

9

Open Space, Parks and Recreation

Mountain Access Route, Kilmashogue, Dublin Mountains





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9.1 Introduction

Open spaces and parks are a vital part of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR), and are some of the places most cherished by the residents of the County. Having safe and easy access to a network of open space and parks, means that the recreational needs of residents are met, while enhancing their health and well-being, by providing opportunities for exercise and social interaction, thereby creating inclusive liveable neighbourhoods and meeting a number of the County Strategic Outcomes as set out in Chapter 1.

Green spaces also provide for connectivity, and wellness in particular in high density employment type locations, including opportunities for walking and cycling. Moreover, they are especially important for improving green infrastructure, biodiversity, and wildlife corridors. The Council will aim to protect and enhance these strategically important open spaces and parks to provide a wider range of benefits for the County.



Marlay Park

9.2 Open Space and Parks

9.2.1.1 Policy Objective OSR1: Open Space Strategy

It is a Policy Objective of the Council to review the existing Open Space Strategy, 2012-2015 and to support the objectives of any new Open Space Strategy prepared within the lifetime of this Plan.

The existing Open Space Strategy examines open space resources in existing communities, and how the needs of communities are being met. The strategy identifies any changes needed to improve access to, and the quality of open spaces in the County.

The new Open Space Strategy will incorporate the ecosystems services approach, along with climate change considerations, and build on the existing Parks Master Plan Programme. In areas where deficiencies have been identified, it is the intention of the Council to acquire land - as opportunities arise and resources permit - to remedy such deficiencies.

9.2.1.2 Policy Objective OSR2: Hierarchy of Parks and Open Space

It is a Policy Objective to provide a hierarchy of attractive parks and public open spaces, which vary in size and nature, are all inclusive, by being readily accessible and at a convenient distance from people's home and/ or places of work.

Public open space shall be provided throughout DLR on a hierarchical basis, ranging in descending order from Regional Parks with Countywide importance, to small incidental spaces. This hierarchy is underpinned by the Greenways Network, which seeks to encompass and connect the parks and open spaces and other green infrastructure, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, across the County.

A public open space hierarchy, and associated definition has been formulated by the Council, and is shown in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: *Hierarchy of Public Open Spaces*

| Type of Public Open Space | Definition |
|---------------------------|--|
| Greenways Network | <p>These are the collective networks of parks and open spaces, green modes of movement, walking and cycling, that are unique features of the County. They provide corridors for pedestrian and cycle routes throughout the County, and help link the parks, and open spaces into a Greenways network that helps define the County.</p> <p>The Greenways also provide nature-based solutions, by several factors including the urban tree canopy, and sustainable urban drainage. These are critical in climate change mitigation, and adaptation, and perform many important functions. For example, they help mitigate flooding and erosion, regulate temperatures, absorb carbon, and filter pollutants from the air (DLR Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024).</p> |
| Regional Parks | <p>These are the premier parks in the County, which provide for a wide range of uses and attractions, and include opportunities for both high quality active and passive recreation. They include facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, toilets, and Regional playgrounds, for children of differing age groups. They may also accommodate food and craft markets and cafes/tea rooms, where appropriate. They play an important role in terms of promoting and enhancing biodiversity, due to their overall size and the ecosystems they sustain.</p> <p>Regional Parks are usually provided by the Local Authority, or in some instances by the developer, reflecting the scale of development proposed.</p> |
| District Parks | <p>District Parks provide for a range of needs for several neighbourhoods. They offer a wide variety of uses and facilities, and they provide for both active and passive recreation. The active recreational facilities in these parks usually include playing pitches, courts and multi-use games or playground areas. They play a key role in our network of wildlife corridors as set out in the Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (to be updated during the lifetime of the Plan).</p> <p>District Parks are usually provided by the Local Authority, or in some instances by the developer, reflecting scale of development proposed.</p> |
| Local Parks | <p>These parks lie within easy reach of most dwellings and businesses in a locality. They provide for the needs of a local neighbourhood. They can provide for kickabout areas, exercise equipment, and seating areas.</p> <p>Local Parks are usually provided by the developer to meet the needs of future residents.</p> |
| Amenity Open Spaces | <p>These spaces are commonly located within residential areas/housing estates and are also found in commercial areas/business estates. They facilitate mainly passive recreation, casual play areas, pocket parks, and visual amenity for both residents and workers.</p> <p>Amenity Open Spaces are usually provided by the developer to meet the needs of future residents.</p> |
| Civic Spaces | <p>These are located in the urban centres close to civic, institutional and commercial buildings. They generally feature a mixture of hard landscaping with planting and seating areas. They allow individuals to interact in a social way, as they are generally located close to cafés and restaurants or civic buildings.</p> <p>Civic Spaces are provided by the developer, or in some instances by the Local Authority, in urban settings to assist in place making.</p> |

9.2.1.3 Policy Objective OSR3: Future Improvements

It is a Policy Objective to continue to improve, plant and develop more intensive recreational and leisure facilities within parks and open spaces insofar, as resources will permit, while ensuring that the development of appropriate complementary facilities does not detract from the overall amenity of the spaces.

There are over 800 hectares of parks and open spaces of varying landscape types throughout the County. A Parks Master Plan Programme, aimed at upgrading and developing the parks and open spaces throughout DLR, is being implemented on a phased basis as resources permit.

Since 2015, the Council has committed to supporting the roll out of Changing Places standard bathrooms across the County. Since then, a facility has been installed in Marlay Park. This plan seeks to include further Changing Places facilities in all regional parks where significant improvements are being undertaken.

9.2.1.4 Policy Objective OSR4: Public Open Space Standards

It is a Policy Objective to promote public open space standards generally in accordance with overarching Government guidance documents 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas - Guidelines for Planning Authorities', (2009), the accompanying 'Urban Design Manual - A Best Practice Guide', and the 'Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for new Apartments', (2018).

The aforementioned documents provide detailed guidance on the provision of open space in new development areas, and for apartment schemes. The Guidelines advocate that, in new development nodes, Local Area Plans should identify preferred locations for larger open spaces that would allow playing pitches and larger recreational facilities to be concentrated away from the housing areas, but still easily accessible from them.

The Guidelines emphasise the need for quality in public open spaces in terms of design, robustness, accessibility, biodiversity and passive supervision/overlooking. There should also be a clear definition between public, communal, and private spaces, to allow for the proper allocation and access to open space in development areas, and for the proper management of same.

The Guidelines indicate specific requirements with respect to Open Space and Recreation, which are referenced in the Development Management Section of the Plan (see Chapter 12, Section 12.8). Section 12.8.2 and Section 12.8.3.3, sets out very clear requirements pertaining to public, communal, and private open space. It is a policy objective of the Plan, that the various categories of open space for both residential and mixed use and commercial be provided in accordance with the standards set out in the tables in Section 12.8.3 and Section 12.8.4.

In the event that these standards of public open space provision are not met, an additional contribution in lieu may be attached to any permission, by way of planning condition, in accordance with Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. In certain instances, a development contribution will also be sought for communal open space provision.

9.3 Open Space and Recreation

9.3.1.1 Policy Objective OSR5: Public Health, Open Space and Healthy Placemaking

It is a Policy Objective to support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) 2016, to increase physical activity levels across the whole population thus creating a society, which facilitates people whether at home, at work or at play to lead a more active way of life (consistent with RPO 9.16).

Open Space and Healthy Placemaking seeks to protect and enhance the unique identity and character of places and to facilitate improvements to human wellbeing and the quality of life that comes from the interaction of people, their environment and in particular the interaction between people and their open spaces, greenways, and overall Green Infrastructure (GI) in their community.

In strategic terms, the overall objectives of DLR County Council in relation to open space, healthy placemaking and recreation, in line with the provisions RSES, are:

- Provision of open space should consider types of recreation and amenity uses required.

- Public open spaces to have good connectivity and be accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes.
- Open space to be planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, GI, and key landscape features in their design.
- Open spaces should be inclusive and cater for all users (consistent with RPOs 9.12, 9.13, 9.14 of the RSES).
- Where open space cannot be facilitated within developments, and where open space is below the requirements of the Plan, an additional contribution in lieu may be provided that would benefit that specific development area or other public realm improvements.

9.3.1.2 Policy Objective OSR6: Allotments and Community Gardens

It is a Policy Objective to support the provision of additional public allotments and community gardens to improve their provision and distribution across the County.

Public allotments and community gardens can have several benefits including the promotion of healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, allow for active participation in the growing of food, and includes other sustainable activities such as composting and beekeeping. Community gardens are located



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at Shanganagh Community Garden, and Fernhill Community Garden. The Council has also established allotments at Goatstown and Shankill.

9.3.1.3 Policy Objective OSR7: Trees, Woodland and Forestry

It is a Policy Objective to implement the objectives and policies of the Tree Policy and the forthcoming Tree Strategy for the County, to ensure that the tree cover in the County is managed, and developed to optimise the environmental, climatic and educational benefits, which derive from an 'urban forest', and include a holistic 'urban forestry' approach.

The Council is updating the 'DLR Tree Strategy 2011 – 2015'. The forthcoming DLR Trees Strategy will include a broader, holistic Urban Forestry approach, with ambitious goals and targets for conserving and managing the County's existing, diverse tree population. The Strategy will apply an ecosystems and canopy-focused approach, particularly in respect of urban trees and urban forestry and will be strongly aligned to the role of trees in Climate Mitigation and Climate Adaptation, with related benefits to public health, biodiversity, heritage, and amenity value.

The most significant (in terms of contributions to Landscape Character, Cultural Heritage, Biodiversity

and Ecosystems Services) trees in the County, will also be mapped.

In mapping the County's trees, The Council will utilise its own collected survey data, as well as using internationally recognised tree inventory management and climate measurement tools such as iTree. This will provide scientifically based species, and specific information on how the trees mitigate the effects of Climate Change.

The Council will also seek to preserve trees, groups of trees and/or woodlands that form significant features in the landscape, and/or are important in setting the character, amenity, or ecology of an area. As part of this Plan, the Council Parks Department carried out a comprehensive review of the tree symbols on the 14 County Development Plan Maps (see also Section 12.8.11 Existing Trees and Hedgerows).

The Council will prioritise the making of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) based on the judicious selection of trees that meet objective criteria, in accordance with best landscape and arboricultural practices. Criteria will include a significant contribution to local amenity and to the environment (e.g. by providing Ecosystem Services). The Council Parks Department will, subject to resources develop a TPO procedure that sets out a clear rationale and robust decision-making process with the allocation of adequate and appropriate resources necessary to prepare, administer and sustainably manage TPOs in the County.



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9.3.1.4 Policy Objective OSR8: Greenways and Blueways Network:

It is a Policy Objective to develop a comprehensive network of County Greenways linking parks and public open spaces and to liaise with adjoining local authorities and other stakeholders to achieve and improve wider external linkages and corridors, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas (consistent with NPO 62 of the NPF).

Greenways are a term for the collective networks of parks and open spaces which facilitate green modes of movement, (walkers, cyclists, roller skaters, horse riders) for pleasure, recreation, tourism and daily journeys, that are a unique feature of the County. Greenways often coincide with wildlife corridors which highlights the need for careful planning and design to ensure that they will be assessed for potential impacts on biodiversity, including sensitive habitats and species and also utilising their potential in terms of their ecosystem services to provide multifaceted nature based solutions (Refer to 8.7.6 Policy Objective GIB22: Non-Designated Areas of Biodiversity Importance).

The development of greenways requires careful consideration in terms of their ecological impacts and to ensure that their development does not significantly impact on biodiversity or cause biodiversity net loss. It also offers an opportunity to provide biodiversity gains and enhancements which will assist in contributing to the DLR ecosystem services approach outlined in this Plan.

Several greenway routes have been identified and a phased programme of works is being initiated, as resources allow, to bring the Greenway network to fruition. Some significant sections are already in place, for example, through Clonkeen Park and

Kilbogget Park, and are functioning extremely well.

In order to ensure careful planning, design and management of greenways at a County level, the Council will:

- Avoid impacts on the integrity of European Conservation Sites (SACs and SPAs), and nationally designated sites (NHAs), which includes taking account of protected species or qualifying interests that may occur/use areas outside designated sites.
- Support the objectives of the National Biodiversity Action Plan, 2017 – 2023 and the forthcoming DLR County Biodiversity Action Plan, 2020- 2025.
- Avoid and/or minimise impacts on locally important biodiversity in DLR.
- Ensure suitable buffer zones of at least 5m are in place on any proposed routes (including associated infrastructure) that may be likely to have a potential impact on habitats or species along rivers, riparian areas, coastal areas, or mountain paths.
- Protect existing hedgerows, important treelines, and individual trees against unnecessary damage during planning, design, and the development of each greenway route.
- Avoid the accidental introduction and the spread of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed during the development and maintenance of the greenway route.
- Carry out IAS surveys, and where necessary, develop an IAS Management Plan for proposed greenway routes.

The Greenway projects will comply with the requirements and objectives of the Habitats Directive and are in line with the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Objectives of the Cycle Network Plan for the Greater Dublin Area.

9.4 Sports and Play

9.4.1.1 Policy Objective OSR9 – Sports and Recreational Facilities

It is a Policy Objective to promote the provision, and management of high quality sporting, and recreational infrastructure throughout the County, in accordance with the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, and dlr Space to Play: a new approach to Sports Facilities Strategy', 2017-2022, to ensure that the particular needs of different groups are incorporated into the planning and design of new facilities.

The benefits accruing from participation in sport and recreational activities are well documented. Sports facilities and grounds in DLR include a variety of both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, which provide for the active recreational needs of the community. It is important that facilities are located where they are of most value and accessible to the community being served. Accessibility should be promoted primarily through public transport links and by walking/cycling.

In accordance with the 'dlr Space to Play Strategy', 2017-2022, the Council will strive to provide facilities for sport and physical activity that are well maintained, sufficient in number and accessible to as many local people as possible, across a diverse range of sports. The Council will do this through relationships and interactions with local sporting clubs, regional and national sporting organisations, schools, community groups and DLR Leisure.

The dual use of school facilities will be addressed through the development management process and in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills.

The Council will promote the provision of regional scale open space and recreational facilities including the regional parks and facilities, particularly those close to developing areas, such as Samuel Beckett, Phase 2.

9.4.1.2 Policy Objective OSR10: Protection of Sports Grounds/Facilities

It is a Policy Objective:

- To ensure that adequate playing fields for formal active recreation are provided for in new development areas.
- That existing sports facilities and grounds within the established urban area are protected, retained, and enhanced.
- To increase the number of playing pitches in the County.
- To maximise the use of playing pitches in the County and for playing pitches to be utilised seven days a week, subject to protecting adjoining residential amenity.

Guidance in relation to the provision of open space associated with new developments and new development areas is provided through the 'Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas- Guidelines for Planning Authorities', (2009).

Within the established urban areas of the County, however, the lack of available sites means that new opportunities for recreational facilities (i.e. large playing pitches) are extremely limited. It is therefore necessary to seek to retain facilities in their current locations where they are of most value and accessible to the community being served. There will be a general presumption against proposals involving development of playing fields unless:

- The proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field (e.g. new changing rooms) or caretakers' accommodation and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use.
- The proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one).



Colaiste Eoin Iosagain, Stillorgan



Paths on Killiney Hill



Dalkey Island Kayaking

- The playing fields that would be lost, as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity and quality and in a suitable location.
- The proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field(s).

Given the Council's objective to ensure that existing sports facilities and grounds within the established urban area are protected, retained and enhanced, it is recognised that development in the immediate environs of these facilities, and grounds, may have adverse implications for the achievement of this objective.

Where development is proposed within ten (10) metres of such a facility/grounds, there will be an obligation on the developer to demonstrate the ameliorative measures proposed will ensure that the subject development will not interfere with the operational capacity or recreational/amenity function of the sports facility/sports grounds.

9.4.1.3 Policy Objective OSR11: Water-Based Sports

It is a Policy Objective to support and encourage water-based sports and maritime leisure activities along the coast subject to Council Bye-Laws, and the Habitats and Birds Directives. The County features seventeen kilometres of coastline, which is a valuable asset. If utilised to its full potential it can contribute to the health and well-being of the residents of, and workers, in the County and will increase sport and physical activity participation levels locally. These activities can also offer significant potential for tourism growth.

It is recognised that the development of improved facilities for sailing and other water-based sports are important for the revitalisation of Dún Laoghaire Harbour and the other harbours along the coast of the County. The Council will support such water-based uses and activities in the harbours and along the coastline, with an emphasis on those that cater for a broader spectrum of the population.



9.4.1.4 Policy Objective OSR12: Dún Laoghaire Recreational Harbour

It is a Policy Objective to protect and enhance the water based recreational and sporting amenity of national significance of Dún Laoghaire Harbour, and its ability to host National and International competitions.

Any commercial shipping proposals within Dún Laoghaire Harbour, should ensure that there is no material detrimental impact upon the water based recreational amenity facilities of the Harbour and its ability to host national and international competitions.

9.4.1.5 Policy Objective OSR13: Play Facilities and Nature Based Play

It is a Policy Objective to support the provision of structured, and unstructured play areas with appropriate equipment and facilities, incorporating and facilitating Nature-based Play with respect to the provision of Play Opportunities throughout the County. These play facilities will also seek to maximise inclusivity and accessibility, to ensure that the needs of all age groups and abilities - children, teenagers, adults and older people - are facilitated in the public parks and open spaces of Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown.

‘Ready Steady Play! A National Play Policy’ was published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2019. The principal aim of the National Play Policy is to provide a framework for future development to create better play opportunities for children. Its overall objective is to plan for an increase in public play facilities and, thereby, improve the quality of life of children living in Ireland by providing them with more play opportunities.

The Council is moving towards a more Nature-Based Play philosophy and approach with respect to the provision of Play Opportunities in the County. This involves shifting the emphasis from merely equipment-based provision to using and leveraging the genus loci and landscape character of outdoor sites in combination with natural elements (e.g. earth sculpting, mounding, ponds, tree stumps). This Nature-based approach provides more rewarding experiences and improves health and well-being.