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# **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

*Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report comprises The Open Space Assessment and informal recreation study. It forms part of the 'Kilkenny Recreational Needs Study'.

This open space report should be read in conjunction with the Assessment of Formal Sporting Facilities in Kilkenny in order to set out an overall strategy for active and passive recreation in Kilkenny City and County.

The aim of this study is to review the existing open space resource in terms of function and quality, with the objective of establishing what is the existing capacity and potential to meet the city's and county's needs in terms of amenity and recreation and / or alternative uses of dysfunctional spaces as appropriate.

The existing provision is assessed against recognised standards and highlights the shortfall.

The study area covers Kilkenny City and Kilkenny County. As part of the analysis the following have been carried out:-

- (a) On ground analysis,(each site visited)
- (b) desk top studies
- (c) public consultation.

Extensive surveys were carried out for all individual open spaces including waterfront corridors.

The findings of the assessment and analysis are as follows:

### **Kilkenny City:**

1. The open space as defined by the zoning objectives map for KilkennyCity shows a quantity of open space greater than that required by the present standard in the Development Plan. Greater than the "Six Acre Standard"
2. The amenity value, the quality and the functionality of the existing spaces is poor.
3. There is no quality play provision within most open spaces surveyed.
4. There is no dedicated department to develop and manage open space within the city and county.
5. Open space resource at a local level requires redesign and redevelopment to maximise its potential and quality.
6. There is a unique water resource both ecological / green and urban / hard associated with the Nore river corridor, with the potential to embellish the image and civic attractions of Kilkenny city.
7. There is a need for a hierarchy of open space provision to ensure a clear function / purpose for each open space provided. This will inform day to day decision making re individual facilities and avoid duplication and / or under-provision.
8. Open space in Kilkenny should provide visual enhancement to the fabric of the city, whether as a recreational amenity or not.

### **Kilkenny County:**

9. County towns are generally well provided for with an attractive surrounding countryside context – walks, natural areas, woodlands etc, and individual sports clubs often have their own facilities, however, in general, each town / village requires consolidation or enhancement of at least one existing green / space or creation of new greens or town parks as a focal point for social and community events and informal provision for miscellaneous recreational activities

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#### General:

10. Kilkenny City and County have no dedicated department to develop and manage open space within the city / county.
11. The issue of public liability should not be a deterrent to providing equipped play areas as long as recently adopted and recognised EU standards are followed.
12. There is a need for a strategic vision of open space in the city and county and its role in
  - The promotion of Kilkenny as a city with a high quality of life.
  - The potential to create networks of open spaces.
  - The development of Kilkenny City, County and the Nore / Barrow region and its niche in the leisure and tourism market, building on it's established heritage attractions.

#### *Recommendations:*

#### **Provision of Open Space**

1. Adopt an open space strategy for the city and its environs.
2. All policies should be guided by the need to provide a balanced range and hierarchy of open spaces and locations throughout the Study Area and by providing access to all.
3. Communities in the City and County should be involved in an informed way in local redevelopment plans involving improved open space, footpath creation and particularly infill development.
4. Due to the strategic nature of the proposals in Kilkenny City impacting on recreation, housing, community development, urban and economic development, tourism and city image it may be appropriate to set up an interdepartmental task force to direct and manage the recreation strategy.
5. Put in place appropriate cross-departmental structures to manage and develop the open space strategy, and provide sufficient resources to implement it.
6. In consultation with local communities, provide one publicly managed town park or village green in the each county town and village addressed in the Study Area.

#### **Design, Quality and Management of Open Space**

7. An immediate priority within the strategy should be to upgrade and facilitate the improved design, maintenance and management of existing open spaces both in the City and County.

#### **Provision of Play Facilities**

8. In consultation with communities, plans for the improvement, maintenance and management of local facilities should be developed with an emphasis on the early provision of quality children's play areas.
9. For the provision of Play Areas the City and County Councils should:
  - Adopt EU standard EN 1176 for the design and management of play area equipment.
  - Be directly responsible for the control and management of the play areas unless by agreement with another agency.
  - Should undertake weekly checks on play areas and equipment, carried out by suitably qualified employees.
  - Remove all defective / dangerous equipment immediately and not reinstate until satisfactorily repaired.
  - Maintain records of inspections including dates, personnel and qualifications of inspectors, and necessary actions taken.

#### **Resources**

10. The City and County Councils should seek to implement Sections 48 & 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, for the purpose of raising funds to, not only provide for, but to also fund the management and maintenance of these amenities. Funding may also be possible from other sources such as SEHB.

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### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

11. The Councils should consider whether to impose a flat rate development levy per house to go towards the provision of open space.
12. Where it is possible under these Sections, developers should provide a satisfactory level of open space on site in accordance with best practice including:
  - The amalgamation of open space into useable units.
  - Arrangements of housing to provide maximum surveillance.
  - The enclosure of open space where it abuts a main road.
  - The provision of equipped children's play areas.
  - The protection of existing landscape features of merit.
  - The provision of hard and soft landscape features, furniture and lighting as appropriate.
13. The clustering of open space in City and County areas with other leisure and sports opportunities to maximise usage, efficient use of capital and human resources and management e.g. the location of open space with sports centres.
14. The recognition of the social and cultural benefits of providing open space to capture available funds from non-traditional agencies e.g. Urban Woodland Schemes, Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation.
15. The Councils should develop management, maintenance and access agreements with what is classified as private space with open access - schools, community run facilities, hospital or college / institutional grounds – to develop and realise the potential of these often quality and mature environments as informal passive recreational areas.

### **Redesign and Redevelopment**

16. In the City and County consider the use of infill built development to reconfigure / structure open space in accordance with best practice for open spaces and urban design.
17. Such redevelopment coupled with public/private partnerships and further public investment should create additional resources to address the upgrade of open space within the City and County.

### **Strategic Vision**

18. The existing River network has potentially established the basis for a network and links County with City, tourism features and existing recreation facilities.
19. Link the development of a green city and leisure facilities with tourism programmes and opportunities e.g. the Nore Waterway Corridor and city centre initiatives such as the Batemans Quay. (Kilkenny, The Medieval City, in sitting in a beautiful, cared for, wooded, riverside environment).
20. Consider jetties and boating facilities in the city centre to bring the river to life.
21. Identify walking and cycling routes linked to open spaces and facilities to develop "greenways" and Sli na Slainte routes e.g. the city centre and interconnecting riverside walks out to the countryside.
22. To upgrade existing and provide new riverside walks as shown on City Map 5.
23. To preserve existing rights of ways in City and County especially those along the river.

### **Hierarchy**

24. Proposals should be prepared for the development of existing open spaces in the City as high quality district, city and regional parks.
25. Provide facilities to enable a greater range of activities be provided i.e. skateboarding, rollerblading and such activities that may become popular and which could be accommodated within the proposed park network. This will ensure maximum potential is realised in the parks and open space system.
26. It is important to integrate city based leisure and tourism proposals with those in the county and region. This will maximise the value derived from recreation investment by enhancing the city and county not just for residents but for visitors also.

Open space provides a green lung for the urban area and green networks are important for future economic and social well-being. However the benefits of open space are severely compromised if the spaces are neglected or undeveloped. Open spaces will only bring benefit if they are of a high quality, managed and maintained.

The fundamental importance of open space, over and above sport and recreation must be recognised in order to bring better quality of life and encourage an urban renaissance. Open spaces significantly enhance the liveability of urban environments. Allowing successful establishment of an open space

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network will serve the city and its population in a multitude of ways: including health, education and tourism, whilst also bringing socio economic benefits. The role of open space in providing a facility for informal recreation must be recognised, as this is more broadly relevant to the population. A minority of park visitors use parks for formal sport and demographically the ageing population means there will be fewer participants in active recreation.

***Open space is not an 'add on' to recreation, it is where recreation, sport and social activities take place.***

# **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

## *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 *Introduction***

The Open Space Assessment forms part of the “Kilkenny Recreational Needs Report” carried out on behalf of Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny City Council.

It is generally recognised that open space is not just an ‘add on’ to recreation, it is where recreation, sports and social activities take place. It is found in our towns and cities that, as the urban population changes and diversifies, the basic need for high quality, functional open space and other recreational facilities are growing.

Good open space can make an important contribution in improving the quality of life, and in helping to deliver wider and longer term benefits such as:-

- Improving the quality of urban regeneration
- Promoting healthy living
- Fostering social inclusion
- Encouraging education
- Supporting environmental sustainability
- Contributing to heritage and culture

Demographics reviewed under Kilkenny County Development Plan, reveal that there is an ageing population. This sector is more likely to engage in health related activities, whilst team and strength based activities will decline. Informal recreation facilities such as walking are likely to increase, especially if there is a safe and joined up network of open space. Accordingly informal recreation should be given at least equal weighting with sport.

This study addresses issues covering both active and passive recreation including informal recreation pursuits, such as walking and cycling. The study identifies and focuses on open spaces, both city and countywide and evaluates them in terms of current facilities and future opportunities. Open space, (informal recreation) is assessed separately to formal recreational facilities and requirements. The findings when taken in tandem with the [separate] study of formal sports facilities will be used to formulate a strategy for addressing Kilkenny’s recreational requirements in the form of the Recreational Needs Report

In determining the recreation potential within Kilkenny County, on ground and desk top research as well as consultation was undertaken to establish the quality and quantity of existing open space and recreational facilities and determine the needs of the population. The research aims to identify those open spaces of a recreational amenity value, with a view to formulating future initiatives and planning policy on such matters.

Kilkenny is also a recognised tourist destination. In carrying out the study, recreational resources as a tourist asset are evaluated. Informal recreation and walking in Ireland, have been identified as the major tourist activity. In Kilkenny there is a strong link between tourism and informal recreation although the potential is not always realised.

#### **1.2 *Study Area***

This study area is consistent with the sporting recreational needs study area, which is Kilkenny City and Environs and also Countywide, focusing on the main county towns.

Castlecomer, Callan, Environs of New Ross, Belview area and Kilmacow village are also covered, as there are currently development plans for these areas. The study area is shown on *Figure 1. Location Plan*

The main emphasis of the study is on the provision of open space within the city where development pressure is greatest and secondly, county towns, where there are opportunities to

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provide additional open space to meet the needs of the growing communities and expanding towns.

It is recognised throughout the study, that towns and villages on, or near the County border, or in the proximity of another major town outside the County eg. Waterford, will be influenced by the recreational facilities outside the study area.

#### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The key objectives of the assessment are to

- Catalogue and evaluate significant areas of existing open space both in Kilkenny City and County.
- Identify where there is an imbalance between demand and provision of recreational amenity areas.
- Identify areas of recreational potential and establish an interconnecting 'route' system that identifies various types of informal outdoor activities.
- Establish a potential hierarchy of open spaces.
- Identify issues that affect both the open space and their provision.
- Produce a mechanism to enable proposals made.
- Produce a baseline database of the existing and potential open space against which the needs analysis can be compared and proposals made to meet demand.

#### **1.4. Report Structure**

The report covers the issues above and relates them to the situation in the main built-up area – Kilkenny City. Where appropriate specific reference is made to issues or approaches in the county town and villages. In general the hierarchy proposed in Section 6.0 relates to the city requirements, however the requirements of and specific proposals for villages and towns are addressed in Maps 3- 12.

# Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy

## Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives

### DEFINITIONS

#### 2.1 Definitions

To assess these open spaces it is necessary to establish what constitutes open space.

Not all spaces with recreational amenity are zoned as open space. Facilities such as cemeteries and hospital grounds can have a significant value in terms of recreation amenity. Often old hospitals are associated with extensive mature grounds, akin to a traditional park; in particular St Canice's Hospital is a good example. Cemeteries too, with mature trees can be a pleasant place to walk or sit, as well as containing some historic interest.

Nor are all zoned open spaces accessible for public use. Stadia for example, are usually completely enclosed and provide facilities for limited number of people. Kilkenny Golf Course is zoned open space yet is not accessible for general public use.

For the purposes of this study the term 'open space' will be taken to be generic, green and hard surfaced open space and indicate a variety of private and public, formal and informal landscape and townscape within both the fabric of the city and the county environs.

The following definitions establish **categories**:-



#### Zoned open space

As per the Kilkenny City 2002 Development Plan - covers land designated for formal and informal recreation.



#### Community Facilities

This includes cemeteries/ churchyards which can be a pleasant place to walk in or sit or provide visual amenity. Eg St Patrick's Graveyard or St Kieran's (*opposite*). It also covers land for institutional purposes such as schools and hospitals where there is open space

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#### SLOAP

*Space Left Over After Planning*, small pockets of grassed areas, commonly found in residential areas. Land is not recognised (zoned) as open space, generally low usability in terms of formal recreation but potential contributor to general informal and visual amenity

# Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy

## Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives

Open space is used for:

### Formal recreation

- organised sports and games where facilities are required, for example marked sports pitch and goals (Soccer, GAA) Generally formal recreation is active.

### Informal recreation

- casual sports or activities where no specific facilities are required. (eg. walking, running, cycling, kick-about). Informal recreation can be active or passive.

Active recreation describes recreational pursuits of an energetic nature. (eg soccer, running, horse riding.)

Passive recreation describes recreational pursuits of a sedentary/ inactive nature. (eg fishing, sitting, picnicing)

### Children's Play Area

Areas specifically furnished with children's play equipment.

## 2.2 **Classification of open space**

Open space for the purpose of this report will be defined as 'green and hard surfaced space' and will include but is not limited to the following uses or non-uses:-

<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Image</b>
<i>Stadia</i>	land that is formally zoned, (under Development Plan) as open space, which in many cases is privately owned eg GAA grounds, with no public access, or no visual amenity due to high visual enclosure	
<i>Sports grounds</i>	pitches, frequently as part of school grounds; zoned as community facilities	

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<p><i>Amenity open space</i></p>	<p>public spaces around buildings such as town squares and public buildings</p>	
<p><i>Natural green, open spaces</i></p>	<p>wetlands or woodlands, 'green corridors' such as riverbanks and canals, 'of an ecological character</p>	
<p><i>Countryside</i></p>	<p>It is also recognised that the countryside itself forms a valuable recreational resource for walking, horse riding etc whilst fulfilling an agricultural function</p>	

As well as use access to zoned or other open spaces is a factor to be assessed. Open space can be private or publicly accessible:

<p><i>Private open space</i></p>	<p>'green' open spaces which although not accessible to the public, provide visual amenity to the public.eg hotel grounds, golf courses</p>	
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### Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives

<p><i>Public Open Space</i></p>	<p>'green' open spaces that are accessible to the public. This can range from parks, natural areas to small pockets of land within residential areas. These areas also provide visual amenity</p>	
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### 2.3 Hierarchy of Open Space

A strategic provision of open space should be based on a hierarchical scale to ensure a varied provision of integrated open space to meet varying needs.

- Regional  
Open spaces and amenities of a 'Regional' classification are those that people will travel from outside the region to visit and use.
- Citywide  
Open spaces and amenities of a 'Citywide' classification are those that people will travel from all over the city to visit and use. In Kilkenny this category does not exist alone and is served by regional parks.
- District  
Open spaces and amenities of a 'District' classification are those that people will travel from around the immediate district, (approximately a one kilometre radius), to visit and use.
- Local  
Open spaces and amenities of a 'Local' classification, are those that people will travel from the immediate locality, (approximately 0.5km radius or less), to visit and use.

### 2.4 What constitutes 'good' open space?

Many factors contribute to high quality open space. Good open space should be aesthetically pleasing; the open space should meet the requirements of a broad spectrum of population in terms of user needs. Maintenance and management are also essential to a good open space. The benefits of open space are severely compromised if the spaces become run down. Open spaces will only bring benefit if they are of a high quality, well designed with a purpose and function, managed and maintained.

Good practice principles are addressed in detail later in the report. These principles follow assessment of open space and measures are established with the objective of providing quality open spaces.

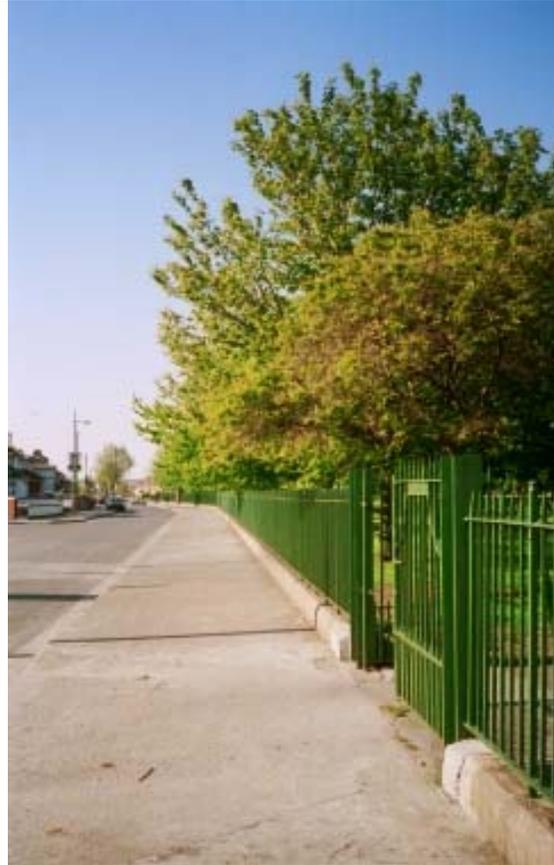
The following factors are essential in creating a good open space. The following criteria are used in assessing the individual spaces surveyed.

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<p><b>Accessibility</b>          One of the most important prerequisites for good open space is location. Open space in the wrong location will fail to function effectively, will be difficult to access, maintain and manage. Spaces should be in close proximity to buildings / built-up areas – the population that is served. This can also lead to enhanced Supervision.</p> <p>Ease of accessibility, potentially allows maximum use of an open space thereby providing a valuable resource.</p>	
<p><b>Usage</b>          The benchmark of good open space is that it is heavily used. This confirms it has a purpose and is valued by the local population. Deserted open spaces are often without any facilities or function.</p>	
<p><b>Good design</b>          A well designed and considered use of open space makes the difference between an open space that will be used to full potential or not at all. A place designed with function in mind and providing amenities to meet those functions will provide immense value and pleasure.</p>	
<p><b>Visual amenity</b>          Open space must be visually attractive, safe, encourage high usage and hence high contribution to the city form</p>	

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**Enclosure / definition / legibility**  
Enclosure or containment of open space is key to maintaining its integrity from the aspect of ownership, control and security. This can be in the form of physical boundaries such as railings, hedges etc; or implied boundaries such as city squares/ plaza's where space is defined by adjacent buildings or footpaths. (Eg French urban squares)



**Facilities / features**  
Equipping open space with facilities and features defines to a large extent the usage and functionality of the space, These may be basics such as footpaths, lighting and seating or specialised features such as play equipment, café/ kiosk, sports pitch.



**Maintenance**  
Levels of maintenance usually determine the usability of an open space. Poorly maintained space is of no benefit to the community and eventually may become a threat. Effective design should allow for the anticipated level of maintenance that can be provided. This does not necessarily mean high maintenance.



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#### **Community partnership**

Evidence of community partnership is most often seen in terms of design and maintenance e.g. the presence of community centres in parks, encouraging association and security.



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## **3.0 POLICY BACKGROUND**

### **3.1 Relevant Legislation**

The provision of open space and amenities for its use are covered by a range of statutes.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 is a statute that sets out the principles for the control of private land in the interests of the common good and for proper planning and sustainable development.

Section 10 of part II sets out the requirements for each development plan including the provision for zoning of land for recreation and open space as well as the setting out of objectives in a development plan for the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities.

Local authorities are empowered, under the Local Government Act 1994 to provide operate and maintain parks and open spaces, including children's playgrounds for amenity and recreation purposes.

European Standards EN1176 (Playground Equipment) and EN1177 (Impact absorbing playground surfacing) are also relevant in the context of providing play equipment.

### **3.2 Planning Background**

The relevant planning background for the study area can be divided into statutory documents and non-statutory documents. The former include the relevant development plans and the latter include guidance documents. The relevant documentation is appended to this report (Appendix IV).

#### *Local Development Plans*

The Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan 2002 and Kilkenny County Development Plan list key policy objectives for provision of open space which is summarised below:-

- To provide a coordinated and graded system of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas
- To preserve and improve public access to those riverbank and countryside areas which have traditionally been used for outdoor recreation.
- To protect, conserve and enhance the attractive physical amenity of the city and environs.
- To conserve and enhance the amenity of the River Nore corridor, to increase public access and water related recreation opportunities.
- To ensure that open space is provided to enhance the character of residential areas.
- To provide adequate and accessible provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities.
- Developers may be required to provide equipped children's playground where a development would be more than 800m from existing facility and make suitable provision for maintenance and management of open space until it is handed over to the local authority.

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- Appropriate regard of the above shall be made to safety, in terms of lighting, layout and landscape treatment.
- To preserve views and prospects of special amenity value or interest.
- Developers will be required to pool land to make provision for multipurpose sport and recreational infrastructure as an integral part of their proposals (including provision of a development levy for passive and active recreation).
- To adopt a minimum open space standard for new residential development. (below)

The following standards for minimum space per head of population are stated below.

#### *Recommended Open Space Standards per 1000 Population / 150 dwellings*

<b>Proposed Use</b>	<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Preferred Standard</b>
<i>Overall requirements</i>	<i>Not specified</i>	<i>2.4 hectares (6 acre)</i>

A lesser standard may be acceptable in urban locations where there are more sustainable patterns of development. This also applies to redevelopment schemes where open space is already available with relatively high densities. This open space should amount to 10% of the total site area.

#### *A Policy For The Provision and Maintenance of Parks, Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation Areas". Department of the Environment*

The *National policy* for the provision, development, administration and maintenance of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation is outlined in the Department of The Environment publication, February 1987, "A Policy For The Provision and Maintenance of Parks, Open Spaces and Outdoor Recreation Areas". (refer to Appendix I)

These guidelines recommend the provision of:

- 2.02 ha (5 acres) / 1,000 population, or
- One 16ha park and two 2.02ha parks per 10,000 people.

Kilkenny would therefore require two 16ha parks and six 2.02ha acre parks for its current population.

These standards however are considered outdated and of less relevance than the NPFA standards (see below). Furthermore, the 2.02ha (5 acre) standard considers population only and does not provide sufficient guidance on distance or coverage area from proposed open space nor the nature and requirements of this proposed open space to meet the needs of the population unit.

This guidance was produced by the Department of the Environment in 1987 and therefore has become outdated but still represents the only national advice specifically for local authorities providing for parks, open spaces and outdoor recreational activities. This advice identifies the growing demand for the provision of public parks, open spaces and recreational areas and the need to co-ordinate this provision if public demand is to be adequately catered for and if maximum value is to be obtained from the limited resources available.

Local authorities are encouraged:- to make assessment of open space and outdoor recreational requirements for urban areas and to include objectives in the relevant development plan to make provision for any deficiency identified; to make an inventory of all existing residential areas; better utilise areas of open space of no recreational or amenity value with any financial gain from such being allocated towards the cost of providing and developing more suitable open space in the

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

same general area; commence a programme for the development and regular maintenance of all suitable areas of open space; to provide operate and maintain a range of outdoor and recreational facilities in accordance with local requirements needs; to apply open space standards within the development control system including attaching conditions requiring developers to make contributions, where appropriate, towards the cost of providing adequately and suitably developed parks and other facilities.

However, in terms of area, an open space standard of 5 acres (2.02ha) of quality public open space per 1000 population is considered reasonable. Suitable tracts of land should be identified, and reserved for public open space purposes in the relevant development plan and subsequent action plans.

In major urban areas population units of 10,000 a Neighbourhood Park of 40 acres (16ha) and 2 Local Parks each of about 5 acres (2ha) should be considered for such a unit. If necessary, existing and proposed open space should be disaggregated into the smallest possible number of units of suitable shape and size so as to permit subsequent maintenance at minimum cost and to allow maximum flexibility of use.

A clear hierarchy of open space provision is set out including the requirements for neighbourhood park, local park, other open space and amenity areas. The provision of open space such as country parks and other such amenities in rural areas are also identified. These details are enclosed within Appendix V.

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The provision of percentage requirements of open space per housing development is a crudely defined method of securing open space. This process needs to be refined, in order to provide open spaces of a viable nature, in terms of both location and nature.

Applying this guidance it is important that the city aim to provide a hierarchy of public open space options for recreation within the city and environs. At the upper end of the scale there should exist regional parks, (notionally 40 acres and above), which will be fewer in number. Moving down the hierarchy of scale / size, a variety of parks and park sizes should be provided in increasing numbers.

#### *National Playing Fields Association (Six Acre Standard)*

There are currently no relevant standards for an open space hierarchy in Ireland. In the U.K. the National Playing Fields Association promotes a more defined hierarchy of community recreational space through the 'Six Acre Standard' or 2.4ha. The application of the **hierarchy and locational** principals in this standard for an urban area such as Kilkenny City are recommended to be used as a guide. The standard also specifies provision for children's play areas as follows:-

- NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play) – should be in the region of 8 – 16 ha and targeted at children aged 8-14 years. NEAP developments should ideally be provided within a walking radius of 1km, (notionally 15 minutes walk), of the community dwellings it serves and offer a minimum of eight types of equipment or recreational activities
- LEAP (Locally Equipped Areas for Play) – should be in the region of 2.02 acres and targeted at children between 4 to 8 years. LEAP developments should ideally be provided within a walking radius of 0.4km, (notionally 5 minutes walk); of the community dwellings it serves and offer a minimum of five types of equipment.
- LAP (Local Area for Play) – small areas of open space suitable for children under 5 years of age should be within a one minute walk of the community dwellings it serves.

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This is a guideline standard, though obviously this space may be neither immediately achievable nor always possible. (in existing built up areas it is not always possible to provide an open space in exact accordance with these guidelines, however in new developments this can be planned for)

### *Comparative Analysis with City and County plans elsewhere in Ireland*

Official open space standards vary throughout the country from County to County, and again between County and City Boroughs, although a figure of 10 percent is normal for most new developments. However, it should be avoided placing too much emphasis on figurative open space standards as these are a crude and somewhat outdated concept, (particularly with reference to the 1999 Residential Density Guidelines).

For the purposes of this report it is more useful instead to look at existing open space within comparable city borough boundaries, (the county figures are also included for Dublin in order to form a more complete picture).

<u>City Borough</u>	<u>Hectares (approx)</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Hectare/1000people</u>
Dublin City Borough	1,780	481,854	3.68
Fingal Co.	1,618	167,683	9.6
South Dublin Co.	1,618	218,728	18.3
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co.	890.34	189,999	7.406
Cork City Borough	526.11	127,187	4.13
Galway City Borough	565.58	57,241	9.87
Limerick City Borough	431.81	52,039	8.5

The above existing open space provision ranges from 1.5 times the required provision in Kilkenny, compared with Dublin City Borough to 4 times that provision in Galway City Borough. However, the analysis will show that provision in Kilkenny City significantly exceeds the development plan standards. This is partly a result of the inheritance of some high quality public space e.g. the Castle, private open space of significance such as Kilkenny Golf Club as well as the impact of lower density housing in the suburbs in previous years.

### Conclusions from analysis of Guidelines and Standards

The conclusion of this report based on the above review of comparative standards and guidelines is that the minimum standard for the provision of open space remains, as set out in the Development Plan, at 2.4ha / 1000 population.

However as a minimum this only provides formal recreation facilities (Ref NPFA guidelines above) and in order to provide more passive recreation amenity and opportunity, a more generous provision should be preferred. It is recommended that a second preferred standard of open space provision in Kilkenny City and environs should be 3.5ha. Of this provision at least 2.4ha must be suitable for formal recreation.

This sets a preferred standard of provision of open space broadly in line with Dublin City Borough, whilst retaining the current standard as a minimum requirement and reflects the reality of current actual provision. It also provides flexibility in the application of development control standards to individual developments in the context of existing quality open space provision.

It should be remembered that zoning too much open space can prove as undesirable as zoning too little, adding to urban sprawl pressures and creating vast swathes of space that exceed maintenance capacity.

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#### **3.3 Key Agencies**

There are a number of government departments and agencies each of which has input into the funding and provision of open space and amenities within these areas. Foremost amongst these is the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

##### Department of Environment and Local Government

Under the Housing Remedial Works Scheme grants are available to fund small play areas within housing estates.

##### Department of Marine and Natural Resource

This Department within the forestry service have initiated an Urban Woodland Scheme which encourages and facilitates increased tree planting with urban areas, facilities including seats, litter bins, "trim trails" and play areas. This Department also have a Neighbourhood Scheme which assists local groups in managing a wood.

##### The Heritage Council

The Council was a statutory responsibility under Section 6 of the Heritage Act 1996 to proposed policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage. In the context of this study national heritage would include flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, heritage gardens and parks and finally inland waterways.

##### Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation

This department is relevant only in the context of Tourism related development.

Funding is available from the Department under the Tourism Development Scheme through the relevant regional tourism authority. This could include a tourist trail and tourism facility in a parkland setting.

##### Department of Health and Children

Support is available through the National Children's Strategy from the National Children's Office to provide facilities and services for children including play areas and play equipment.

##### Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

Support is provided to voluntary organisations working with disadvantaged groups. This could include childcare and crèche facilities including play equipment and play areas.

##### Area Development Management Ltd

ADM fund local groups who provide (1) services to the unemployed (2) community development and (3) community based youth initiatives. The latter two would appear appropriate for ADM to become involved. Potentially this includes landscaping in public areas, playgrounds etc.

#### **3.4 Synopsis**

Both the Kilkenny City and Kilkenny County Development Plans have provision for open space and recreation amenities. The Plans specify a standard of 2.4 hectares / 1000 population. An excess of open space to over and above this requirement is actually provided. It is noted above, that a standard of 3.5ha, similar to Dublin City provision, is appropriate as the preferred standard with a minimum standard of 2.4. retained. Kilkenny City have stated their objective to establish a coordinated and graded system of parks that are accessible to the public and it is in seeking to provide this standard that will aid formulation of the spaces into a hierarchy.

There is provision under the plans to make areas of natural amenity and countryside, accessible to the public, by means of preservation and creation of public rights of way. Many areas of

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Kilkenny are designated under the Draft Plan as Special Areas of Conservation, or Areas of High Amenity. These are generally elevated rural hill areas within the countryside, currently a popular informal recreation amenity.

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#### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

Consultation has been undertaken on a number of levels. The two principle forms of consultation have been a series of public meetings as detailed below and a series of meetings with officers in Kilkenny City Council and Kilkenny County Council and the Planning Department. Held over a two week period at several locations throughout the city and county, these gave an opportunity for interested parties, established groups & clubs and the general public to give their input and local knowledge to the report.

#### **4.1 Public Consultation**

Public consultation was carried out through a series of seven public meetings, which were advertised in local papers and over local radio, (see dates and venues below). Over 300 letters were sent to Churches, Schools, Clubs and Community Groups and Private Sports Clubs inviting attendance, and or, written submissions.

##### *Public Consultation*

<b>DATE</b>	<b>VENUE</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	New Park Hotel, Kilkenny
6 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	Hotel Kilkenny, Kilkenny
7 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	Castlecomer Community School
11 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	Kilkenny River Court Hotel, Kilkenny
12 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	The Rising sun, Mullinavat
13 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	Grennan College, Thomastown
14 <sup>th</sup> March 2002	Colaiste Eamonn Ris, Callan

The issues discussed at these public meetings included the provision of active and passive recreational facilities to meet social needs in certain parts of the city and county; a strategic approach to the provision of new active and passive recreational facilities; the provision of facilities for special recreational needs; the provision of new / improved open space; and finally, using the River Nore and its banks as a recreational amenity.

##### *Officer Consultation*

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2002                      Kilkenny City Council Offices

The meeting was held with the objective to obtain views, inputs and opinions and to look at relevant issues and a strategic approach to the provision of new active and passive recreational facilities

A report of the consultations is prepared and draws conclusions from those findings. These conclusions are considered in this study in developing a recreational strategy.

#### **4.2 Synopsis of consultation**

The consultation report is appended to this report.

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#### **5.0 OPEN SPACE ANALYSIS**

##### **5.1 Methodology**

On ground research and desk top studies were carried out to determine actual and potential recreation amenities. Open space that the public can access, as a resource, is assessed here. This may include both formal and informal, active and passive recreation facilities as a current use. However, formal recreational facilities and requirements are assessed in themselves elsewhere in the strategy.

An analysis and comparison of the information gathered against acknowledged standards of good practice enables a picture to emerge. Key issues such as functionality are identified, maximising potential of existing open space are addressed, and recommendations for forming potential new open spaces and routes are proposed.

Existing facilities are being viewed on a strategic scale within the city framework as a whole, policy recommendations are made for the future planning and development of recreational facilities and open space. The concept of networks and corridors is examined and "route" systems adopted. This allows for an identification of open spaces by their function to enable a network of spaces and corridors to be established.

Having previously defined what constitutes open space (2.0), the assessment of open space reviews current provision of zoned open space under the development plans as well as areas that are deemed to be open space by their nature, whether SLOAP land or institutional land.

The assessment comprised both desk top studies and on ground site surveys. The methodology is described in Appendix III

The site assessment is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis and notes the following key issues:-

- Context; setting of site
- Open space type; describes category
- Landscape type; describes characteristics
- Facilities; notes user amenities
- Effectiveness; assesses usefulness
- Safety; reviews security

Qualitative analysis includes:-

- Visual amenity
- Maturity
- Management / maintenance
- Usage

The assessment proforma and assessment methodology are contained in Appendix III.

The tables for each open space are appended to this report. Appendix IV

##### **5.2 Statistical summary of findings**

The existing open space in Kilkenny is shown in Appendix II, Site Survey Plan. Not all open space is zoned as such. There are currently large areas of zoned open space not developed or readily accessible.

The assessed space falls within two categories:- zoned open space and community facilities which includes space left over after planning (SLOAP). Within these categories different types of facility are identified. However even within zoned open space some areas have limited access or are private and this is differentiated. This is illustrated in the following summary tables.

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Zoned open space in Kilkenny City comprises the following:-

<b>Category</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Accessible recreation facility (public access)	<b>54</b>	<b>179.33</b>
Non -accessible recreation facility (private members)	<b>38</b>	<b>127.07</b>
Stadia	<b>8</b>	<b>26.82</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>333.22</b>

Un - zoned open space (community facilities & SLOAP) in Kilkenny City comprises the following:-

<b>Category</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Area(ha)</b>
SLOAP (low estimate)	<b>53</b>	<b>35.32</b>
Sports Pitches (community facility i.e. schools)	<b>30</b>	<b>19.78</b>
Institutional grounds	<b>17</b>	<b>11.56</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>66.66</b>

It is unrealistic to look at *zoned open space* in isolation to *community facilities*. Much land zoned as “community facilities” functions as open space (playing fields, Scouts Den), whereas some zoned open space is not generally accessible to the public, or is for private members use. The following table breaks the available space down into more useable categories:

<b>Zoned Category (ha)</b>		<b>Unzoned Category (ha)</b>		<b>%</b>	<b>Total area ha</b>
Accessible recreational facility	179.33	SLOAP	35.32	54	214.65
Non-accessible recreational facility	127.07			31	127.07
Stadia	26.82	Sports pitches	19.78	12	46.60
		Institutional grounds	11.56	3	11.56
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>333.22</b>		<b>66.66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>399.88</b>
%	83%		17%		

It must be noted however that of the above total, 60.46 hectares is zoned for future open space, (Kilkenny City Development Plan 2002, land currently under agricultural use zoned for open space) This allows recreational space for a further 17,000 population (based on 3.5ha/1000 pop.) The following summarises the key points emerging from the above analysis:

- The total amount of physical open space in Kilkenny City with a potential or existing recreational or amenity function is 399.88 ha.
- Of this space 83%. (333.22 ha) is zoned open space
- However of the zoned open space only 45%, (179.33 ha) is readily accessible to the general public.
- Private, non-accessible or formal recreational space comprises 43% (173.67 ha) of potential amenity space.
- Of all the physical open spaces identified in Kilkenny City, almost 17% of this is not zoned as open space.
- In terms of public policy, there is an **accessible** resource of open space consisting of zoned and unzoned land of 214.65 ha. Based on the preferred standard recommendation set out in section 3.4, of 3.5ha / 1000 population, this indicates an existing resource large enough for a population of 60,000 people. Within this resource must be found the network of workable public parks (some of the above SLOAP will not be suitable for more

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than visual amenity) and some of the recommended 2.4ha / 1000 people of formal recreational facilities (i.e. the minimum standard) – some of this will be provided by the less accessible recreational provision already existing.

Section 6.0. sets out a hierarchy of parks for the city using the above resource.

Assessing open space requirements on a population basis can often prove less than ideal, due to the unpredictability of occupancy rates – larger houses and apartments often being occupied by fewer persons than the bed space numbers would imply. Other anomalies also exist - apartment developments in the inner city where densities are high, will be unable to achieve public open space standards.

There would appear to be a generous standard of provision in this Plan in quantitative terms. However, our examination of actual existing open space suggests that quality of provision undermines effective delivery. It must be considered whether over provision open space is occurring given limited maintenance budgets. A balance must be struck between those spaces to an acceptable level.

The weaknesses inherent in the open space standards is emphasised in the 1999 Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Residential Density, when it says: “ *In general, planning authorities in Ireland set out detailed quantitative standards in their Development Plans. Less emphasis is placed on qualitative standards*”. The report goes on to say: “*The achievement of higher densities must be coupled with a higher standard of residential environment and thus the provision of higher quality public and communal open spaces is of paramount importance. Any acceptance of lower quantitative standards of open space must be accompanied by a parallel increase in qualitative standards of open space.*”

**It is also highlighted in the Guidelines that: “Case studies also indicate that where existing recreational facilities are available close to town and city centres, public open space provision on a strictly population basis is not appropriate....In essence, it will be necessary for planning authorities to take a more flexible approach on open space standards and put greater emphasis on the qualitative standards”.**

Per head of population, Kilkenny City Borough has an adequate land supply for open space. However, it is the qualitative and functional aspects of these open spaces that are of great concern. It is not sufficient to provide just land to create an open space amenity. It must be designed to have a function and provide recreational facilities.

### **5.3 Issues**

#### **5.3.1 Gaps in the open space hierarchy**

No hierarchy of spaces currently recognised. No network of spaces

#### **5.3.2 Suitability of Open Space Zoning**

Whilst the current development plan zoning categories of “Community facilities” and “Open space” are recognised, they do not acknowledge recreational facilities provided as a community facility as an open space amenity. (eg school and public sport pitches are zoned as “community facilities”, whereas privately owned sports pitches are zoned as “open space” . Therefore a football pitch could be zoned under different categories depending on ownership)

To enable future planning and provision of open space, it is recommended that all formal and informal recreational facilities should come within a comprehensive zoning category. In addition the current zoning does not recognise the fact that many of these [private] zoned open spaces are inaccessible to the public and of recreational benefit to a limited number of people. (eg GAA grounds, Kilkenny golf club).

The zoning ‘ community facilities’ does not differentiate between the various uses under this category. (eg schools pitches or cemetery). Some of these spaces are accessible to public,

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(cemetery), others have limited accessibility (schools). However with a comprehensive zoning and classification for all formal sports fields, an over all picture of sporting provision can be viewed.

#### **5.3.3 Function**

Many of the spaces designated as open space have no function. Essentially they are non designed spaces, akin to open fields. This severely limits the range of activities that can take place or the capacity of people the area can cater for. Open spaces without an obvious function become unused, resulting in a lack of visual policing, which eventually vandalism and anti social behaviour. This type of space precludes use by the elderly or very young, the ones that would benefit most.

The space should be designed with specific functions intended, to serve a range of people and ages. An overall layout plan should be prepared and if necessary implemented at stages. Consideration should be made to safety, retaining features on the site, user requirements, linkage to adjoining areas etc Facilities such as sports pitches, footpaths, lighting seating, specific areas for activities eg kickabout, jogging, play facilities, features such as water feature, kiosks, performance area could also be incorporated where appropriate.

#### **5.3.4 Design**

With the exception of the Castle and city centre civic spaces virtually no public open spaces in Kilkenny appear to have been consciously designed in even a functional sense. The process of design is fundamental to the success of even the simplest of spaces as it is preceded by the crucial question "What (or who) is this space for?" It is evident that the purpose of many open spaces is unclear and they correspond with the "space left over after planning" concept in many instances. Design not only ensures the efficient planning and lay-out of space but also is an investment in adding value to that space so it serves the public on a range of levels. The best parks have a multitude of activities taking place which ensures a critical mass of people and therefore security and use. Some spaces are well maintained but have a narrow function usually sports related, which ensures that softer aspects of passive and informal recreation involving a much wider range of people are not facilitated. A design for open space with play/ other appropriate facilities within developments could become part of the submission requirements with a specified balance of formal and informal recreation facilities

#### **5.3.5 Play**

The underdevelopment of play facilities in Kilkenny is a fundamental gap in, not just facility provision, but investment in the next generation. As a priority, this strategy should put in place mechanisms to address the need for quality play facilities across the city. Given appropriate budgets play grounds are not land hungry and can be provided in the interim whilst wider strategies are being developed for other aspects of recreation.

#### **5.3.6 Lack of Facilities County wide**

There is a distinct under provision of equipped play areas county wide. Liability should not be used as an excuse for non provision, provided play equipment complies with EU standards. Most of the main county towns identified have space available to incorporate equipped play areas.

#### **5.3.7 Insurance and public safety issues**

Insurance has been wrongly construed as an issue resulting in the lack of provision of equipped children's play areas. In accordance with NPFA's advisory note The New European Playground Safety Standards and EU standards BS EN 1176, BS EN 1177, guidelines are clearly set out to enable local authorities to provide the equipment and meet safety requirements.

According to Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance Company who act as insurance broker and risk assessor to local authorities, if adopted EU standards for equipment, surfaces and management / maintenance are followed, then no undue insurance risk is created.

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#### **5.3.8 Maintenance and management**

- Too many poor quality open spaces
- Lack of funding
- No overall responsible Government Agency

The quality of recreational open spaces and facilities is of greater importance than their quantity. Maintenance responsibility lies with the individual clubs to look after their own facilities. Currently maintenance for Kilkenny City and County Council is contracted out.

- Future provision will put pressure on existing resources.
- Requirement for skilled management
- No current policy for management of existing open space
- Requirement for establishment of a Parks Department to focus on open space management, maintenance and ongoing open space provision. It is also becoming apparent that many clubs are now struggling to maintain playing fields and other facilities, due to financial and manpower shortfalls. Vandalism and other antisocial behaviour such as graffiti and littering, cause both financial and practical problems for all guardians of open spaces and sports facilities, public and private alike.

In order to overcome this financial and re-sourcing problem, the county and city development plans have made provision for developers to provide limited maintenance for new developments built.

#### **5.3.9 Security**

A well used site will discourage antisocial behaviour therefore function and facilities are important. Provision of well defined enclosure and locking of some facilities at night may be required. Provision of lighting, where appropriate is essential in order to achieve adequate levels of security and public safety.– imaginative use of lighting can transform a daytime public open space, to something quite different during the evening, whilst also providing the levels of security required.

#### **5.3.10 Antisocial Behaviour**

Illegal settlements do not seem to be a major problem at present and there is not much evidence of major antisocial behaviour. However the design and function can minimise this risk.

#### **5.3.11 SLOAP**

*Space Left Over After Planning*, small pockets of grassed areas, commonly found in residential areas is not recognised (zoned) as open space. Generally it has low usability in terms of formal recreation but great potential contributor to general informal and visual amenity. These small areas can form the basis for LAP (local areas for play, 1 minute walking distance from home), catering for children up to the age of six. A minimum of tree planting to enhance visual and landscape amenity in combination with traffic calming can maximise potential for these areas.

#### **5.3.12 Tourism**

Enhance Kilkenny's potential for tourism asset. Opportunities exist within the framework of open space redevelopment to cater simultaneously for tourism.

An obvious opportunity is the inclusion of a river walkway linking the castle, with both the city centre north through Bateman's Quay developments and southwards to the open countryside. This could be developed in tandem with a strategic walkway/cycle track system incorporating information points, along the length of the river countywide.

As such any riverside open space improvement schemes, walkways or cycle routes will not only benefit locals, but also encourage visitors to stay longer. Currently the Barrow navigation is a popular navigable and walk able canal route that links countryside into a greater river and canal network. This has vast potential for barge holidays with facilities provided en route.

#### **5.3.13 New Policies**

New policies for the development of open space and recreational facilities should start from a standpoint of existing historical and geographical provision. A realistic view should be adopted of

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what is achievable, and what is likely to be sustainable in any one area, in order to prevent wastage of limited resources. Careful targeting of new facility provision in terms of making the greatest impact for the greatest number of people will ensure maximum value for money. Setting precedents in terms of quality, is more important in the short term, than achieving total coverage of the city according to prescribed standards, (which should be a long term aim).

At the local level, policies must aim to create manageable and maintainable spaces, of high quality, in strategically chosen locations. The provision of this high quality open 'green' space within a city must form part of an overall strategic plan, and therefore must be considered in tandem with housing strategy, community development and safety policies, regeneration plans, and economic factors.

Linkage of a public open space within a greater network on a strategic level, will increase both its potential usage and it's comparative value to the city as a whole. A hierarchy of spaces of different size should exist, each offering a selection of activities, opportunities and amenities. Opportunities to link existing spaces into a continuum should also be sought at the local level. Public open space, (particularly that in housing developments), which is of an impractical shape or size on its own, can often be made functional through the addition of, or linkage to, adjacent spaces, streets and footpaths.

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### **6.0 PROPOSALS**

#### **6.1 Regional and / or City Parks and Corridors**

The setting of Kilkenny in the Nore river valley with associated tributaries provides an opportunity for establishing open spaces and networks of open spaces of strategic value and importance to the cities self image as well as recreational needs.

##### ***River Nore Corridor***

The River Nore corridor holds huge potential for open space in the core of Kilkenny. Essentially the river bank and floodplains are largely undeveloped, with the exception of a stretch within the city centre, between Green's Bridge and John's Bridge. The central location of these riverside areas means the area is accessible to the greatest number of people. There is potential to create countywide links along the river corridors.

Within the city centre, the river forms part of the urban fabric. The development of Bateman's Quay in particular, should maximise the potential to bring the river walks into the city. The Breaghagh River runs into the north of the city centre, adjacent to Black Abbey and St Canice's cathedral. It runs into the Nore, adjacent to St Francis' Abbey. Walks through the city could be developed along this river corridor, which will also reap tourism benefits by linking the ecclesiastical and historical sights.

The river valley is scenic with two distinct characters. To the south of John's bridge, adjacent to the Castle the valley is enclosed, with woodland. The canal runs parallel to the river in this section. This section is accessible to walkers. The existing antiquities and old mill buildings hold potential to house facilities such as a clubhouse or tourist facility. The Lacken walk on the northeastern bank is mainly enclosed within the hospital grounds by a demesne wall. Longer routes, connecting to Thomastown and beyond, could extend tourism and informal recreation countywide. Shorter circular routes, linking back into the city would enhance the city's recreational network.

To the north of Green's bridge the river valley is more open in character. Low-density residential development overlooks this area from the hills. The character of this area lends itself to the provision of parkland containing both formal and informal recreational facilities.

The River Nore corridor consists of significant areas of zoned open space, ecologically valuable and visually delightful river landscape and a substantial medieval castle creating a fairy-tale focal point right in the centre of the city overlooking the river. The lands which make up this corridor include:

- Kilkenny Castle itself which is a significant recreational facility and tourist attraction. It is singular in being the only park in Kilkenny City. Its location is pivotal in both the city and as part of the greater area of the river corridor. The area of city parkland (23.3 hectares) is proportionally high for the size of city. However the castle's accessibility and nodal position make it a very important asset at both local level and as a major tourist attraction. Although the grounds of the castle are significant, their civic quality and heritage value makes them unsuitable for formal and active recreation, however, for the same reasons they form the ideal context for informal and passive recreation.
- Friarsinch, (River Nore). These lands on the floodplains could be linked through the city centre via the Quays, including Batemans Quay creating a continuous public amenity through the city centre. These lands whilst ecologically interesting and valuable along the river also offer over 42.14 ha of space for more formal recreational use.

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#### ***Pococke River Corridor***

The protection and enhancement of river corridors is recommended in providing open space for the city.

Sections of the Pococke River to the east of the city centre are designated open space. It is recommended that this open space designation is extended further and could potentially encompass existing woodland at Leggetsrath.

The course of the river follows alongside sections of the proposed circular ring road in the suburbs. The provision of paved surface, lighting and enhanced permeability from neighbouring residential areas would develop use of this open space and also enhance its potential to draw in users from neighbouring areas. It could form part of the Sli na Slainte route. There is potential to link in with New Park estate and Garrincreen forming a 'green' network of open spaces.

#### ***Breaghagh River Corridors***

The Breaghagh River corridor, from Water Barrack Road, (westwards and southwards) is designated open space for most of its course. The course of the river closely follows the circular ring road in the city suburbs. The route links the Kilcreen estate, (zoned for hotel use) and existing broadleaved woodland along the river corridor southwards.. The provision of paved surface, lighting and enhanced permeability from neighbouring residential areas would develop use of this open space and also enhance its potential to draw in users from neighbouring areas.

#### ***Links to Surrounding Countryside***

The countryside of Kilkenny holds vast potential to develop outdoor recreation activities for both tourism and of benefit to local residents. There are many river courses throughout the county and there is scope to form an interconnecting network of routes along these courses and as part of a greater trail for walking or other. Routes along the River Nore could be extended out of the City, both North and south linking into other towns including Thomastown and Woodstock Estate at Inistioge to the south.

The crescent of hills to the south of the county are currently used for various informal recreation activities such as walking, horse riding and orienteering (South Leinster way), through Blackstairs mountains, Carrigadoon Hill, Curraghdobbin Hill to Slievenamon mountain.

The council have stated their objective of encouraging development of outdoor recreation and leisure amenities based on natural amenities and resources. This can be facilitated through providing public rights of way to places of special beauty, amenity or recreation value

### **6.1.1 *Creating Corridors and Networks***

The completion of a River Nore corridor requires relatively little new development to establish a north south city parkland. The development of a combined walkway/cycleway will interconnect the existing spaces.

A series of corridors or 'routes' are proposed throughout Kilkenny City and Kilkenny County. These routes are physical or visual connections between different types of open space. They relate to the various activities that could take place. Existing or potential open spaces are identified with the intention of creating interconnecting recreational corridors for various activities.

Three route types have been identified and are described herein. The routes are not necessarily exclusive and may in many cases be simultaneous, catering for a range of uses. Their whereabouts and realisation are described.

### **6.1.2 *Routes***

#### ***Green routes***

There is potential for the creation of high quality 'green routes' through the city as both a latent recreational and tourist asset for Kilkenny, as well as holding strategic linkage and transportation

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potential. These routes have potential to form wider links with the countryside and in doing so expanding the network of tourism and recreational areas.

Creation of Green routes as recreational spaces or parks forming an attractive 'green' (usually vegetated) linkage with provision for cycleways, walking or jogging routes. The Heritage Council "Greenways" proposal or the Sli na Slainte route are examples where a series of roads, river corridor form pleasant routes.

Designated cycle and pedestrian routes are key components of most traffic management plans in cities today. Their implementation is an essential component of any overall solution to traffic management. As such their potential should be considered closely within Kilkenny. These routes will enjoy higher usage if they are examined in conjunction with tourist considerations not only within the city but their further links into a countywide network.

#### *Cycling*

Cycle routes can take the form of dedicated sections of existing or new roads. However it is more beneficial if these routes can pass through open space. They may be created by the conversion of redundant routes already existing within the city – disused railway lines, the canal towpath along the Castle Walk and Nore River corridor.

The development of green routes will require improved surfaces, seating and lighting along routes. In addition, the instalment of litterbins, information boards, directional signage and landscape planting works usually accompany the development of green routes. A sense of overall unity and cohesion can be achieved through unified design principles and continuous material choice, which will greatly enhance the overall effect.

Ideally a network of green routes should exist throughout the city, linking strategic nodes of activity such as the institutes of education or city centre and major areas of public open space.

The provision of green routes is becoming an ever more important issue due to the growing pressures on land within the city causing sporting clubs to migrate beyond the borough boundary. By the nature of these clubs, many members will be youths with no access to private cars; the provision of green routes will facilitate access more democratically therefore.

- Existing open space / parkland
- Application to attractive road corridors
- Links between open spaces

These routes have been marked on the Potential Open Space Hierarchy

#### *Brown routes*

Brown routes are those recreational corridors which facilitate activities such as horse riding, mountain biking, orienteering and hill walking. Effectively a 'right of way', where a paved surface / lighting or facilities is not required. The river Nore corridor and River Barrow as well as many of the Areas of Amenity Value(AAV) contribute to the idea of Brown route network

- Usually countryside activities
- Links between AAV
- Coincide with river corridors
- Hills / mountainous areas not usually under agriculture / pasture

Existing rights of way over land should be maintained and extended where possible. Many of these corridors are not used as agricultural land due to their inherent nature ie river courses and banks and would be ideal for such a purpose.

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#### Blue routes

Kilkenny is linked county wide by its network of rivers, forming an obvious system upon which to base blue routes. The Nore links Kilkenny county, northwest – southeast linking Durrow, Kilkenny, Thomastown and New Ross. The Barrow river and canal is an established navigational route and forms part of the South Leinster walking trail. This waterway links Waterford Harbour through New Ross, Graiguenamanagh through to Carlow and ultimately to the Grand Canal. The Dinnin links Castlecomer to the Nore, north of Kilkenny City. Within Kilkenny City and environs the Breaghagh and Pockocke form valuable river links.

- Access to the river network throughout county towns
- Navigational routes where possible
- Angling facilities
- Canoe / white water pursuits
- Walking / off road route
- Ecological corridor
- Scenic attraction

### **6.3 District / Neighbourhood Parks**

The Regional and City wide parks in a city the size of Kilkenny will provide the major concentrations of amenity within the city, however, the day to day recreational provision to local communities will be provided by a series of district or neighbourhood parks each of which would be around 8ha in size and provide a range of facilities.

Nine district parks are proposed (Ref Map 5):-

- Pockocke Valley (Newpark)
- Penny Feathers Loch
- Garrincreen
- Dunmore
- The Paddocks
- Westfield Loughbouy Park
- Scouts Den
- New Park Marsh
- Loughboy Park

These proposed district parks should comprise and link existing formal sporting provision with informal open space.

Existing open spaces should be utilised and developed eg Pockocke valley, New Park Marsh instead of forming new spaces.

Where there is potential to connect into the regional park eg Scouts Den, this should be undertaken

Where there are natural features such as waterbodies, mature trees or hedgerows these should be incorporated in design.

In the larger county towns a park of this nature may be appropriate and they are proposed for:

- Thomastown (floodplain)
- Castlecomer (wildlife sanctuary)
- Callan (Old Friary )
- Craigenemanagh (Abbey street riverside)

These 'town parks' are generally in a very central location and easily accessible. They should provide facilities for both formal and informal recreation in an parkland environment. These open spaces have existing unique quality as, a natural riverside setting in the case of Thomastown or a historic context in the case of Callan. The critical factor here is that the areas maintain their

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current quality but allow a flexibility of use, say to allow sports one week or host a circus or fair the next.

The parkland and intrinsic quality of the space should be maintained and enhanced, but should accommodate provision for grass pitches or other formal sports pitches. Play areas and other facilities such as seating footpaths could also be provided as appropriate.

#### 6.4 Local parks

There is a series of open spaces throughout the built up areas of Kilkenny city, which can provide a range of informal, passive and active recreational spaces. It is recommended that an environmental enhancement programme is initiated with the aim of upgrading each of these spaces through:

- Visual enhancement by soft landscape treatment
- Provision of seating paths and other features
- Where appropriate the incorporation of play facilities
- Associated traffic calming
- Utilising SLOAP land for the formation of local parks ie Fatima Place, Father Albert Place, Mayfield

In the smaller villages throughout the county a similar approach should be taken to the creation of a village green or similar amenity in a central location. This may also coincide with a larger open space within which facilities can be provided.

#### 6.5. Statistical summary of parks hierarchy

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Area Ha</b>
Regional	The Castle/ Canal Walk/ Lacken Walk	56.91
	Friarsinch/ Batemans Quay	44.62
	*(Kilkenny Golf Club)	(57.83)
	Kilkreen Estate / Breagagh river	37.11
District	Dunmore	2.08
	New Park Marsh	34.37
	New Park	8.21
	Garrincreen	2.28
	Pennyfeathers Loch	6.2
	Scouts Den	3.69
	Loughboy Park	2.77
	Pococke River	0.91
	The Paddocks	3.48
	Local Parks	Scanlon Park
The Orchard		3.12
Kilkenny Industrial Park		9.16
Sionhermitage		1.96
The Closh		0.43
Fairgreen		1.84
James Green		0.2
Dean Street		0.28
Talbotsinch		1.53
Richview		0.61
<b>Total</b>		*(281.43) 223.6

\* Kilkenny Golf Course is a private facility

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The above hierarchy creates quality provision at 3.5ha / 1000 (i.e. the preferred standard) sufficient for a population of 63,000 people. The current population is 22,157 so there is capacity for the existing population to grow within the existing open space provision.

Additionally new parks in the city environs and new development areas would provide 60.46ha which at the above recommended provision would cater for an additional 17,000 no people. It should also be noted that there is also a range of other semi-private and private open spaces that also provide above and beyond the recommended standard.

However the areas identified above for the provision of open space are at best “fields” and do not offer any recreation amenity. It is not sufficient to just provide grass. Developers should be required to submit proposals, designed by competent recognised professionals for PARKS. This should comprise facilities for formal and informal recreation in the proportion of 7:3 in accordance with NPFA guidelines. The informal area including equipped childrens play area.

However, where small pockets of land, that are not suitable for provision of formal sports facilities occur eg within residential estates Local areas for play should be provided in accordance with NPFA guidelines.

## **7.0 DELIVERY**

### **7.1 Mechanisms for Delivery**

#### *Mechanisms for the delivery of open space*

The delivery of open space in any new developments can be achieved through a variety of planning mechanisms.

There are two issues that consideration of delivery of open space must address. The first is the delivery of additional open space for areas identified that have a shortfall. The second is the delivery of improvement to existing areas. This is an important issue in the existing built up areas of the city.

In order to address these issues the following delivery mechanisms are identified.

- (1) Priority should be given to the provision of open space preferably with the site of failing this within the immediate neighbourhood. Provision exists within Sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act for this to be achieved.
- (2) Provision off site should be within the NEAP walking distance of 600 metres. Provision exists with Sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act for this to be achieved.
- (3) Developer contributions under Sections 48 and 49 of the Act should be required to physically upgrade and improve existing areas of open space. This is particularly important in existing built up areas where building land is at a premium.

Other opportunities existing for improving the delivery of quality open space.

The first opportunity is for public private partnerships, for example between private clubs, golf courses, race courses etc. The perception that this creates an increased risk of liability is not one that is supported by the Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance Company. This risk is reduced if there is clarity of responsibility and agreed management procedures for the use of facilities.

Another “delivery opportunity” exists for public / public partnership. This may include arrangements between the local authority and owners of institutional lands, such as hospitals, colleges, schools which are often of high quality, clubs, community organisations etc. This involves getting added value from publicly or community provided facilities which to date may have had a narrow range of utilisation.

There are potentially other funding sources available within other Government Agencies such as the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, Department of Health and Children where opportunities exist to develop a resource eg Sli na Slainte route or tourism

### **7.2 Funding Opportunities**

#### *Funding opportunities*

The most important point with regard to funding of open space is that the provision of open space is not just a physical land use issue and therefore opportunities for funding should look beyond funding through S48 and 49 of the Planning Act as the traditional mechanisms. This is particularly so as there has been up to now an over reliance on this as the single source of funding for much of the open space provided in the city and its environs.

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### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

It is important that a hierarchical and integrated approach to the provision and management of open space is begun so that a cross departmental approach to provision and funding can be realised both within the local authority and with the assistance of the various different departments at national level.

The audit of open spaces has identified a need to redesign and manage significant areas of current open space. There is potential and a need in this process to encourage some infill development as appropriate to facilitate the restructuring of the landscape and promote good urban design. The selective disposal of parts of some of these areas of open space would release funds to reinvest in improvements to and maintenance of remaining areas. It would be important that such an initiative would be carried out in consultation with local people to ensure there is a local appreciation that funding will be rolled back into the area and will assist in qualitatively improving existing and proposed open space and facilities with minimal reduction in quantity. This could be part funded or facilitated by public / private partnership.

Resources are also available from a range of public and other agencies:

<b>FUNDING SOURCES</b>	<b>REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>NATURE OF PROPOSALS</b>
<i>Public Bodies / Agencies</i>		
Department of the Environment – Urban and Village Renewal Programme, annual discretionary grants	Environment as a catalyst for urban renewal, economic development and quality of life / lifestyle	Environmental improvements – paving, traffic calming, street furniture, tree planting, landscape improvements
Department of the Environment – Housing Remedial Works Scheme	Residential areas undergoing regeneration and / or new build / infill development	Environmental improvements including play and related facilities.
Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation	Sports and recreation projects	Sports facilities and associated infrastructure.
Department of Forestry – Urban Woodland Scheme	Increased tree planting	Landscape proposals involving increased tree cover, woodland creation and associated footpaths and facilities.
<i>Community Organisation</i>		
National Lottery	Community gain	Funding of local groups and projects
Area Partnership Companies	Community / Environmental Development in target areas.	Development of groups and local capacity and small scale environmental projects.
Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs – Community Development Programme	Programmes of local community development	Play and other facilities.
Department of Tourism Recreation and Sport – Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund	Target Areas with specific social problems	Facilities for young people between 10 and 20 years, youth centres, sports centres and related. Open space related to sports facilities and tourist projects
Charitable Trusts e.g. local organisations / sponsors.	Socially disadvantaged areas	Playgrounds, recreational facilities

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

#### **7.3 Developing the Resource – Structures and Staff**

The development of additional amenity facilities and improved management of existing facilities either solely by the Council or in conjunction with other local groups will require the development of a specific responsibility within the Council for Parks and Open Space provision and maintenance. This can be achieved by Local Authorities putting in place appropriate financial and staffing resources to support any multi-agency approach providing for the development of open spaces, amenity areas and sports facilities where the local authorities have a key role in implementation.

In the long term a council employed Parks and Recreation Development Officer's remit might include the planning and delivery of children's play areas, as well as coordinating their management and maintenance. In addition, their roles may include the development of activity programs such as holiday play schemes and after school clubs in association with voluntary community groups. They would also help coordinate initiatives in conjunction with local sports, environmental and arts groups as well as local schools.

Identifying key areas, in which the initiation of potential projects will set a standard for future improvements throughout the city, will demonstrate how a developing vision can be implemented as a whole.

The focusing of resources on target projects, chosen for their strategic location in terms of population and accessibility, will ensure investments have an optimum impact.

#### **7.4 Maintenance and Management**

Improvement to maintenance and management is possible in most public open space. It is also becoming apparent that many sporting clubs are now struggling to maintain playing fields and other facilities, due to financial and manpower shortfalls. Vandalism and other antisocial aggravate the situation, causing both financial and practical problems for all guardians of open spaces and sports facilities, public and private alike.

Surveillance of open spaces and recreational facilities will be a vital element in their success or failure. Open spaces should be designed to avail of the maximum possible levels of visual policing – this will typically be provided by adjacent domestic residences and busy thoroughfares. Another method now well established is the use of CCTV cameras.

Security can be enhanced by well defined enclosure, which may be locked up at night preventing access. A site that is well used during the day will discourage antisocial behaviour through the presence of users. This can be enhanced by the employment of full time wardens, such as those used in the Castle to provide supervision. Indeed regular inspection of equipment is now often an insurance requirement, particularly where children's play equipment is provided.

Maintenance of a site will not only help it to function properly, but also tends to discourage activities such as tipping, which become much more obvious in a well maintained space.

Closer coordination between the two authorities is required, particularly in defining maintenance responsibilities for those facilities, and open spaces, which lie on or straddle boundaries.

Although some private developments may fund their own maintenance, open space is a public amenity and facility and certainly visible to all. Varying maintenance regimes and standards will only create division in the city and promote a poor civic message. A new approach is required - this may mean recognising local authority limitations in regard to maintenance, focusing limited resources on certain strategically chosen projects and facilities, and doing the work to the highest possible standard. This would be a more effective than spreading limited resources too thinly, over too large an area. A task force as mentioned previously could be responsible for strategic management.

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New approaches to the management and leasing of publicly leased facilities may also be required, facility sharing between leasing clubs may be one measure necessary.

#### **7.5 Community Participation**

The inclusion of local community groups at the outset of any new public open space development, before all the decisions have been made, will contribute greatly to that scheme's chances of success. Good community structures are extremely valuable assets and great strengths, which should be utilised to their optimum level.

It is important that such involvement is informed based on realistic options. This may involve investment in capacity development in local areas in advance of projects being undertaken. It will also be important to have an early impact with opportunistic projects where appropriate. Where there are opportunities for infill development it is particularly important to inform and involve the local community and realise community gain.

# **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

## *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

### **8.0 BEST PRACTICE**

#### **8.1 Best Practice Principles**

The provision of open 'green' space within a city must form part of an overall strategic plan, and therefore must be considered in tandem with housing strategy, community development and safety policies, regeneration plans, and of course economic factors.

Plans should aim to be as inclusive as possible - designed to meet the needs of all, within the diverse range of inhabitants of Kilkenny City and Environs and County. Adequate provision of high quality public parks, play areas and open spaces are key to the well being of both a city and its citizens – transforming the environment and encouraging inward investment alongside community pride in formally run down areas.

#### *Understanding site context*

History, ecology, social and cultural backgrounds as well as economic context are all factors which must be taken into account in any plans for redevelopment or improvement. It existing setting will also determine to a large degree what will be achievable.

#### *Successfully meeting local aspirations and needs*

The close cooperation and involvement of local communities in all stages of the development of open spaces and recreational facilities is essential to their long term success and reducing levels of misuse.

#### *Community participation / Local Partnerships*

Participation of the local community in park design, development and management will be critical to the future success of any project. It is critical that clear principles of engagement are set out from the beginning of any public consultation process.

#### *Future vision*

A clear goal or vision is key to achieving a coordinated approach by different bodies, (such as local authorities and private partnerships), towards the development of public open space.

Responsive leadership and evidence of corporate appreciation of the benefits of recreational open space are essential. The strategy or hierarchy Masterplan, with stated implementation and maintenance programmes, will focus ideas and aid their delivery.

#### *Planning policy*

Planning policy must be coordinated to link the development of public open space to local, regional and national strategies.

#### *Management plans / sustainability*

A strategy for the ongoing management and maintenance is paramount to continued success. Budgets and funding sources, and at which door specified responsibilities lie, must be clearly identified from the outset.

#### *Design quality*

Quality open space planning, design and implementation must be implemented. Innovative professional design skills will contribute significantly towards both remedying flaws of the past, whilst avoiding repeat mistakes in the future.

#### *Culture and Heritage*

Provision of outdoor performance facilities and venues can stimulate local festivals and arts opportunities. Historical trails and visitor facilities will promote tourism and encourage local pride. These should be integral aspirations of any open space strategy.

#### *Health & Education*

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Green spaces and public play areas are potentially very important resources for local schools, in the promotion of healthy living through provision of sport and recreation facilities.

#### *User groups / combat disadvantage*

All user groups must be considered in the provision and design of open space,. This may mean providing adequate levels of security so that women and OAP's feel unthreatened walking through an open space alone, to facilitating access and interaction for those users with special needs.

#### *Environment / Ecology*

Public open spaces, particularly parks, provide the lungs to any city. It is therefore important that landscape management plans are developed to ensure ongoing and increased effectiveness.

Maximise opportunities exist for the preservation and promotion of special ecological habitats, all.

#### *Play*

Playgrounds and play areas will require very close management and maintenance to avoid conflict with liabilities and potential accidents. Good practice guidelines will involve:

- Operational control retained within the local authority.
- Maintenance and upkeep of the playgrounds and equipment directly the responsibility of the local authority.
- Suitably qualified employees to carry out weekly inspections.
- Defective / dangerous equipment to be immediately removed and not reinstated until satisfactorily repaired.
- Records maintained of inspections, dates, names and qualifications of inspectors and actions required / taken.

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

*Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix I	A Parks Policy For Local Authorities
Appendix II	Assessment Methodology and Assessment Form
Appendix III	Site Survey Plan Kilkenny City
Appendix IV	Site Survey Plans Kilkenny County
Appendix V	Site Survey Sheets
Appendix VI	Open Space Hierarchy and Network Plan Kilkenny City
Appendix VII	Strategic corridors and Network Plan

## **APPENDIX I**

### **A PARKS POLICY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

## **APPENDIX II**

### **ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT FORM**

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### **APPENDIX II ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND ASSESSMENT FORM**

#### ***Assessment Methodology***

##### *Desk Top Study*

The desk-top studies enable an overview of strategic policy and current initiatives as well as illustrating any existing hierarchy of public open space. OS plans and Development plans were reviewed to determine where the open spaces are located as well as land that is designated as future open space. Each open space is given an identity number and statutory facts including planning designation, location, ownership and size are recorded.

##### *Research*

Research identifies informal recreational pursuits that take place in Kilkenny that do not necessarily use a specific space but use routes or scenic corridors. (Activities such as running, walking and horse riding). Popular cycling routes, walking trails, eg South Leinster Way, Sli na Slainte are identified. The Heritage Council's "Greenways" are also noted.

##### *On Site Assessment*

An assessment table was formulated to uniformly assess all open space identified on site. Each open space within the study area has been individually visited and assessed, according to the criteria set out in the pro-forma established for the report. Each site was also photographed.

The site assessment is based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis and notes the following key issues:-

- Context; setting of site
- Open space type; describes category
- Landscape type; describes characteristics
- Facilities; notes user amenities
- Effectiveness; assesses usefulness
- Safety; reviews security

Qualitative analysis includes:-

- Visual amenity
- Maturity
- Management / maintenance
- Usage

The assessment proforma and assessment methodology are contained herein.

The tables for each open space are appended to this report. Appendix III

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

#### **Open Space Assessment Methodology**

##### *Statutory facts:*

- Planning status:-land designation – refer to development plans
- Land ownership:- public or privately owned; specify and whether institutional
- Category:-(regional / local / neighbourhood) this classification based on size,is in accordance with “5 acre standard”

##### *Context*

This describes the setting of the site, its immediate environs and adjacent landuses.

- industrial refers to heavy or light manufacturing.

##### *Open Space Type*

This category identifies open space and describes what the purpose is of the open space or recreation facility. It should be noted that not all open space is for recreational purposes. Nor are all outdoor recreational facilities completely open space. Eg equestrian centre or cemetery.

- *Park* refers to a designated recreation space; *active* refers to formal facilities within park ie pitches, courts, pitch and putt; *passive* refers to provision of space for informal recreation ie paths, grass, bird hide
- *Linear* refers to a ‘corridor’ not necessarily a recreation space, but may be a green link or with a facility eg canalside towpath, railway corridor
- *Sports ground* is a formal recreation ground for organised sport eg football pitches, golf, eq This will be analysed in terms of facilities on a separate schedule
- *Other* may include botanical gardens, arboretums, equestrian etc.

##### *Landscape Type*

This describes the characteristics of the open space in terms of its “environmental style” (eg gardenesque or natural). Some facilities may be a combination of the various elements.

- *Formal* this describes organised parks/ gardens and can be further categorised into predominantly hard or soft landscape. Will probably mostly apply to describe urban facilities.
- *Naturalistic*:- a facility that is designed to look natural
- *Dysfunctional/ undeveloped*:- a facility that could be classified as SLOAP or “blank” space within a developed area.
- *Ecological*: -a facility or amenity area that is undesigned and is natural in appearance or an area that has been allowed to regenerate naturally.

##### *Facilities*

This section itemises the user amenities found within the designated space. Some of these may be intangible.eg viewpoints,

##### **Effectiveness**

This section aims to assess the usefulness of the facility and ease of use by looking at various elements.

- Accessibility high/ medium / low; method of transport can be recorded.
- Usage; this will look at height of use and can be further broken down into user groups
- Microclimate; will assess exposure / shelter / aspect / shadow
- Contribution to city form: qualitative analysis as a built element – visual

##### **Safety**

This section reviews the feeling of security within the site as well as looking at methods used in securing the site.

- Enclosure:- whether or not boundaries are enclosed and boundary treatment eg fence
- Overlooked:- casual surveillance by adjacent land users
- Surveillance: organised security ie CCTV/ warden or other

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- Antisocial indicators:- graffiti/ vandalism etc

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Visual amenity : high medium low rating of visual quality.

- High:- represents scenic quality; open space with attractive views out or picturesque built setting. High quality park environment well maintained
- Medium:- represents reasonable quality; open space with some contribution to city form potential to become improved quality
- Low:- evidence of antisocial behaviour, lack of management, undesirable place to be...

Maturity:- mature, semi mature, young

- Mature: established vegetation with fully formed tree canopy, (historic demesne)
- semi mature: well established recent planting within 15 years
- young: vegetation less than 15 years age open canopied trees

## **APPENDIX III**

### **SITE SURVEY SHEETS**

## **KILKENNY CITY AND ENVIRONS**

## **REGIONAL OPEN SPACES (KILKENNY CITY AND ENVIRONS)**

## **DISTRICT OPEN SPACES (KILKENNY CITY AND ENVIRONS)**

## **LOCAL OPEN SPACES (KILKENNY CITY AND ENVIRONS)**

## **CALLAN**

## **CASTLECOMER**

## **GRAIGENAMANAGH**

## **THOMASTOWN**

## **NEW ROSS**

## **BELLVUE**

## **KILLMACOW**

## **SLIEVEROE**

## **WATERFORD ENVIRONS**

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **PLANNING BACKGROUND**

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

*Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

### **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Study**

#### **Relevant Legislation**

The provision of open space and amenities for its use are covered by a range of statutes.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 is a statute that sets out the principles for the control of private land in the interests of the common good and for proper planning and sustainable development.

Section 10 of part II sets out the requirements for each development plan including the provision for zoning of land for recreation and open space as well as the setting out of objectives in a development plan for the preservation, improvement and extension of amenities and recreational amenities.

Local authorities are empowered, under the Local Government Act 1994 to provide operate and maintain parks and open spaces, including children's playgrounds for amenity and recreation purposes.

European Standards EN1176 (Playground Equipment) and EN1177 (Impact absorbing playground surfacing) are also relevant in the context of providing play equipment.

#### **Planning Background**

The relevant planning background for the study area can be divided into statutory documents and non-statutory documents. The former include the relevant development plans and the latter include guidance documents.

##### *Kilkenny County Development Plan 1994*

The adopted County Development Plan encourages the provision of recreation and sporting facilities in a number of areas. The main aim of the Plan (Section 9.2) is to ensure a full range of "passive" and "active" recreational opportunities throughout the county to serve the needs of the community and to encourage tourism development.

It is stated policy to encourage the protection of Gowran racecourse from development which would interfere with its amenity qualities. The importance of both the bloodstock and non-thoroughbred industries to the county is recognised.

The Development Plan covering the environs of Waterford City and New Ross identify that new recreation facilities are best located in these suburban locations. Furthermore, the development limits of Callan, Castlecomer, Graiguenamanagh, Thomastown, Environs of New Ross and Waterford City Environs all have scope for the provision of recreational facilities.

##### *Amended Draft Kilkenny County Development Plan 2002*

This Development Plan is currently under the consideration of the Council and it is envisaged that it will be adopted later this year. The Council is committed to the protection and sustainable development of the amenities of the County for recreational purposes to the benefit of its residents, as well as the promotion of tourism, and will endeavour to make provision for a hierarchy of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas within the County within easy reach of their homes and places of work. It will be the policy of the Council to:

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- Co-operate with local development organisations, community groups and others in the development of recreational facilities throughout the County and to enter into joint venture arrangements where appropriate for the provision of such facilities.
- Not permit development which would result in the loss of public or private playing fields, parks, childrens play space, amenity, open space or zoned land for recreational or open space purposes.
- Require the provision of open space to a minimum of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population, or 1 hectare per 150 dwellings, whichever is the greater. A lesser standard of provision may be acceptable in urban development or redevelopment schemes where open space is already available with relatively high densities such as flats, townhouses or apartments, but should still generally amount to at least 10% of the total site area.
- Open space provision for smaller residential developments and schemes catering for special groups such as accommodation for the elderly or single persons will be considered on merit.
- Developers may also be required to provide an equipped children's playground in association with open space provision where a development scheme would be greater than 800 metres from an existing easily accessible equipped childrens playground.
- Developers will be required to make suitable provision for the future management and maintenance of open space required under this policy.
- Normally permit development proposals for outdoor recreational use in the countryside where a number of criteria, listed in the Development Plan, are met.
- Normally only permit development proposals for intensive sports facilities where these are located within settlements and provided a number of criteria listed in the Development Plan are met.
- Consider proposals for sport or recreational uses generating high levels of noise where a number of criteria, listed in the Development Plan, are met.
- Normally only permit proposals for watersports adjacent to inland lakes and waterways where a number of criteria, listed in the development plan, are met.
- Continue to levy a sum of money from each housing unit proposed to go to the provision of public open space. A separate fund will be established to assist in the provision and development of open space and recreational facilities throughout the City and County.
- Ensure that developers be required to make provision for sport and recreational infrastructure commensurate with the needs of their developments as an integral part of their proposals.

The Council also recognises the need for a new swimming pool and it is their objective to provide such a facility on a suitable site within Kilkenny City and its environs.

Incorporated in this Plan are the Amended Draft Development Plans for the Scheduled Towns of the County, which are outlined below.

#### *Amended Draft Development Plan for Callan 2002*

The Council recognises the long term potential in terms of recreation and amenity of the area between Kings River and Mill Race, and the current underutilisation of the Fairgreen and the site of the old playground. It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of formal

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

recreation and amenity open space, accessible to all, and to ensure the provision of adequate areas of open space required to serve new residential developments.

#### *Amended Draft Development Plan for Castlecomer 2002*

The Council recognises the need for additional recreational facilities in Castlecomer. It is their objective to improve public access to Sawney's Wood, liaise with Coillte, Department of Energy and local bodies regarding access to woodland walks and the creation of a linear amenity wood and walkway along the former railway line, and to investigate the need for playground facilities for pre-school children.

#### *Amended Draft Development Plan for Graiguenamanagh 2002*

The Council recognises the natural potential of the town in terms of amenity and recreation, particularly the River Barrow, and identifies the need for improved provision of facilities for young people and children. It is the policy of the Council to ensure the provision of recreational facilities for all age groups, encourage the development of facilities based on the natural amenities of the town, and to protect existing amenities and open space through development control.

#### *Amended Draft Development Plan for Thomastown 2002*

Thomastown has a good range of sports facilities and community organisations and it is the policy of the Council to preserve, provide for and improve recreational facilities within the town. The Council will seek to improve accessibility and facilities for river swimming, remove dereliction and improve previously derelict sites and ensure that appropriate facilities are available to all age groups and different sections of the community.

#### *Amended Draft Development Plan for the Waterford City Environs (including Belview Action Area Plan & Kilmacow Village Plan) 2002*

The Plan proposes the establishment of "country parks" between the new neighbourhoods along the River Suir and the Rockshire Hill Ridgeline, which would include sports pitches and recreation areas, public access walkways and cycle routes, and small formal parkland adjacent to new development. Throughout the Plan Area a number of "green ways" are proposed comprising of pedestrian and cycle routes which will link the proposed new neighbourhoods. It is intended that the majority of these routes will be used for leisure and recreation purposes, forming the spine of the country park areas. A key "green way" will be along the line of the disused railway route.

#### *Amended Draft Village Plan for Kilmacow 2002*

Leisure facilities in Kilmacow are currently of a high standard and it is essential that the provision of existing facilities is monitored as the village expands in order to meet an increased demand. It is an objective of the Council to preserve, provide for and improve recreational facilities within the village and to ensure that appropriate facilities are available to all age groups. The Council also intends to prepare a recreation plan to maximise the benefits of the River Blackwater to the local community in conjunction with the Kilmacow Development Group and the Southern Regional Fisheries Board.

#### *Amended Draft Development Plan for the Environs of New Ross 2002*

The Council recognises the considerable potential of New Ross as a tourist attraction due to its strategic and scenic location and it is an objective of the Council to liaise with Wexford County Council, New Ross UDC and the Chamber of Commerce to encourage the development of New Ross as a touring base for the Barrow/Nore River Valley Region. The Council aims to protect the amenity value of the River Barrow and to protect existing amenity lands and to investigate the need for the future provision of recreational lands as part of an Action Area Plan.

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

#### *Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan 1994*

This Plan recognises the combination of a physically attractive and distinctive environment with access to a variety of recreational activities, which provides the foundation for a good quality of life for the inhabitants of Kilkenny. In addition to publicly accessible open space, the Kilkenny Urban Area has extensive private open space, including school grounds, the 18 hole golf course at Glendine and a number of playing fields in the ownership/control of clubs. Kilkenny's riverside setting, with its floodplains penetrating into the developed areas as green wedges, provides a natural amenity enjoyed by inhabitants and visitors. The other green area of first rank importance within the City is the Castle Park and gardens. This area, including views of, and from, the Castle and its grounds, (which is in the charge of the Office of Public Works), will be the subject of stringent protection by the Corporation and the Council. There are a wide variety of other open spaces within the City, public and private, suitable for active recreation or providing visual amenity. Swimming, golf, GAA games and other field sports, tennis, riding, athletics and squash are available to the public. The most serious deficiency in recreational provision is the lack of suitable play areas for the younger age groups (pre-school and primary). The Castle Park play area is frequently overcrowded, indicating a strong demand for further good-quality children's facilities. Whereas provision for walking and for GAA games is adequate, opportunities for other field sports and for all-weather and indoor activities is limited. Demand for swimming is not met in full by the existing indoor heated pool at Michael Street in spite of the extension of opening hours in recent years. In the suburbs of the city, land has been reserved for recreational use.

#### **Amended Draft Kilkenny City and Environs Development Plan 2002**

This Plan is currently under consideration by the Council. A number of broad policy objectives relating to open space are outlined below, where the Council shall seek to:

- Provide a co-ordinated and graded system of parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas within an urban area so that the population can participate in a wide range of active and passive recreational pursuits within easy reach of their home and places of work.
- Preserve and improve public access to those riverbank and countryside areas which have been traditionally used for outdoor recreation and by land acquisition or other measures to make accessible to the public important areas of natural amenity and countryside which have not hitherto been open to the public.
- Ensure that public roads in urban and rural areas are properly landscaped in the interests of visual amenity.
- Provide a new swimming pool which shall incorporate other sports and leisure facilities in Kilkenny City and Environs.

The Plan recognises the importance of recreation, leisure and sport as components to a good quality of life, and their major land use implications. It is the policy of both Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council to ensure that open space is provided to enhance the character of residential areas.

The Planning Authority will encourage developers to pool land for the purposes of open space requirements to allow for the provision of multipurpose amenity areas as well as small ancillary open spaces within residential areas.

It is the policy of Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council to maintain and where possible improve the provision of swimming facilities to include access for all impairments and disabilities including the elderly and children.

## Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

Kilkenny County Council will not normally permit new residential development unless open space is provided in accordance with the standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population. A lesser standard of provision may be acceptable in urban locations where there are more sustainable patterns of development, thus maximum use can be made of land.

Kilkenny Borough Council and Kilkenny County Council will normally permit development for outdoor recreational proposals in the countryside, located in residential areas, generating high levels of noise and adjacent to waterways where the following criteria has been used to assess the proposed development and are deemed acceptable.

	Outdoor/Countryside Recreation	Recreation in Residential Areas	Water Sports	Noise Sports
<b>Impact On</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nature Conservation Areas</li> <li>▪ Archaeological Heritage</li> <li>▪ Built Heritage</li> <li>▪ Residential Amenity</li> <li>▪ Value of Agricultural Land</li> <li>▪ Local Road Network</li> <li>▪ Existing Streetscape/Townscape</li> <li>▪ Wildlife/farm livestock</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*
Parking	*	*	*	*
Drainage	*	*	*	*
Litter	*	*	*	*
Disposal of Sewerage	*	*	*	*
Noise generated	*	*	*	*
Pollution	*	*	*	*
Compatibility with Development Plan	*		*	*
Accessibility (Public Transport)	*	*	*	*
Sympathetic to surrounding environment in	*	*	*	*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scale</li> <li>▪ Siting</li> <li>▪ Layout</li> <li>▪ Landscape treatment</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*
Compatible with existing use of water			*	
Compatibility with local landscape (Boundary treatment, etc.)	*	*	*	*

### **Kilkenny Integrated Area Plan 1998-2001**

A priority of the Kilkenny IAP is the provision of both public and semi-public open space. It is stated that developments should seek to maximise open space provision in a coherent manner. Provision is made in the IAP for open space to be incorporated into new developments such as Hebron Square and John's Green. The possibility of resolving the issue of the provision of open space within existing housing developments is to be addressed in the on-going implementation phase and to combine the resources of the Council, developers and local communities in a programme of environmental improvements throughout the life of the IAP.

The main feature of the IAP is the creation of four identifiable urban precincts at Hebron Square, Kilkenny Commercial Centre, John's Green Urban Village and Kilkenny Conference Centre. It is a requirement that all open spaces and environmental amenities envisaged in the IAP will be provided as part of these various developments. It will be a matter for the Executive Board to determine whether the facility is to be provided directly by the developer or by way of a contribution to the Local Authority.

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

*Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

### **Other Relevant Documents & Standards**

#### *The National Development Plan 2001-2006*

The benefits of a healthy population are identified in the National Development Plan and funds are allocated for provision of physical infrastructure for recreation in deprived urban and rural areas.

#### *Sustainable development – A Strategy for Ireland (1999)*

The principle of sustainability and encouragement to all forms of sustainable development underline the Department of the Environment and Local Government's approach to planning. Providing opportunities for people to participate in sport and in a wide range of formal and informal recreation activities should wherever possible be available for everyone, including the elderly, young children and those with disabilities for whom access to facilities is especially important.

#### *Parks Policy for Local Authorities (1987)*

This guidance was produced by the Department of the Environment in 1987 and therefore has become outdated but still represents the only national advice specifically for local authorities providing for parks, open spaces and outdoor recreational activities. This advice identifies the growing demand for the provision of public parks, open spaces and recreational areas and the need to co-ordinate this provision if public demand is to be adequately catered for and if maximum value is to be obtained from the limited resources available.

Local authorities are encouraged:- to make assessment of open space and outdoor recreational requirements for urban areas and to include objectives in the relevant development plan to make provision for any deficiency identified; to make an inventory of all existing residential areas; better utilise areas of open space of no recreational or amenity value with any financial gain from such being allocated towards the cost of providing and developing more suitable open space in the same general area; commence a programme for the development and regular maintenance of all suitable areas of open space; to provide operate and maintain a range of outdoor and recreational facilities in accordance with local requirements needs; to apply open space standards within the development control system including attaching conditions requiring developers to make contributions, where appropriate, towards the cost of providing adequately and suitably developed parks and other facilities.

An open space standard of 5 acres (2ha) of public open space per 1000 population is considered appropriate and suitable areas of land should be identified and reserved for public open space purposes in the relevant development plan and subsequent action plans. In major urban areas population units of 10,000 a Neighbourhood Park of 40 acres (16ha) and 2 Local Parks each of about 5 acres (2ha) should be considered for such a unit. If necessary existing and proposed open space should be disaggregated into the smallest possible number of units of suitable shape and size so as to permit subsequent maintenance at minimum cost and to allow maximum flexibility of use.

A clear hierarchy of open space provision is set out including the requirements for neighbourhood park, local park, other open space and amenity areas. The provision of open space such as country parks and other such amenities in rural areas is also identified. These details are enclosed within Appendix 1.

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The provision of percentage requirements of open space per housing development is a crudely defined method of securing open space. This process needs to be refined, in order to provide open spaces of a viable nature, in terms of both location and nature.

## **Kilkenny Recreational Needs Strategy**

### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

Applying this guidance it is important that the city aim to provide a hierarchy of public open space options for recreation within the city and environs. At the upper end of the scale there should exist regional parks, (notionally 40 acres and above), which will be fewer in number. Moving down the hierarchy of scale / size, a variety of parks and park sizes should be provided in increasing numbers.

#### *National Playing Fields Association Six Acre Standard*

In the U.K. the National Playing Fields Association promotes a more defined hierarchy of community recreational space through the 'Six Acre Standard'. The application of this standard in such a large urban area as Limerick City is appropriate although there have been criticisms that this standard is impractical. Provision for children's play areas is defined as follows:

- NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play) – should be in the region of 20 - 40 acres and targeted at children aged 8-14 years. NEAP developments should ideally be provided within a walking radius of 1km, (notionally 15 minutes walk), of the community dwellings it serves and offer a minimum of eight types of equipment or recreational activities.
- LEAP (Locally Equipped Areas for Play) – should be in the region of 5 acres and targeted at children between 4 to 8 years. LEAP developments should ideally be provided within a walking radius of 0.4km, (notionally 5 minutes walk); of the community dwellings it serves and offer a minimum of five types of equipment.
- LAP (Local Area for Play) – small areas of open space suitable for children under 5 years of age should be within a one minute walk of the community dwellings it serves.

These or similar standards should be adopted as a guideline standard, though obviously this may be neither immediately achievable nor always possible.

#### *Targeting Sporting Change in Ireland*

This document sets out a clear blueprint for the development of Irish sport with regard to facilities. A strategic goal is the provision of quality sports facilities in the right place at the right time.

#### *Residential Density Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1999)*

Paragraph 5.7.2 of the Guidelines identifies that local authorities have placed less emphasis on qualitative standards of open space in their Development Plans. This has given rise to residential estates having adequate amounts of open space but very often poorly located or unsuitably shaped.

The Guidelines state also that the achievement of higher densities must be coupled with a higher standard of residential environment and thus the provision of higher quality public and communal open space is of paramount importance. Any acceptance of lower quantitative standards of open space must be accompanied by a parallel increase in qualitative standards of open space.

### Public Open Space

#### Qualitative Standards

Greater emphasis should be placed in the quality of public open space as follows.

- Public Open Space should be well designed from a visual perspective as well as functionally accessible to the maximum number of dwellings within the residential area.

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### *Open Space, Sport and Recreation Policies and Objectives*

- Planning authorities should not permit the provision of open space where it is inadequately overlooked, supervised or accessible.
- Emphasis should be placed on the need to retain existing natural features (e.g. an important stand of mature trees or stream) and to provide open space in its vicinity to ensure its visual setting and protection.
- Open space should be suitably proportioned and narrow tracts, which are difficult to manage, should not be acceptable.
- In new development areas local or Action Area Plans should identify at an early stage the preferred location of larger open spaces including, if considered appropriate, location in the non-development areas adjoining the proposed development. This may allow playing pitches and larger recreational facilities to be concentrated away from housing areas but easily accessible from them and allow a more flexible approach to open space requirements within residential estates by way of more casual spaces suitable for smaller children's play, informal kickabout and passive amenity.
- Hard play areas such as all-weather surfaces should also be taken into account when assessing new proposals.

### Quantitative Standards

The Guidelines recommend that the provision of public open space to serve new residential developments should be on a hierarchical basis varying in size from large regional parks to small children's play areas and passive recreation spaces close to people's homes.

Common current quantitative requirements are 15/20 sq.m. per person or 10-14% of the site area. The Guidelines recommend that greater emphasis is placed on qualitative standards. Where residential developments are close to the facilities of city and town centres or in proximity to public parks or coastal and other natural amenities, a relaxation of standards should be considered. Alternatively, planning authorities may seek a financial contribution towards public open space or recreational facilities in the wider area.

### Private Open Space

Privacy is identified in the Guidelines as a key issue in quality of residential development.

All houses (terraced, semi-detached, detached) should have an area of private open space behind the building line. In general the requirement should be 60-75m<sup>2</sup> minimum for 3/4/5 bedroom houses in order to ensure that most household activities are accommodated and that it is at the same time adequate to offer visual delight, receive some sunshine and encourage plant growth. A slightly reduced standard may be acceptable where 1 and 2 bedroom houses are proposed but in no instance should a figure of less than 48m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling be acceptable. A minimum standard of 22 metres between directly opposing first floor windows should normally be observed (see paragraph 5.6.1 above). This will normally result in a rear garden depth of 11 metres. However, where adequate levels of privacy are provided, this depth may be reduced provided that the minimum area outlined above is achieved.

Semi-private enclosed landscaped space solely for the use of the residences, it may be considered appropriate to accept the sum of the area of both private and public open spaces as satisfying the private open space requirement for these dwellings.

In the case of apartment and duplex style schemes, private open space will be provided in the form of landscaped areas, courtyards, terraces/patios and balconies. Roof gardens should also be considered, provided that they are easily accessible, secure and attractively landscaped. Recommended minimum standards should range from:

- 10m<sup>2</sup> per one bedroom apartment
- 15-20m<sup>2</sup> per two or three bedroom apartment close to City and Town Centres to:

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- 20m<sup>2</sup> per 1 bedroom apartment
- 30-40m<sup>2</sup> per 2 or 3 bedroom apartment in the outer suburban areas.

Permeating throughout the Guidelines is the concept that achievement of higher densities must be coupled with a higher standard of residential environment and thus the provision of higher quality public and communal open space.

### **Key Agencies**

There are a number of government departments and agencies each of which has input into the funding and provision of open space and amenities within these areas. Foremost amongst these is the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

#### *Department of Environment and Local Government*

Under the Housing Remedial Works Scheme grants are available to find small play areas within housing estates. The Department have also issued.....

#### *Department of Marine and Natural Resource*

This Department within the forestry service have initiated an Urban Woodland Scheme which encourages and facilitates increased tree planting within urban areas, facilities include seats, litter bins, "trim trails" and play areas. This Department has a Neighbour Wood Scheme which assists local groups in managing a wood.

#### *The Heritage Council*

The Council has a statutory responsibility under Section 6 of the Heritage Act 1996 to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage. In the context of this study national heritage would include flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, heritage gardens and parks, and finally inland.

#### *Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation*

This Department is relevant only in the context of tourism related development.

Funding is available from the Department under the Tourism Development Scheme through the relevant regional tourism authority. This could include a tourist trail and tourism facility in a parkland setting.

XXXXX

XXXXX

XXXXX

#### *Area Development Management Ltd*

ADM find local groups who provide (1) services to the unemployed (2) community development and (3) community based youth initiatives. The latter two would appear appropriate for ADM to become involved. Potentially this includes landscaping in public areas, playgrounds etc.

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## **APPENDIX V**

### **SUMMARY OF OPEN SPACE AUDIT**

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