

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS FOR OPEN SPACE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2000, the Council adopted guidance on the provision of open space in new developments. This paper recommends that the contributions made by developers are increased to reflect inflation.

2 CONTRIBUTIONS

- 2.1 The current contribution required for off-site provision of open space is £1,404 per residential unit. It was based on the cost of providing and maintaining open space and was similar to the contributions required by other councils. Where it could be demonstrated that the average occupancy of a development would be 2.5 or less people per dwelling, there was a reduced rate of £1,123 per unit.
- 2.2 I believe that we should revise the contributions to take account of inflation since 2000 and the increased cost of providing and maintaining open space. This would result in full contributions of £1,620 in 2006/7, with the reduced rate at £1,300. It is also proposed to adjust the levels of contribution annually, based on inflation.
- 2.3 It is important to recognise that developments do not usually get under way immediately after they are permitted. Most permissions run for three years, so it is proposed to apply a staged approach. If the development begins within 12 months, then the contribution required at the time of the consent would apply. If it begins between 12 and 24 months after the consent, the contribution would be increased by 3% to reflect inflation. If it is between 24 and 36 months, the increase would be 6%.
- 2.4 As part of our work on the Local Development Framework, we will be looking at the provision and funding of open space. As a result, we may need to revisit our approach but the proposal in this report would cover the period until our policy changes.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 In 2005/6, we collected £386,000 in contributions for open space. In a comparable year, the recommended contribution would have brought in around £440,000. However, the current reduction in applications and permissions for new housing, due to English Nature's approach to the Special Protection Area, means there will be a significant reduction this year.

4 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 It is recommended that:

- i) developer contributions towards open space in 2006/7 are £1,620 per unit, with a reduced rate of £1,300;
- ii) the level of contributions is then increased annually, in line with inflation; and
- iii) where developments begin between 12 and 24 months after the permission is granted, the contribution is increased by 3%, and 6% for schemes beginning between 24 and 36 months from the decision date.

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