

# SPORTS AND RECREATION



Aim: To ensure that there are excellent and accessible recreational facilities and public spaces provided to meet the needs of all citizens



## Introduction

- 11.1** Properly maintained and easily accessible public open spaces and sports and recreational facilities are key elements in ensuring a good quality of life is achieved for all members of the community. They also enhance the overall attractiveness of the urban environment and provide places for active and passive recreation. Active recreational facilities include sports grounds and pitches as well as indoor facilities such as swimming pools and multi-purpose halls. It is vital that such spaces and facilities are retained and managed to a high standard while being easily accessible to as wide a population as possible. With increasing pressure for development and higher densities in urban areas it is crucial that new spaces and facilities are designed to the highest standards so that their potential usage is maximised.
- 11.2** In order to identify shortages in the provision for sports in specific parts of the city and potential for development of additional sports facilities it is proposed to update the '*Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study*'. Policies are also proposed below to protect the existing supply of sports facilities and grounds to ensure they are located close to the communities they serve.

### Sport and Recreation Objectives

- To protect existing green areas and public open spaces which provide for the passive and active recreational needs of the population;
- To protect and enhance recreational areas including sports grounds and facilities;
- To improve the quality and range of uses provided within parks and public open spaces including sports facilities and encourage their greater use and enjoyment;
- To manage and maintain parks to the highest standards;
- To provide new parks and green spaces with proper facilities which are designed to a high standard;
- To develop and improve linkages between parks and public open spaces such as public walkways/cycleways.

### Strategic Context

- 11.3** Relevant documents and policies in relation to public open spaces and recreational facilities include the following:
- *A Parks' Policy for Local Authorities* - 1987
  - *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for planning authorities* - 2008
  - *Ready, Steady, Play! A National Play Policy* - 2004
  - *Teenspace National Recreation Policy for Young People* - 2007
  - *Parks Strategy* - 2000
  - *Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study* - 2003

## Recreation

### Parks Strategy

- 11.4** Current policy in relation to the development of parks and areas of public open space in the city is contained within the *Parks Strategy 2000*. Some of the parks projects which have been developed in recent years include the Banks of the Lee Project, with linkages between the Mardyke Walk, the Distillery Fields and the Lee Fields to the rear of Sacred Heart Convent being provided. A number of smaller local parks have also been developed including Kilmore Park, Popham's Park and Glenamoy Park. It is planned to commence a review and update of the Parks Strategy shortly. This should set out a strategy for the development of parks and public open spaces over the period 2009-2015. A key feature of the strategy will be the concept of a Hierarchy of Parks which looks at parks in terms of their size and walking distance from residential areas. It is hoped that larger and more strategic parks projects would be progressed with detailed proposals regarding facilities or the form these should take e.g. providing sports facilities and grounds, play facilities, walkways/trails etc. In terms of the City Centre the riverside is a key public space and mainly consists of hard landscaped areas. It is a key element in providing for the public open space needs of the City Centre.

POLICY 11.1

Parks Strategy

To review and update policies, objectives and proposals for parks in the city as outlined in the Parks Strategy 2000.

Hierarchy of Parks

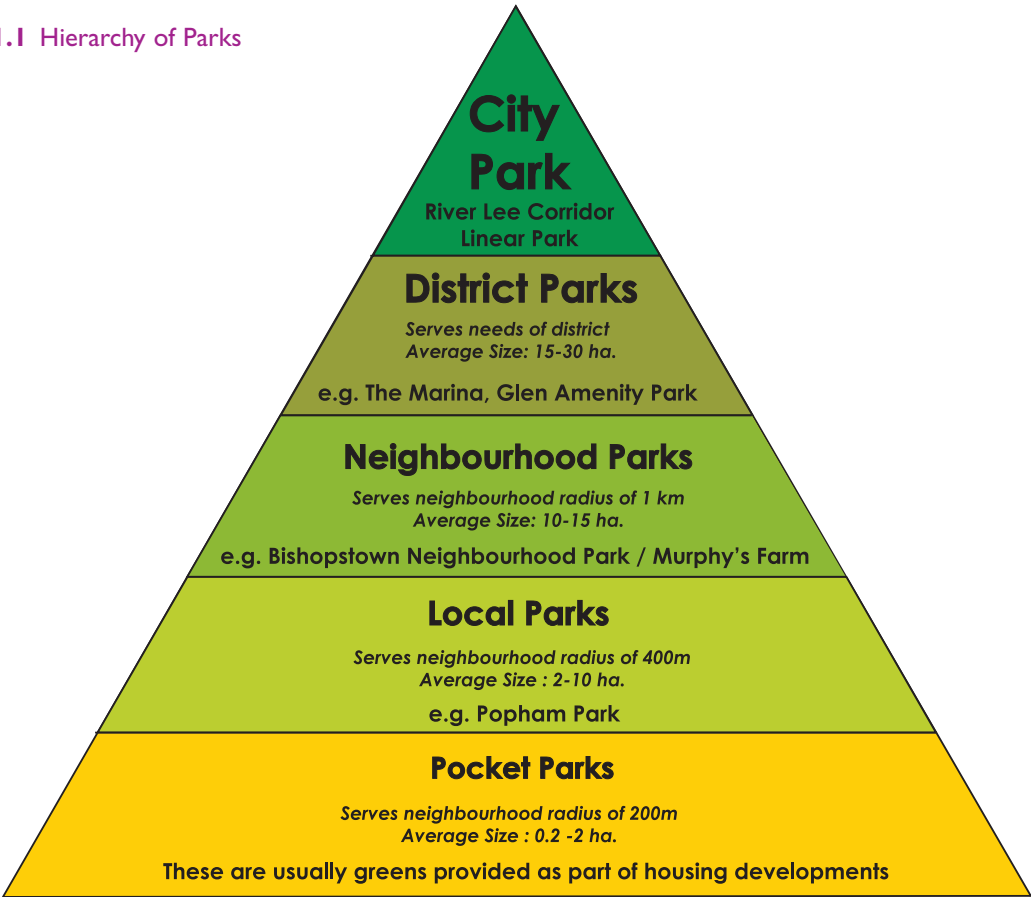
11.5 The principle of a Hierarchy of Parks is considered very useful in ensuring all members of the population have easy access to sufficient parks and areas of public open space which suit their various needs. A general standard of one neighbourhood park of 16 ha (40 acre) and two local parks (approx. 5 acre each) based on population units of 10,000 is taken as acceptable for urban areas. However it is considered that a wider variety of spaces should be provided for. This includes the provision of areas of public open space ranging from a large City Park serving the needs of the city as a whole to smaller spaces or pocket parks serving smaller communities. While this will be considered in more detail as part of the revised Parks' Strategy the general basis for a hierarchy is set out in Figure 11.1. Although it may not be possible to satisfy all layers of the hierarchy in all parts of the city, given that certain areas are largely built-up, it gives a good general idea of what needs exist. It also identifies where deficiencies exist and where parks and public spaces may need to be upgraded or retrofitted and provided as part of new developments. Where parks and public open spaces exist it is important that they are protected. Such areas will therefore be zoned for such purposes or protected through Policy 11.3.

POLICY 11.2

Hierarchy of Parks

To apply the principle of a hierarchy of parks in relation to the provision of parks and public open spaces which vary in size and nature to serve the needs of all members of the community.

Figure 11.1 Hierarchy of Parks







### Audit of Public Open Space

- 11.6** The Parks' Section is currently carrying out an audit of public open space in the city which will feed into the updated Parks Strategy. This will identify where deficiencies exist in terms of provision and where existing parks may need to be upgraded or new parks retrofitted as part of new development.

### Parks Projects

- 11.7** The updated Parks Strategy will consider proposals for new and upgraded parks and public open spaces. Where parks are cross-boundary the City Council will co-operate with Cork County Council in their delivery. The following parks projects are proposed over the next six years:

#### Kinsale Road Amenity Park

It is proposed to redevelop the Kinsale Road landfill site as a park as landfill operations are phased out. A pitch is currently under construction within this area. It is considered that the new park could include areas for passive and active recreation such as play areas, wildlife areas and walks as well as catering for a variety of activities including areas for events such as circuses etc. There is a long term objective to link the park with recreational areas in the County on the Vernon Mount Ridge. This will be further investigated over the period of the Plan.

#### Banks of the Lee Project

Much has been achieved in terms of the implementation of the Banks of the Lee Project, which aims to improve the availability of green spaces to sustain the renewal of the City Centre as a living city, to improve recreational facilities to benefit the north west of the city and to improve recreational facilities and pedestrian links with the expansion of the city's third level educational institutions. The pedestrian/cycle bridge between the Mardyke Walk and the Distillery Fields has been completed and the new amenity route and bridge to the rear of the Sacred Heart Convent is currently under construction. It is proposed to upgrade the link to Bishopstown along the Curragheen River. There are proposals to upgrade the Lee Fields, Curragheen River Park and Bishopstown Park/Murphy's Farm outlined in the *Bishopstown and Wilton Area Action Plan 2007*.

#### Glen Amenity Park

The Glen Amenity Park is a substantial and significant open space in the North East sector. The Glen is a natural river valley, unique as an amenity area with a variety of vegetation. Upgrading works which take account of its semi-wild setting will be completed by late 2008.



### **North-West District Park (Knocknaheeny)**

A location has been identified for a District Park to serve the North-West of the city which is located mainly in the County area but will be developed by the City Council. Funding has been applied for under the *National Development Plan 2007-2013* (NDP) to develop the park. It is important that the park be located close to existing residential areas to ensure maximum usage and benefit to the community. It will also benefit the overall regeneration of the area. The park should contain a variety of facilities e.g. sports pitches, hard surfaces, courts, amenity walkways, pitch and putt, children's play grounds, open parkland etc.

### **Marina Park**

As part of the South Docks Local Area Plan 2008 it is proposed to develop the Marina Park. It will extend east from the Showgrounds including the Atlantic Pond, lands to the east of the pumping station at Atlantic Pond and the underutilized parklands north of the old rail line and south of the Marina. It is proposed to accommodate the upgrading of Pairc Uí Chaoimh to a modern stadium by working with the GAA and to facilitate the development of a Centre of Excellence. The Showgrounds will be developed as an area of public open space. It is proposed to promote an international design procurement competition for the design of Marina Park and to provide public art and an outdoor performance space. It is proposed that Marina Park be developed between 2010 and 2013.

### **North-East District Park**

A deficit in the provision of areas of public open space has been identified in the North-East of the city. The City Council will look for opportunities to develop areas of both passive and active recreation including areas zoned for open space and as part of the Green Belt area of the County. An area at Saint Dominic's Retreat Centre, Ennismore has been identified for possible future development of a public park.

#### **11.8** Proposed new and upgraded Neighbourhood, Local and Pocket Parks are listed below:

- New Wilton Neighbourhood Park as outlined in the Bishopstown and Wilton Area Action Plan 2007;
- Bride Valley Park;
- Bantry Park;
- Park at Knocknaheeny Avenue;
- Bell's Field and Lady's Well as outlined in the Coburg Street and St. Patrick's Hill Area Action Plan 2007;
- New park at Old Whitechurch Road;
- A new park at Shanakiel located next to the new residential development. This could possibly be developed as a biodiversity park;
- New Blackrock Park as outlined in the Blackrock Village Area Action Plan 2006;
- Kennedy Park, as outlined in the South Docks Local Area Plan 2008;
- New parks as outlined in the North Docks Local Area Plan 2005, including Horgan's Quay Square, Grattan Hill Lower park, Clifton Terrace park, Castlevue Terrace park and hard landscaped spaces such as Horgan's Walk, Station Square, Kent Plaza, Patent Slipway Plaza and Castlevue Terrace Lower space;
- Curragheen River Park, as outlined in the Bishopstown and Wilton Area Action Plan 2007.

### **Allotments**

#### **11.9** Public allotments and community gardens can have a number of benefits including promoting healthy lifestyles, providing a cheap and local source of food, reducing food miles and promoting diversity. The City Council will support the development of public allotments and will seek to identify sites for such activities in major development areas, major parks and other locations.

### **Standards for Public Open Space provision**

#### **11.10** The *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for planning authorities* (DOEHLG, 2008) which is replacing the *Residential Density Guidelines* (1999) provides guidance on the provision of open space for new developments. The guidelines outline how, as part of new development areas, local

area plans should identify the preferred location of larger open spaces, including if considered appropriate, locations in adjoining non-development areas. This would 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 housing schemes by way of more casual spaces suitable for smaller children's play, informal kick-about and passive amenity.

- 11.11** Quality of public open spaces should be emphasised in terms of design, accessibility, shared use, biodiversity, sustainable urban drainage systems and provision for allotments and community gardens. In this regard details of the proposed landscaping, hard and soft should be submitted as part of planning applications. Quantitative standards in relation to public open space are outlined in Chapter 17: Development Management. Guidance in relation to the public realm and public open space is also outlined in the *Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide* (DOEHLG, 2008), which accompanies the guidelines. There will be an emphasis on quality and ensuring that all public open space is overlooked by surrounding homes so that this amenity is owned by the residents and is safe to use. It is important that the public realm is considered as a usable integrated element in the design of the development, that children's play areas are sited where they will be over-looked but not a nuisance and there is a clear definition between public, semi-private and private space.

### POLICY 11.3

#### Public Open Space

- To protect, retain, improve and provide for areas of public open space for recreation and amenity purposes. There will be a presumption against development of land zoned public open space for alternative purposes.
- There will be presumption against development on all open space in residential estates in the city, including any green area/public amenity area that formed part of an executed planning permission for development and was identified for the purposes of recreation/amenity open space, and also including land which has been habitually used as public open space. Such lands shall be protected for recreation, open space and amenity purposes.
- To provide and promote high quality open spaces which are well designed, suitably proportioned and accessible to the surrounding community. The development of open spaces should aim to enhance and protect natural features and views and be set in safe and secure environments with the emphasis on active open spaces enjoyed by all sectors of the community.
- To follow an approach of qualitative as well as quantitative standards for open spaces providing high quality open spaces with high levels of access to recreation for local communities.

### Amenity Routes

- 11.12** Amenity routes provide a linkage between and improve access to areas of public open space and recreational amenities. The dual use of such routes as walkways and cycleways is encouraged where possible. Much has been achieved in terms of the provision of new amenity routes since the last City Development Plan. These include the completion of the Mardyke Walk, new pedestrian bridge and North Distillery route, the route from Mahon Industrial Estate to the Old Passage Railway line and the route from Sean Cronin Park, Skehard Road to the Old Passage Railway line. The route from the Glen Avenue, through Military Cemetery and Pope's Road is under construction at present. It is proposed to continue the implementation of new and upgraded amenity routes including routes identified as part of the *Bishopstown and Wilton Area Action Plan 2007*, the *North Docks Local Area Plan 2005* and the *South Docks Local Area Plan 2008*. It is also important that existing routes are upgraded to a high standard and that proper facilities are provided. Safety is considered a key issue and public lighting may ensure that these routes can be used more frequently including evening-time. New or upgraded amenity routes are listed in Table 11.1 and outlined on the Zoning and Objectives Maps in Volume 2. New routes should be designed so as to promote surveillance.



**Table 11.1 New/upgraded Amenity Routes**

City Sector	New/upgraded Amenity Routes
North West	Mardyke - Daly's Bridge - Strawberry Hill - Hollyhill Road - Nash's Boreen - Fairfield Road
North East	Silverspring Lane - Lower Mayfield Road - proposed North Ring Rd - Ballyhooly New Rd
North East	Along Glenamought River from Kilnap Bridge - Glenamought Bridge
South East	Along riverbank from Blackrock Village - Blackrock Castle
South East	Mahon Industrial Estate - through Bessboro - South Link Walkway
South East/South Centre	South Douglas Road - along Tramore/Trabeg River - Proposed Amenity Park, landfill site - Kinsale Road - rear of Tramore Road industrial units along Tramore River - Pouladuff Road
South West	Magazine Road - along Glasheen River - along South Channel of River Lee - Gaol Bridge
South West	Victoria Cross - proposed pedestrian bridge - along North Channel of River Lee - Perrott's Inch - proposed pedestrian bridge - UCC grounds
South West	Along north bank of Curragheen River from the existing Curragheen River walk - County Hall
South West	Along south bank of Curragheen River from the existing pedestrian bridge over the Curragheen River - Victoria Lodge Apartments - Victoria Cross Road
North Docks	Horgan's Walk
South Docks	Albert Quay to Marina via Kennedy quay and South Jetties along River Lee south bank

#### POLICY 11.4

##### **Amenity Routes**

To develop a network of high quality amenity routes, particularly along waterways, linking existing parks and public open spaces. Routes will be made easily accessible and overlooked where possible. They will also be properly branded including signposts as well as facilities such as park benches and public lighting.

### **Recreational Facilities Needs Study**

- 11.13** The *Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study* was carried out in 2003. The study identified a shortage of facilities for some sports in certain parts of the city and suburbs with increasing demands for clubs and other local groups for sports venues. Since the study was carried out the Mahon sports pitches have been completed and a pavilion will be built shortly. The study is planned to be updated shortly. The update may be done in conjunction with the County Council to ensure that the future development of sports facilities occurs in a co-ordinated fashion and that adequate land and water resources are provided for sport and recreational facilities including the urban fringe. The study will look at some additional activities, including proposals for additional sports such as walking routes etc.

#### POLICY 11.5

##### **Recreational Facilities Needs Study**

To update the *Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study*.



## Sports

### Sports Facilities and Grounds

- 11.14** Sports facilities and grounds include a variety of both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities which predominantly provide for the active recreational needs of the community. It is vital that such facilities are maintained to a high standard and easily accessible. In order to ensure facilities are located close to the population existing facilities are zoned to protect their recreational value. Due to the lack of available land in the city new opportunities for sports grounds, particularly in the provision of playing pitches, are limited. It is therefore necessary to retain such facilities in their current locations and where they are of most value and accessible to the community being served particularly younger people. Accessibility should be promoted through improved public transport links and walking/cycling. Sports facilities should be upgraded and maintained to the highest standards to ensure quality of provision. This gives recreational land the greatest value and potential for being used. In order to promote participation in sports and coordinate the sports function of the City Council, a Sports Development Officer and new Sports' Coordinator have been employed.



#### POLICY 11.6

##### Recreational Facilities

To support the development of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities which are easily accessible to all members of the community.

#### POLICY 11.7

##### Protection of Sports Grounds and Facilities

To protect, retain and enhance the range and quality of sports facilities and grounds in the city and to ensure that lands zoned 'sports ground' is not developed for other purposes. There will be a general presumption against the loss of land zoned as sports grounds for development for other purposes. Limited ancillary\* development may be considered if the proposed development:

- Is ancillary\* to the principal use of the site as sports grounds and does not affect the quantity or quality of the pitches and provision of adequate training areas and facilities or adversely impact upon their use;
- Only affects land incapable of forming part of the playing surfaces and does not result in the loss of any playing surface or pitch.

*\*Ancillary uses include other sport and leisure facilities such as a clubhouse, changing rooms, meeting rooms, gym, sports training halls, catering facilities, caretakers accommodation and appropriate car parking facilities. Crèches and community uses are open for consideration provided that they are linked to the sports use.*



## POLICY 11.8

### Sports Facilities and Grounds

- To promote the provision and management of high quality sporting facilities.
- To facilitate access to sports facilities for all members of the community and ensure that the particular needs of different groups are incorporated into the planning, design and management of new facilities. The City Council will continue to encourage joint provision and dual use of sports facilities in appropriate locations.
- To promote, in co-operation with the County Council, the urban fringe and Green Belt as important resources for the provision of sports facilities e.g. golf courses, pitches etc.
- To take account of the priorities set out in both national and local sports strategies when planning new facilities.
- To consider the sports facilities, recreation and amenity needs of an area for which planning permission is sought and effect their provision through the planning process, e.g. provision of Multi-Use Games' Areas (MUGAs) etc.

### Play Facilities

**11.15** The importance of providing high quality play facilities for children is recognised, particularly given that the nature of play is changing and opportunities for play are diminishing due to changes in the environment, technology, lifestyle and society. The National Children's Office published *Ready, Steady, Play! A National Play Policy in 2004*, which covers the years 2004-2008. Its objective is to increase public play facilities and thereby increase the quality of life of children living in Ireland by providing them with more play opportunities. The play policy addresses the needs of younger children. The *Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide* (2008), which accompanies the *Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas* provides guidance on the development of children's play areas. A key ingredient in making children's play areas safe to use is overlooking. This can be provided from within nearby homes or by other users of the surrounding public spaces. New residential developments will therefore be required to include play areas which cater for different age groups. Areas for young children should provide opportunities for play by toddlers and young children close to their homes. Larger play spaces are required for a wider range of children, particularly older children. They should generally contain a range of play equipment and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), which could be used for sports such as



basketball and 5-a-side football. The National Recreation Policy for Young People aged between 12 and 18 years- *Teenspace* was launched in September 2007. It aims to provide a strategic framework for the promotion of better recreational opportunities for teenagers. It sets out a series of objectives and actions in order to achieve the implementation of better recreational facilities and activities for young people. The development of facilities such as Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), dedicated youth cafés and skateboard parks will be encouraged as appropriate.

**11.16** Play areas can generally be categorised as follows:

- Local Areas for Play (LAP). These include small areas of open space specifically designated and laid out for young children to play close to where they live. They cater for children up to 6 years of age and can be overseen by parents, carers and the local community;
- Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP). These include areas of open space designed and equipped for children of early school age and located within a 5 minute walk from home;
- Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP). These cater mainly for older children and are located within a walking time of 15 minutes from home.

- 11.17** It is considered that an overall strategy should be developed for the provision of play facilities in the city in conjunction with the updated Parks' Strategy.

#### POLICY 11.9

##### **New Play Facilities**

To provide play facilities that are well-designed, easily accessible and maintained to a high standard.

#### POLICY 11.10

##### **Play Facilities in New Developments**

To require developers, where appropriate, to provide playgrounds as part of larger, new residential developments (over 75 dwellings units).

#### POLICY 11.11

##### **Play Strategy**

To develop an overall strategy for the development of play facilities within the city.