details of all facilities to be provided in the area of open space must be submitted at full planning permission stage or 'reserved matters' stage.

5.8 Development proposals which include new public open space/ green space must incorporate suitable arrangements for its long-term management and maintenance and for public access, for the lifetime of development, and management and maintenance plans may be required. It should not be assumed that Sefton Council or a Parish or Town Council will adopt any new open space. Sefton Council will need to be satisfied that these arrangements are in place before planning permission is granted. Generally, this will be secured by planning condition and/or Section 106 legal agreement or other legal agreement or mechanism. Playgrounds should be inspected annually by a competent assessor³¹. Section 2 of the SPD refers to open space managed to Green Flag standards or principles.

5.9 Generally the trigger for provision of new open space within the site will be included within the Section 106 legal agreement or other legal agreement or mechanism. For larger schemes the payment may be phased, with stepped triggers. The developer will be required to notify the Council prior to any phasing triggers being reached. Provision must be available for use by members of the public in line with the planning permission. Generally, this will be before practical completion³² of the final house, or of 50 homes (whichever is the lower figure), unless it can be clearly demonstrated why the open space can be provided at a later phase.

5.10 Details of the company or organisation responsible for managing and maintaining the open space must be made known to those occupying the properties and Sefton Council's Green Sefton service. They must also be informed if the management company changes in order to maintain a permanent record of who is responsible for the open space should a problem occur.

Commuted sum payments

5.11 Where new or enhanced provision is provided off the site, the trigger for timing of provision or for the payment of a commuted sum will be included within the Section 106 legal agreement or other legal agreement or mechanism. Again, for larger schemes the payment may be phased, with stepped triggers. The developer will be required to notify the Council prior to

²⁹ See www.sefton.gov.uk/spd.

³⁰ While specific to the Thames Basin and Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), Natural England's SANG guidance helps indicates design and other issues which may be relevant to SANGS in relation to the Sefton Coast. See https://www.woking2027.info/supplementary/tbhspaspd/updated_sang_guidance_August_2021.pdf

³¹ An assessor on P R I I Register of Play Industries Inspector list, see <https://www.playinspectors.com/outdoor-play/>

³² Practical completion will take place when a dwelling is complete for all practical purposes and is available for occupation.

any phasing triggers being reached. Provision must be available for use by members of the public in line with the planning permission. Again, this will generally be before practical completion of the final house, or of 50 homes (whichever is the lower figure). For replacement open space or sports facilities provision under policy NH5 this would be before the first home is occupied.

Provision of other types of open space /green space

5.12 Other types of new open space provision that could be considered in new housing developments include allotments, community gardens, orchards and other food growing initiatives or outdoor sports pitches. These cannot generally be provided instead of new public open space under Local Plan policy EQ9 or the Golden Rules due to their specialist nature and characteristics. Such provision would need to be suitably sized (around 2 hectares) and appropriately located, taking into account soil quality, drainage and flood risk, access and amenity. Suitable arrangements for long-term management and maintenance would be required in line with sections 5.7 to 5.10 inclusive above.

5.13 Similarly, sports pitches cannot generally be provided instead of new public open space under Local Plan policy EQ9 or the 'Golden Rules', although compensatory provision of new or enhanced sports pitches, tennis courts or bowling greens or associated facilities may be required for certain sites or as set out in Local Plan site-specific requirements. Suitable arrangements for long-term management and maintenance would be required.

Wider Environmental Improvements in Bootle

5.14 Bootle Area Action Plan policies BAAP11 'Public Green Spaces' and BAAP24 'Environmental Improvements' allow for wider environmental enhancements including in lieu of public green space provision or enhancement. This is set out in more detail in the Area Action Plan and elsewhere in this SPD.

5.15 Part 3 of policy BAAP24 'Environmental Improvements' allows for on-site environmental improvements *"if these are substantively over and above normal policy requirements and the Council considers that they provide clear benefits to future residents and the wider neighbourhood"*. Any new or enhanced public green space within the site should follow the Design Principles set out above.

6. Enforcement and monitoring

6.1 Monitoring indicators are set out in Appendix 3 of the Local Plan and in relation to individual Bootle Area Action Plan policies. Those relevant to this SPD are shown below. *Additional indicators are shown in italics below.* The monitoring indicators will be reported in the Council's annual Authority Monitoring Report and/or planning obligations monitoring report. The indicators are:

For Bootle Area Action Plan area

- Financial contributions secured for and expended on local parks and other areas of public green space *or other Environmental Improvements (policy BAAP24)*
- *New public green space provided as part of development proposals*

For the rest of Sefton

- The area of new public open space approved on schemes of 150 or more dwellings
- The area of new public open space approved on proposals for 11-149 dwellings on sites which are more than 2 km from a main park or Countryside Recreation Area
- Financial contributions secured through Section 106 legal agreement or other mechanism to improve existing public open space *or to provide compensatory provision for loss of open space including outdoor sports facilities*

7. Further information and references

National

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

Planning Practice Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

[Draft] National Planning Policy Framework Plan-making and national decision-making policies (December 2025):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6941965758a21370f58f304e/Draft_NPPF_December_2025.pdf

National Design Guide (2021):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602cef1d8fa8f5038595091b/National_design_guide.pdf

The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (Statutory Instrument 2015 No. 595) – see

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/595/article/2/made>

Natural England Green infrastructure documents

- **Green infrastructure Standards for England – Summary (2023)** - see <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Green%20Infrastructure%20Standards%20for%20England%20Summary%20v1.1.pdf>
- **Green infrastructure Planning and Design Guide** – see <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/DesignGuide.aspx>

Green Flag Award (online): www.greenflagaward.org.uk.

Planning Portal: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/making-an-application/>

Sport England:

- Facility Costs Guidance: <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/facility-cost-guidance>
- Active Design: <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/active-design/>
- Development of community sports hubs and costs: <https://www.sportengland.org/>

Department of Education:

Guidance on protecting school playing fields and schools' powers to protect land:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-school-playing-fields-and-public-land-advice>

British Standards Institution BS EN 1176 Playground Equipment and surfacing: see for example:

- <https://landingpage.bsigroup.com/LandingPage/Series?UPI=BS%20EN%201176>
- <https://www.bsigroup.com/contentassets/fd0e8cd7dd174774890cd67e03389a99/childrens-playground-stds-hi-res.pdf>

Register of Play Inspectors International: <https://www.playinspectors.com/outdoor-play/>

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) online information about play, for example:

- <https://www.rosaplaysafety.co.uk/advice-information/en1176-playground-equipment-standard/>
- <https://www.rosaplaysafety.co.uk/advice-information/equality-act-ea/>
- <https://www.rosaplaysafety.co.uk/advice-information/>

Learning through Landscapes: Climate Ready School Grounds – Technical Areas – see

<https://ltl.org.uk/project/climate-ready-school-grounds-technical-areas/>

Regional

Liverpool City Region Local Nature Recovery Strategy (March 2026): <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy>

The Mersey Forest:

- The Mersey Forest Plan: <https://merseyforest.org.uk/our-plan/>
- The Mersey Forest Tree Atlas: <https://merseyforest.org.uk/tree-atlas/>

Merseyside Police Designing Out Crime Team: team inbox is Force.ALU@merseyside.police.uk

Sefton

Applying for planning permission: <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/apply-for-planning-permission/how-to-make-a-planning-application.aspx>

Conservation and Heritage: <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/conservation-and-heritage/>

Developers Pack - Street Design Guide: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/700872/sefton-developers-pack-street-design-guide.pdf>

Open Space and Recreation Study (2015): <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/oumlmsr/open-space-and-recreation-study-smbc-november-2015.pdf>

Pre-Application advice: <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/apply-for-planning-permission/pre-application-advice-on-development-proposals.aspx>

A Local Plan for Sefton (adopted April 2017): <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/local-plan/>

Bootle Area Action Plan (adopted January 2026): <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/bootleaap>

Bootle Area Action Plan Environment and Climate Change Topic Paper (2025):

- Document: https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/vvcjzosp/sp19-environmentclimatechange_topic_paper.pdf
- Appendices: https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/jznd35ju/sp19a-environmentclimate_topic_paper_appendices.pdf

Sefton Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2023) and any Annual Review: <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-including-local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/evidence-and-studies/playing-pitch-and-outdoor-sports-strategy/>

Sefton Supplementary Planning Documents, Guidance and Information Notes:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/spd>

Selected Green Sefton websites:

- Allotments - <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/around-sefton/parks-and-greenspaces/allotments/>

Neighbourhood Plans

Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan (2019):

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/3719/neighbourhoodplan-19.pdf>

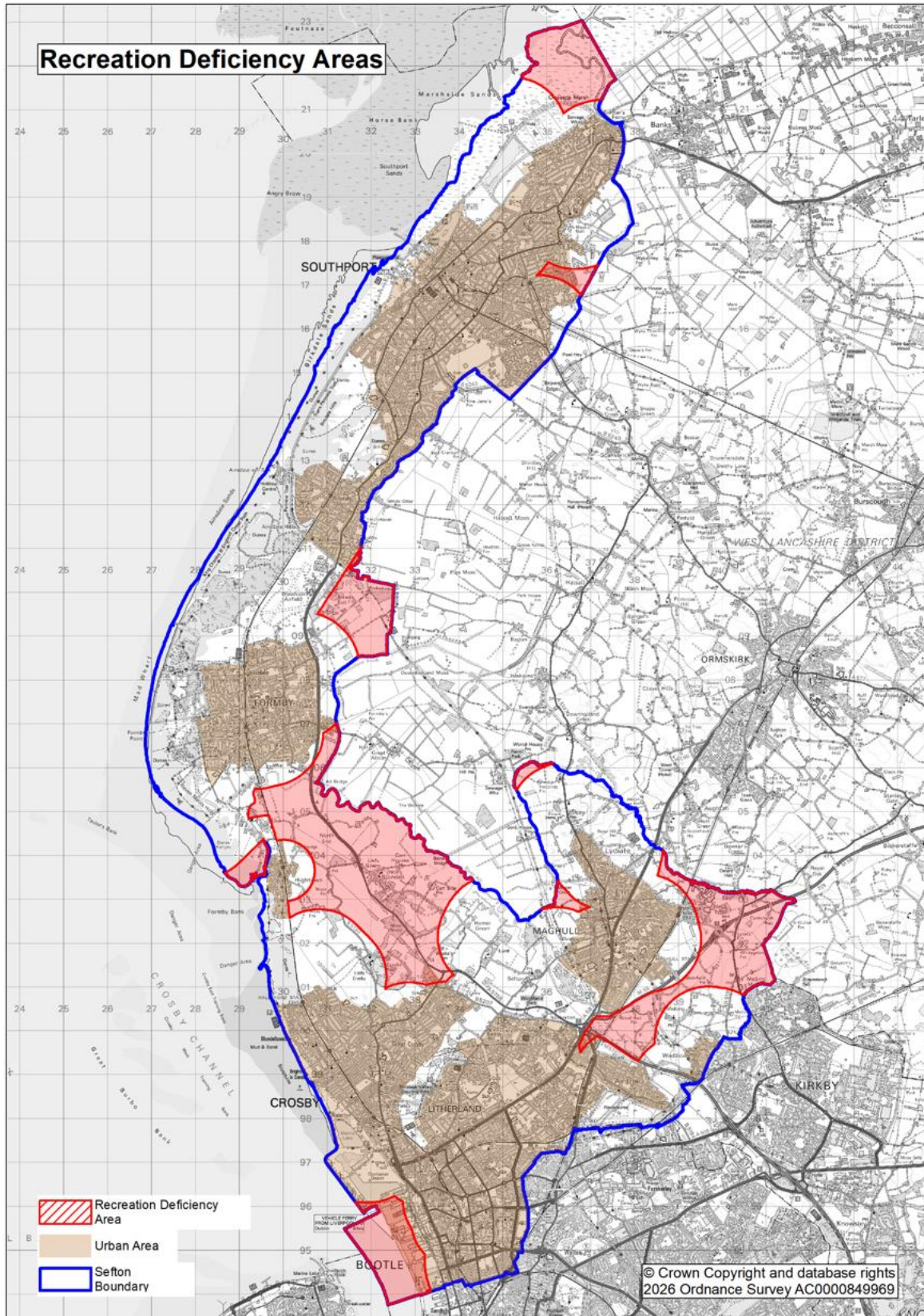
Lydiate Neighbourhood Plan (2019): https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1766/lydiate-n-p_final_version_-_copy.pdf

Maghull Neighbourhood Plan (2019): <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1770/maghull-n-p-final-version2.pdf>

Appendix A: Parks and Countryside Recreation Areas – Areas of deficit

The map below shows areas more than 2 km from a main park or Countryside Recreation Area (recreation deficiency areas). More detailed maps may be available from the Council on request.

Areas more than 2km from a main park or Countryside Recreation Area



Appendix B: Planning obligations and commuted sums

B1. Commuted sums would be secured as part of legal agreements or planning obligations made under Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (as amended). The National Planning Policy Framework defines a planning obligation as “A legal agreement entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal”.

B2. Paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that:

“58. Planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:

- a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b) directly related to the development; and
- c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.”

Sefton Council considers that their approach to provision of open space, public green space provision, other green infrastructure (including nature areas) and wider environmental improvements through commuted sums and planning obligations is in line with paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

What is the commuted sum for open space and wider environmental improvements?

A commuted sum payment of **£2,838*** (at 2026-27 prices) per dwelling, in relation to Local Plan policy EQ9 'Provision of public open space, strategic paths and trees'

OR

A commuted sum payment of **£2,838*** (at 2026-27 prices) per housing unit, single hot food takeaway premises or 100 m2 of other non-residential floorspace, in relation to Bootle Area Action Plan policies BAAP11 Public Greenspace and/or BAAP 24 Environmental Improvements

* adjusted each year in line with inflation.

How is the commuted sum calculated and how will it be spent?

B3. The baseline commuted sum of £2,050 (2017-2018 prices) is carried forward from the 'Green space, trees and development' SPD (2008), as set out in the first column of Figure B1 below. This sum has been used successfully as a basis for securing public open space enhancements in Sefton since 2008. This sum has been adjusted each year to reflect inflation rates, and this annual adjustment would continue (£2,838 in 2026-2027).

B4. The sum was based on a contribution (rather than the full cost) of open space provision, including allowances for capital works, establishment (for 3 years), maintenance (for up to 10 years) and administration costs, as set out in the first column of Figure B1 below; plus any associated legal costs. Because it is based on a contribution, rather than forming the full cost of provision/enhancement, it is still appropriate for this sum to be used for public open space enhancements as set out in Local Plan policy EQ9 'Provision of public open space, strategic paths and trees', as set out in Figure B1 below.

B5. It is also appropriate for this sum to be used as the basis for the wider environmental improvements set out in Bootle Area Action Plan policies BAAP11 Public Green Space and BAAP24 Environmental Improvements. This is also set out in Figure B1. Where an establishment and/or maintenance period is not relevant (for example for an education-based project to reduce fly-tipping, or a project which provides one free 'bulky goods' collection per

household in a set time period), the proportion (%) of the commuted sum to be used for the initial [capital] cost would be increased accordingly.

B6. Sefton’s Legal officers may also charge an additional fee for preparing legal agreements (Section 106 legal agreements), on an agreed scale of charges. For more complex agreements additional sums may be requested to cover the costs of obtaining advice from external expert consultants, legal and administration costs.

Figure B1. Spending of each commuted sum - £2838* per dwelling (at 2026-27 prices)		
2008/2017 SPD derivation of commuted sum	Public open space (Local Plan policy EQ9)	Wider environmental improvements (BAAP policy BAAP24)
At least 65% towards the costs of improving existing public parks, play spaces or public open space	75% towards the costs of improving existing public parks, green spaces, playing fields, play spaces / play areas or other public open space. This may include measures to improve green infrastructure, play or gym equipment, paths and street furniture, and accessibility to these public open spaces	At least 75% towards the costs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving public greenspaces, with emphasis on facilities, equipment & activities for children & young people • improving small areas of under-used land for community environment projects • enhancing nature, taking account of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other Sefton priorities • improving priority routes between new development and existing public greenspaces • projects to deal with litter/fly tipping • streetscape improvements • planting trees in appropriate locations in line with corporate and partner environmental priorities • supporting community and ‘friends of’ groups who help manage and maintain local parks; <u>and/or</u> • other projects that would improve the local environment.
Up to 10% contribution towards an initiative forming part of a strategic approach to managing visitor pressure on the Sefton Coast		
10% for 3 years’ establishment	10% for 3 years’ establishment	Up to 10% for 3 years’ establishment
10% for maintenance (for up to 10 years)	10% for maintenance (for up to 10 years)	Up to 10% for maintenance (for up to 10 years)
5 % for the costs of administering the commuted sum.	5 % for the costs of administering the commuted sum.	5 % for the costs of administering the commuted sum.
100%	100%	100%
Sefton’s Legal officers may also charge an additional fee for preparing planning obligations, on an agreed scale of charges. For more complex planning obligations, additional sums may be requested to cover the costs of obtaining advice from external expert consultants, legal and administration costs.		
* Rises annually with inflation		

What if the applicant does not agree with this commuted sum assessment?

B7. If the applicant does not agree with the final commuted sum calculation for a site, they should provide designs and costs for the public open space, other related requirements set out in Local Plan site-specific policies or Appendix 1 of the Local Plan or wider environmental improvements.

Appendix C: Priority routes within Bootle Area Action Plan area

C1. These routes are identified in policy BAAP8 'Getting Around' and Figure 14 of Bootle Area Action Plan and are also relevant to policies BAAP11 Public Green Spaces and BAAP24 Environmental Improvements. Figure 14 of the Plan is reproduced in Figure C1 below.

