

APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO CORE STRATEGY POLICY CS21 & THE SCC PLANNING POLICY OBJECTION

Justification for Loss of Open Space

The proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 0.27 hectares of amenity space lying to the rear of houses on Sheridan Close, Byron Road and Burke Drive, Thornhill. The site has an elongated shape, slopes along its length and adjoins the rear gardens of neighbouring properties. It comprises rough grass with no other vegetation.

PPG 17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation states that open space of high quality or particular value should be recognised and given protection by the planning authority through their policies, including small areas of open space in urban areas that provide an important local amenity (para. 11). The land at the rear of Sheridan Close forming the application site is not high quality or an important local amenity and does not fall into the specified areas of particular quality as set out in paragraph 11 of the PPG:

- (i) its recreational and play opportunities are low (in view of its size, shape, landform and location);
- (ii) it does not offer a community resource for events as envisaged in the PPG;
- (iii) it does not particularly benefit wildlife and biodiversity (comprising rough grass with no trees or other vegetation).

The land had no specific open space allocation on the Proposals Map of the City Council's Local Plan Review.

Paragraph 10 of the PPG states that existing open space should not be built upon unless an assessment has shown that the open space is surplus to requirements.

Open Space Assessment

Open spaces in Thornhill area located in the vicinity of the application site are shown in the table below (distances are actual travel distances by foot/cycle).

OPEN SPACE	DISTANCE FROM SITE
Hinkler Green (sports pitch, play area, skateboard park, MUGA)	700 metres
Masefield Green (woodland, children's' play area)	600 metres
Donkey Common (woodland, open space)	600 metres

Therefore there are opportunities for outdoor recreation, sports and play within 10 minutes' walk of the application site or less, other than the application site, with facilities having been upgraded and with contributions to the improvement of the facilities from the proposed development. The loss of the amenity open space comprising the application site would not result in a shortfall of these opportunities for residents within the locality of the site.

In addition, the City Council's Green Spaces Strategy indicates that the East Neighbourhood Partnership Area, within which the site at Sheridan Close falls, has a relatively high level of amenity green space (such as the application site); 17% of the total area of open space compared with no more than 4% in the other Neighbourhood Areas. In the section discussing Amenity Open Space, the Strategy indicates in paragraph 2.54 that the provision is concentrated in the east and north of the city and particularly in the Thornhill area. The local nature of this type of open space suggests that provision in Thornhill would not be of benefit to other areas of the city. The loss of the amenity open space comprising the application site would not therefore result in a shortfall of this type of open space in the locality nor have wider repercussions elsewhere in the city.

Southampton CC Core Strategy

Policy CS 21 of the Core Strategy seeks to retain the quantity and improve the quality and accessibility of open spaces in the city and specifically to:

1. protect and enhance key open spaces;
2. replace or configure other open spaces to achieve wider community benefits;
3. safeguard/extend the green grid; and
4. secure developer contributions to provide high quality, accessible open spaces.

The application site is not a key open space nor an effective part of the green grid, in view of its lack of trees or other landscaping.

The proposed development of the application site would achieve wider community benefits as part of the SCC Estate Regeneration Programme by providing affordable housing to meet local housing needs, as envisaged in paragraph 5.4.14 of the Core Strategy. The paragraph states that: *'Selected amenity open spaces with little recreational, landscape or nature conservation value may be converted to other uses as part of this wider programme.'*

The proposed development of the amenity open space fits squarely within this description. In addition the proposals would secure contributions towards open space/play space elsewhere in Thornhill through the proposed Section 106 to be attached to a permission for the development (public open space at Hinkler Green and children's playspace at Masefield Green, both identified in the open space assessment above as lying within walking distance of the application site). This will improve the quality of other open spaces to achieve wider community benefits, as envisaged in section 2. of Policy CS 21.

Summary

In view of the above, the proposed development for housing of the existing amenity open space at the rear of Sheridan Close falls within the exceptions to the normal restriction on the loss of open space in PPG 17 and in SCC Core Strategy Policy CS 21, in that:

- the open space is of low recreational, amenity and ecological value;
- Thornhill has a relatively high provision of amenity open space – its loss at the application site would not exacerbate a more pressing open space shortfall for residents;
- there are other areas of recreational and sports open space of higher quality within walking distance of the site, with facilities having recently been improved;
- the proposed development of the site for housing will provide other community benefits as part of the City Council's Estates Regeneration Programme;
- S.106 contributions to be associated with the proposed development would allow facilities at existing open space and playspace in the locality to be improved.