



# Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033

## Topic Paper

June 2019

## Topic Paper 12: Recreational Spaces

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# 1 Introduction

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is first and foremost a land use plan that identifies site specific development opportunities in response to the needs of the community for more housing, jobs, services and facilities. It also seeks to preserve, protect and enhance where appropriate, those aspects of the built and natural environment which are important in defining the quality and sensitivity of the places we value, enjoy, move through, and live in. The ultimate aim of the LDP will be to deliver sustainable development.

The LDP is a vehicle for the Council to define its key growth and development priorities and will provide the ongoing framework of policies to guide decisions on planning applications.

## 2 Purpose of this Topic Paper

This is one of a series of 12 topic papers which have been put together to inform the production of the Conwy Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). Their aim is to interpret the relevant evidence and guidance in relation to the specific topic and identify the key issues that the Plan will need to address as well as possible policy approaches to be incorporated in the Plan. Each topic paper has been compiled from detailed evidence originating from LDP Background Papers (technical documents that form the evidence base for the RLDP.) Topic papers are designed to cover key subject areas currently covered in the adopted LDP and summarise technical data contained within the Background Papers to make the presentation of data more accessible to readers. Topic papers establish a baseline position and identify the key issues facing the County Borough which the RLDP will need to address.

The Topic Papers are intended to provide an early opportunity for stakeholders and the public to have an input into the Plan. This topic paper covers key issues relating to recreational spaces.

## 3 Key Changes to Legislation and Policy (since LDP adoption)

There have been a number of significant changes to government policy and changes in the political environment since adoption of the LDP. This section examines briefly the key points that are pertinent to this particular topic paper.

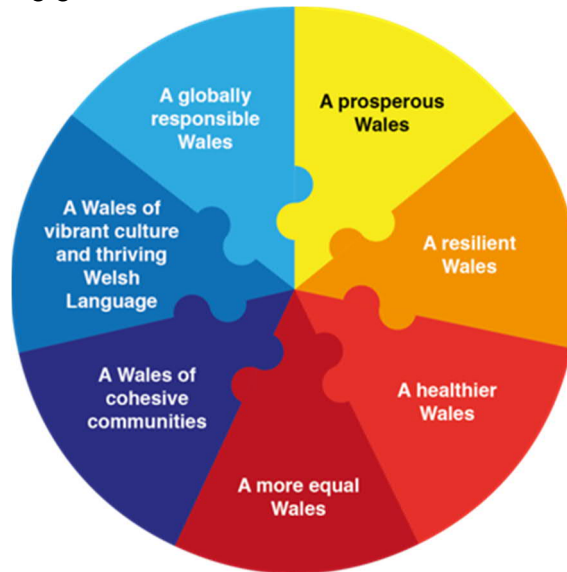
### 3.1 National

#### **Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

It will make public bodies such as Councils think more about the long-term, work better with other organisations and communities to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

The Act has seven well-being goals which are:



Each public body mentioned in the Well-being Act must carry out sustainable development.

“The action a public body takes in carrying out sustainable development must include:

- a. setting and publishing objectives (“well-being objectives”) that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals, and
- b. taking all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Act “sustainable development” means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.

The Act specifies five ways of working: long-term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention. Each of these will be incorporated into the RLDP process.

### Planning policy

National planning policy can be found in Planning Policy Wales (10th edition, December 2018). It has been revised to deliver the Well-being of Future Generations Act and is based around four distinct themes that collectively contribute to placemaking and bring the requirements of the Act into context for planning policy. They show the inter-linkages between planning policies:

- Strategic and spatial choices
  - 
  - Good design
  - Promoting healthier places
  - The Welsh language
  - Sustainable management of natural resources
  - Strategic planning
  - Placemaking in rural areas
  - Managing settlement form
- Active and social places
  - Housing

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<sup>1</sup> Part 2 ‘Improving Well-being section 3 ‘well-being duty on public bodies’ paragraphs (1) and (2)

- Retail and commercial centres
- Community facilities
- Recreational spaces
- Transport
- Productive and enterprising places
  - Economic development
  - Tourism
  - The rural economy
  - Transportation infrastructure
  - Telecommunications
  - Energy
  - Minerals
  - Waste
- Distinctive and natural places
  - Landscape
  - Coastal areas
  - Historic environment
  - Green infrastructure
  - Biodiversity
  - Water, air, soundscape and light
  - Flooding
  - De-risking

Recreational spaces falls under the Active and Social Places theme. PPW considers that they serve a dual role, of providing a place for play, sport, activity and relaxation and contribute positively towards quality of life, health and well-being. They also promote nature conservation and biodiversity and contribute towards an areas green infrastructure.

The Council should provide a framework for well-located, good quality sport, recreational and leisure facilities. The RLDP should set clear policies for the provision, protection and enhancement of sport, recreation and leisure facilities. These should set standards of provision so that local deficiencies are identified and met through the planning process. Policies should also resolve conflict between different pursuits. Formal and informal open spaces should be protected. All playing fields, including those owned by private and voluntary organisations should be protected, unless there is an excess in the area, alternative provision can be made or facilities can be retained and enhanced through redevelopment of a small part of the field. Multiple use of open space should be encouraged. Planning authorities should consider the use of disused land and routes as open space or greenways in urban areas and encourage safe and attractive cycle routes and footpaths.

Placemaking now forms the core of PPW and must be embraced in both plan making and development management decisions to achieve the creation of sustainable places in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act objectives. Placemaking is a multi-dimensional approach to planning, designing and managing an areas protection and enhancement. It is about responding to the surroundings by understanding the history and development of a place, its function and most importantly its residents and their relationship with the locality. It is then about delivering change that works towards meeting its environmental, economic and social goals. It uses a local community's assets and needs as inspiration for creating good, functional places that promote people's health, happiness and well-being.

**Technical Advice Note 16** (2009) provides further advice and aims to integrate the links between health and well-being, sport and recreational activity and sustainable development. The objectives set in PPW are best achieved by undertaking local assessments of need and audits of existing provision (Open Space Assessment). This should inform LDP policies and should consider all forms of open space provision: public parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural greenspaces, green corridors, outdoor sport facilities, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people, allotments, community gardens and urban farms, cemeteries and churchyards, accessible areas of countryside in the urban fringe, civic spaces and water.

Allotments is included in the definition of open space in TAN16, however, they are listed as a community facility in the consultation draft PPW, and so will be covered in the Community Facilities Topic Paper for the Conwy RLDP.

PPW does not set standards for provision as these should be based on the results of the Open Space Assessment. The strategy should seek to improve the match between current levels of provision and existing and likely future patterns of demand. Locally generated standards should be set on robust evidence, including assessing quantitative elements, qualitative elements and an accessibility component. These can be quantitative and qualitative standards.

The TAN makes reference to Fields in Trust (FIT) recommended standards. Standards set by the then Countryside Council for Wales for accessible, natural green spaces are also referred to. These can be used by local authorities.

Beyond the Six-acre Standard, published by FIT, is referred to in draft PPW as a source of helpful advice. The benchmark guidelines were updated in 2015 to reflect the changes to national planning policy to include amenity and natural greenspace. The guidance also includes qualitative guidelines. All three elements will need including in the updated open space assessment: quantitative, qualitative and accessibility. The new standards are:

Open space typologies		Quantity guideline	Walking distance
Formal outdoor space	Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m
	All outdoor sports	1.60	1,200m
	Equipped / designated play areas	0.25	LAPs: 100m LEAPs: 400m NEAPs: 1,000m
	Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skate parks)	0.30	700m
Informal outdoor space	Parks and gardens	0.80	710m
	Amenity greenspace	0.60	480m
	Natural and semi-natural	2.00	720m

Source: <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/guidance>

Recreational spaces, in particular natural and semi-natural greenspace, will link to Topic Paper 6: Natural Environment. This will include an assessment of green infrastructure.

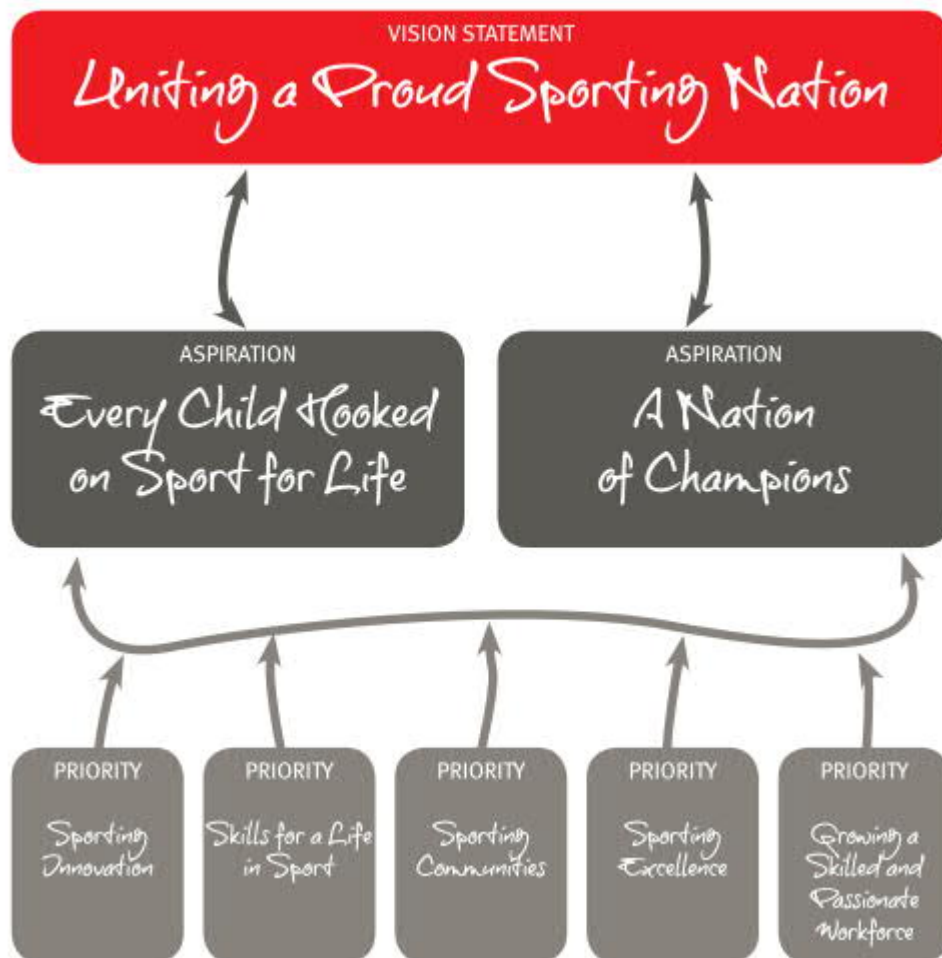
The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a voluntary mechanism that allows local authorities in England and Wales to levy a standard charge on most types of new development, to fund the infrastructure needed to support development in their area. CIL has been designed to replace the current system of planning obligations. The Council is progressing with implementing CIL. Once adopted, it will affect how planning obligations for recreational spaces are sought.

Creating an Active Wales is Welsh Governments plan for delivering an active healthy and inclusive Wales. It seeks to further support people who are already physically active and encourage those who are not. Making activity a natural part of people’s lives is at the heart of this. Planning can deliver this through developing a built environment that supports activity and access to green spaces.

Climbing Higher is the Welsh Government’s long-term strategy for sport and physical activity. It seeks to maximise the contribution sport and physical activity can make to well-being. It has an integrated strategy, which brings key areas together: health, economy, culture, society, environment and Wales on the world stage. Relevant priorities for recreational spaces in the RLDP are:

- Wales needs to maximise the synergy between sport, physical activity and the natural environment.
- Wales needs more physically active communities.

Sports Wales has published a Vision for sport in Wales. Its Visions, Aspirations and Priorities are:





Under section 11 (1) of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, each local authority is required to undertake a play sufficiency assessment every 3 years to assess opportunities for playing within its area. In addition, the local authority is required to develop an action plan that secures opportunities for children to play. The Play Sufficiency Assessment must demonstrate that the Local Authority has taken into account and assessed the matters set out in The Play Sufficiency Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2012 and Statutory Guidance. The assessment will enable the following:

- Identification of gaps in information, provision, service delivery and policy implementation
- Support the establishment of evidence to give an indication of distance travelled in relation to play sufficiency
- Highlight potential ways of addressing issues relating to partnership working
- The input and involvement of all partners increasing levels of knowledge and understanding
- A monitoring system which will involve and improve communication between professionals
- The identification of good practice examples
- Increased levels of partnerships in assessing sufficient play opportunities
- The identification of actions for the Securing Play Sufficiency Action Plan which accompanies the Play Sufficiency Assessment

The LDP Manual was last updated in 2015, which was after the Conwy LDP was adopted. It provides guidance and advice on LDP production. It suggests a list of relevant information for LDP evidence base. Relevant to this topic area are open space needs; ability to fund infrastructure and links between S106 and CIL; environmental, ecological, landscape and heritage constraints and opportunities and development viability. No indicators are suggested for recreational spaces.

The National Development Framework (NDF) will be a 20 year national spatial plan for Wales setting out high-level strategic issues including a vision for next 40 years and objectives focusing on the strongest market areas, communities across all of Wales, decarbonisation and natural resources. The NDF issues and options paper has recently been out to consultation and Welsh Government are currently collating responses. The current timetable is for an NDF to be in place by September 2020.

## **3.2 Regional**

The Planning Act 2015, sets out that a region can consider preparing a Strategic Development Plan (SDP). For North Wales, this is the regional A55 Corridor Strategic Plan. It will allow topic areas including housing demand, search areas for strategic employment sites and supporting transport infrastructure to be planned for in an integrated and comprehensive way.

Sports North Wales has been established in 2018 and seeks to broaden the opportunities for community sport across the region. It aims to remove the barriers that are preventing people, particularly those in under-represented groups, from taking part in sport.

### 3.3 Local

The purpose of the Corporate Plan is to present Conwy County Borough Council's Priorities for the five years from 2017 to 2022. The priorities are the areas that the Council want to focus special attention on in order to support the achievement of the citizen outcomes.

The outcomes are as follows:

- People are educated & skilled
- People are safe and feel safe
- People have access to affordable, appropriate, good quality accommodation that enhances the quality of their lives.
- People are healthy & active
- People live in a county that has a prosperous economy
- People value and look after the environment
- People live in a county where heritage, culture and the Welsh language thrive
- People in Conwy contribute to their community. They are informed, included and listened to.

Across all areas of work the Council is committed to ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising future generations, endeavouring to make the best decisions in light of financial restraints. In addition the Corporate Plan gives a commitment to consider the impact of policies on rural communities, those protected under Equalities legislation and people living in poverty. The Council will also promote the Welsh language, and build confidence to be progressive. Harnessing the potential of technology to improve performance, business processes and efficiencies is a strategic priority up until 2022.

Revised population projections have been released from Welsh Government (WG) which will influence the RLDP strategy, including recreational spaces. The current LDP was based on the latest available data at the time, which are different to those more recently released. The RLDP will use the same methodology and source data as the WG projections, but will be specific to Conwy and the RLDP. Please see Background Papers 1 and 2 for more details on how this will be considered in the RLDP.

The Abergele Placemaking Plan (APP) is currently being prepared. It will be owned and delivered by the local community and once finalised will set out the issues which need tackling in Abergele with an Implementation and Monitoring plan produced to address those issues. It will be the local reference document to achieving an improved and more sustainable community.

A Play Policy for Conwy was published in 2015. It is based on the concept that play is a fundamental part of a healthy childhood and it is every child's right to be able to play. Conwy is committed to securing sufficient opportunities for playing by:

- 1) Supporting organisations to better understand play and how best to support it
- 2) Identifying barriers to children's freely chosen play in their communities and working together to find ways to remove or reduce them
- 3) Supporting the development of new play provision
- 4) Supporting the increased quality and quantity of existing play provision
- 5) Co-ordinating the development of projects, partnerships and work programmes in order to secure sufficient opportunities for playing as required under the Children and Families

(Wales) Measure and to co-ordinate and produce Conwy's Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan.

The last Play Sufficiency Assessment was published in 2016. An update is currently underway. It includes various criteria, some of which are relevant to the Open Space Assessment. Joint working with the Play Development Team will be required to share information.

There has been an appeal for residential development on a designated open space site in Penrhyn Bay. The land is privately owned and was linked to meet the open space requirements from a residential development granted permission in 1991. There are qualitative deficiencies with the site, but it is well used by the public. There are quantitative deficiencies of this type of open space in Penrhyn Bay. The appellant was not proposing to provide an alternative. The appeal was dismissed on the basis that the proposed development would result in the net loss of designated open space, which is of value to the local community, in an area where there is a shortfall of open space provision.

There is another appeal for the development of a site in Old Colwyn, which was refused on the basis of open space policies – both the lack of provision on-site and the loss of designated open space. At a late stage in the process, the applicant made arrangements to provide children's open space on neighbouring land, which met requirements of CFS/11. There are deficits of most open space sites in Old Colwyn. The Inspector considered that provision of an equipped play area nearby was not enough to overcome the significant loss of informal open space that the proposal would result in. The applicant has referred this decision for Judicial Review. The Planning Inspectorate is currently appealing the outcome.

#### **4 LDP Policy – Current position**

The LDP was adopted in October 2013 and has to date been through the Annual Monitoring process four times. The next section of this topic paper addresses the key findings that have arisen from the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). There are four policies on recreational spaces in the current LDP policies. These can be found at Appendix 1 for reference.

#### **5 LDP AMR findings and Review Report Conclusions**

One LDP objective is relevant to recreational spaces:

- SO13 To protect and improve accessibility to essential services and facilities, including open space, allotments, health, education and leisure.

AMR findings show that the open space policies are operating effectively and delivering this objective. There has been no net loss of open space since LDP adoption in 2013. All large residential applications have provided on-site open space as required by LDP policy. All small residential developments which have been found to be financially viable have provided a commuted sum towards open space provision in line with LDP policy.

The LDP Review Report concluded that the following action was required for open space policies:

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Comment</b>
CFS/1 – Community Facilities and Services	Review to incorporate latest evidence base, including any new allocations that are required and reflect change in national policy. Revise to remove sites that have been delivered.
CFS/11 – Development and Open Space	Revise to incorporate findings of the Open Space Assessment and latest Fields in Trust Standards. CIL may impact how major open space is sought.
CFS/12 – Safeguarding Existing Open Space	Functioning effectively – minor amendments may be required.
CFS/13 – New Open Space Allocations	Review to incorporate findings of new Open Space Assessment.

Following a subsequent review of evidence base, Section 8 of this paper addresses the above table again and makes recommendations as to how each policy should be changed to reflect updated evidence base to be taken forward in the RLDP.

## **6 Updated LDP Evidence Base**

The following background paper will inform recreational spaces policies in the RLDP:

### **6.1 Background Paper 28: Recreational Spaces Assessment**

This background paper is to follow. The update to the FiT standards has meant that a new database has been needed to be able to record all of the sites. Sites from the previous assessment have been reclassified where required and the new open space typologies are in the process of being mapped. Preliminary work indicates that there are deficiencies of open space in the County Borough.

Allotments will be covered separately in Background Paper 30. Please see Topic Paper 5: Community Facilities for more details.

## **7 Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)**

Work on the SA/SEA has commenced. The policies for recreational spaces in the RLDP will have regard to it and will be progressed jointly.

The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report outlines the proposed approach to the RLDP's Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), to ensure that it meets social, economic and environmental objectives. The SA/SEA is an important

process in identifying areas of change and mitigation measures to ensure the RLDP is sustainable and in compliance with the Planning (Wales) Act and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

In relation to recreational spaces the relevant proposed SA objectives are:

- Health and Wellbeing: Improve the health and wellbeing of the population, including with respect to physical and mental health, social wellbeing and community safety.
- Equality and Social Inclusion: Reduce poverty and inequality, tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion, including through enhancing access to community facilities.
- Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil: Conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests, including through safeguarding important sites and species, improving green infrastructure provision and safeguarding important soil resources.
- Cultural Heritage: Conserve, protect and enhance the historic environment and cultural assets, including the use of the Welsh language.

## 8 Potential Land Use Policies and Proposals

The RLDP will apply national policy at a local level. Existing open space will be protected and the FiT standards will be applied to new open space sites.

It is suggested that the following policies will need amending as part of the LDP Review.

Policy	Comment
CFS/1 – Community Facilities and Services	Reference to retail and community facilities will need removing, as recreational spaces is now a separate LDP topic area. The policy will be updated to reflect changes to the recreational spaces policies below.
CFS/11 – Development and Open Space	This will be updated to reflect the new FiT standards. Thresholds for on-site delivery may change.
CFS/12 – Safeguarding Existing Open Space	Minimal change is required to this policy.
CFS/13 – New Open Space Allocations	This will be reviewed once the Recreational Spaces Assessment is complete. New allocations may be required.

In addition, new policies may be required to cover the following issues:

Theme	Justification
Policy to avoid or resolve conflict between different pursuits.	This is a new requirement in national planning policy. The Recreational Spaces Assessment will assess if a policy regarding this issue is required.

Use of previously developed or disused land and water bodies for sport and recreation purposes	This is a new requirement in national planning policy. The Recreational Spaces Assessment will be required to assess if there are any appropriate sites for inclusion.
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## 9 Further Evidence base needed

An update to the following evidence base is considered necessary:

- Review and update the Recreational Spaces Assessment.

## 10 Conclusion

Open space policies have, on the whole, delivered the LDP Vision and objective they set out to. LDP policies have secured on-site open space on larger residential sites and financial contributions sought for smaller sites. Should the Council adopt CIL, it is likely to impact how contributions from developers will be sought for recreational spaces. Safeguarding existing open space has also been successful, as shown by the planning appeal at Penrhyn Bay, but the decision at Old Colwyn could impact for this typology of open space on non-Council owned land.

There are likely to still be deficiencies of some recreational space types. The update to the recreational space standards will need to be reflected in the recreational space assessment and RLDP policies.

## 11 Appendix 1: Existing LDP Policies

### STRATEGIC POLICY CFS/1 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance community facilities and services by:

- a) Protecting and enhancing the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the retail centres in the Plan Area by locating appropriate retail developments in line with Policy CFS/2 – ‘Retail Hierarchy’;
- b) Applying a sequential approach in determining proposals for new retail development in the Plan Area in terms of site selection and the availability of suitable alternative sites in line with Policy DP/6 – ‘National Planning Policy and Guidance’;
- c) Protecting the retail offer in Llandudno, and the town centres, by designating primary shopping areas and/or shopping zones in line with Policies CFS/3 – ‘Primary Shopping Areas’ and CFS/4 – ‘Shopping Zones’;
- d) Protecting the retail centre of Llandudno by designating Parc Llandudno and Mostyn Champneys as retail parks where large format retailing will be concentrated and safeguarded in line with Policy CFS/5 – ‘Retail Parks’;
- e) Safeguarding essential community facilities outside Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and the District Centres in line with Policy CFS/6 – ‘Safeguarding of Community Facilities outside the Sub-Regional Centre and Town Centres’;
- f) Protecting and enhancing the attractiveness of shopping centres by only permitting appropriate shop fronts and appropriate shop front security measures in line with Policies CFS/7 – ‘Shop Front Design’ and CFS/8 – ‘Shopping Street Frontage Security’;
- g) Meeting the community’s need for allotments by safeguarding existing allotments in line with Policy CFS/9 – ‘Safeguarding Allotments’ and allocating land for new allotments in Abergele, Llandudno Junction, Llanrwst and Dwygyfylchi in line with Policy CFS/10 – ‘New Allotments’;
- h) Ensuring that new housing development makes adequate provision for the open space needs of its residents and safeguarding existing areas of open space in line with Policies CFS/11 – ‘Development and Open Space’ and CFS/12 – ‘Safeguarding Existing Open Space’;
- i) Allocating replacement playing fields and new areas of land for open space at Abergele and Glan Conwy in line with Policy CFS/13 – ‘New Open Space Allocations’;
- j) Allocating land for an extension to the cemeteries at Llanrwst and Penmaenmawr in line with Policy CFS/14 – ‘New Burial Ground Allocations’;
- k) Supporting development proposals for new education facilities in line with Policy CFS/15 – ‘Education Facilities’.

## **POLICY CFS/11 – DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN SPACE**

1. New housing development of 30 or more dwellings shall make on site provision for the recreational needs of its residents, in line with the Council's standards for open space of 3 hectares per 1000 population, comprising of:
  - 1.2 hectares for playing pitches
  - 0.4 hectares for outdoor sport
  - 0.8 hectares for children's playing space
  - 0.6 hectares for amenity open space
2. In exceptional and justified circumstances, consideration will be given to the provision of a commuted sum as an alternative to on-site provision, in accordance with Strategic Policy DP/1 – 'Sustainable Development Principles' and Policies DP/4 – 'Development Criteria' and DP/5 – 'Infrastructure and New Developments'.
3. New housing development of less than 30 dwellings shall make provision of a commuted sum as an alternative to on-site provision, in line with the Council's standard for open space of 3 hectares per 1,000 population.

## **POLICY CFS/12 – SAFEGUARDING EXISTING OPEN SPACE**

Planning Permission will not be granted for development which results in the loss of open space except where there is an over-provision of open space in the particular community, and the proposal demonstrates significant community benefits arising from the development, or where it will be replaced by acceptable alternative provision within the vicinity of the development or within the same community.

## **POLICY CFS/13 – NEW OPEN SPACE ALLOCATIONS**

1. Land is allocated to meet the demand for open space at the following locations:
  - a) Off St.George Road, South of Abergele Playing Fields
  - b) Top Llan Road / Llanrwst Road, Glan Conwy
2. Additional land may be identified during the Plan period in accordance with the Development Principles.