

# Local Plan Open Space Audit for Hyndburn Borough Council

## Invitation to Tender - Project Brief

June 2021

### 1 Introduction

1.1 Open space is a vital resource that provides people with opportunities to relax, exercise and spend time with nature. It forms a key part of the wider green infrastructure network of an area and has positive effects on people's health. Open space also helps to create a more attractive environment in which people will choose to live and in which business will invest. Green spaces in urban areas also perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change mitigation and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in improving air quality.

1.2 Hyndburn Borough Council ("the Council") is preparing a new Local Plan, including strategic policies and site allocations. To inform the Local Plan, the Council is seeking to appoint suitably qualified consultants to undertake a comprehensive Open Space Audit (OSA), assessing the quantity, accessibility and quality of a range of open space typologies across the Borough. A full audit was last undertaken in undertaken in 2006. More recently, the Council has partially undertaken an OSA, having mapped all relevant open spaces, identified typologies and carried out some initial accessibility assessment. The main purpose of this commission is therefore to complete the audit, including undertaking quality assessments of relevant spaces, identify appropriate standards and to review the GIS mapping to ensure it is accurate.

1.3 The audit will provide information for a range of Council services and will be an important part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, helping to inform the site selection process and policy development. This will include policies on protection and enhancement of open space and the provision of new open space. It will also inform policies on wider green infrastructure and on biodiversity net gain.

1.4 In this regard, it will provide crucial data for determining any planning applications that may affect or involve open space, including decisions on developer contributions towards open space provision. It sits alongside the Playing Pitch and Built Sports Facilities Assessments and Strategies and will inform any future work on a wider Green Infrastructure / Nature Recovery Network.

1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to ensure that Local Plans are based on robust, up to date and relevant evidence. In particular, paragraph 96 of NPPF requires that local authority planning policies '*should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate*'.

1.6 Paragraph 97 also makes reference to the need for an OSA, stating that '*existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless ...an*

*assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements...’.*

## **2 Project Specification**

### **Background**

#### Emerging Hyndburn Local Plan

2.1 As well as providing information for other services and strategies, this commission will support and inform the upcoming Regulation 19 consultation on the emerging Local Plan. The Local Plan will consist of strategic policies (previously consulted on as a separate Core Strategy document) and site allocations. These two elements are to be merged into one document for the purposes of the Regulation 19<sup>1</sup> consultation. The background to this consultation is set out below:

- The Council currently has an adopted Core Strategy and an Area Action Plan for Accrington Town Centre (both adopted in 2012); and a Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted in 2018); the new Local Plan will replace the Core Strategy;
- The Council has already consulted under Regulation 18 on the Core Strategy Review DPD and Site Allocations DPD, which it now intends to amalgamate into one Local Plan document;
- Publication, Consultation (Regulations 19 and 20) and Submission (Regulation 22) of the new Local Plan (Strategic Policies and Site Allocations) is expected in 2021/22.
- The Local Plan is scheduled to be adopted in 2022 with a Plan Period up to 2036 and beyond in line with the requirement for strategic policies to look ahead a minimum of 15 years from adoption (NPPF paragraph 22).

2.2 The Council have already produced a number of evidence base documents including those relating to the economy, housing, environment, Green Belt and viability. These can be viewed at: <https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/evidence-base/>

2.3 Further evidence base documents, including this OSA, are also being commissioned and prepared, such as those relating to flood risk, habitats, landscape and further viability work. In particular, the Council, in conjunction with Blackburn with Darwen, have commissioned a Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy and a Built Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy. Therefore, this audit work will not need to undertake quality assessments for any playing pitch or other outdoor sports facility, unless and sites are not covered by the PPA or BSFA.

2.4 Another significant project that the Council is working on is the Huncoat Garden Village Masterplan, in support of the Local Plan’s strategic housing and employment allocation in this part of the Borough. Whilst the Masterplan is informed by its own open space considerations, this assessment will make an important contribution to the implementation of the Masterplan.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to ‘Regulations’ are to the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

## Consultation on potential site allocations

2.5 The Site Allocations are a key part of the Local Plan which will guide development to the most appropriate locations in the Borough and to meet the future development requirements of the Borough up to 2036. Specific consultation on the site assessment methodology and a number of potential allocations has been carried out during Regulation 18(1) and (2) stages. The latter presented a wide range of alternative sites, along with some preliminary assessment work. Further information on previous consultation stages can be found here:

<https://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/localplan/>

2.6 Whilst open space considerations were identified as one of the assessment criteria set out in the methodology, a complete Audit will be required in order to make conclusions on the suitability of sites. The Regulation 19 stage will set out a “preferred option” with a list of specific proposed site allocations.

## **The Study Area**

2.7 Hyndburn is situated in north-west England and has a population of around 80,400. The Borough of Hyndburn is situated in the east of the County of Lancashire, forming part of the ‘Pennine Lancashire’ area, close to the border with Yorkshire and Greater Manchester. Hyndburn lies in the foothills and valleys on the western edge of the Pennine Hills.

2.8 The principal town in Hyndburn is Accrington, which includes the townships of Oswaldtwistle, Church, Clayton-le-Moors, Baxenden and Huncoat. Other distinct settlements located within the Borough boundary include Great Harwood, Rishton, and Altham. These urban areas are located close together, physically separated by only very narrow stretches of countryside in places, predominantly designated as Green Belt.



2.9 There are a number of underlying economic challenges faced by the Borough and therefore the emerging Local Plan is supporting a growth strategy intended to boost the local economy and improve the range and type of homes being provided. This is to be achieved by identifying ambitious and achievable development requirements, including the identification of new site allocations to deliver sustainable growth.

2.10 The geographical area that the audit will be expected to include are all open space sites within the existing (and proposed) urban boundary and those within a 300m buffer of this boundary. This is to capture those sites which may be adjacent or within a short walking

distance of the urban boundary. 300m is considered to equate to an approximate 5 minute walk.

## **Open Space in Hyndburn**

2.11 The Borough of Hyndburn lies in the foothills and valleys of the western edge of the Pennine Hills. It is surrounded by open countryside and has a large number of parks and large areas of open space within the urban boundary, including a number of nature reserves. Many of the parks have achieved Green Flag awards and have particular cultural and recreational value. However, many parts of the Borough are densely built up, typically characterised by terraced streets and properties with very little outside space. Easy access to a range of open spaces is therefore particularly important in these areas.

2.12 Open space is defined in Annex 2 (Glossary) of the NPPF as '*all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity*'. The Council considers that this definition does not restrict classifying only publicly accessible land as 'open space'. Where privately owned and/or inaccessible land is considered to have particular 'public value' (for example, privately owned woodland which may have visual and other environmental benefits) this should also be included in the audit.

## **3 Requirements of the Study**

3.1 National policy no longer provides specific guidance on the scope or methodology for undertaking Open Space Audits. Planning Practice Guidance on [Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space](#) simply states that '*it is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas. In carrying out this work, they should have regard to the duty to cooperate where open space serves a wider area*'<sup>2</sup>

3.2 The last published guidance on open space audits was 'Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17' (2002). Whilst this is no longer formal Government guidance, it is still accepted as providing a sound methodology by which to conduct audits and is still widely used. It is expected that the broad methodology recommended in this guidance, including the typologies of open space, will be used for Hyndburn's audit.

3.3 It is expected that the study will produce the following:

1. GIS mapping of all open spaces of 0.2ha<sup>3</sup> and above of the following typologies (inside the existing and proposed urban boundary and any sites which are within 300m of the boundary):
  - a. Allotments
  - b. Amenity Green Space
  - c. Cemeteries and Churchyards
  - d. Civic Space
  - e. Green Corridors
  - f. Natural and Semi-natural spaces
  - g. Outdoor Sports Facilities
  - h. Parks and Gardens
  - i. Provision for Children and Young People
2. Analysis of accessibility catchments, using Fields in Trust accessibility standards, or other standard as appropriate;

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<sup>2</sup> Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306

<sup>3</sup> Smaller spaces may be included if they are locally valuable e.g. a play area or small formal garden

3. Quality Assessments of the following typologies:
  - a. Allotments
  - b. Amenity Green Space
  - c. Civic space
  - d. Natural and semi-natural spaces
  - e. Parks and Gardens
  - f. Provision for Children and Young People
4. Setting of locally relevant quantity, accessibility and quality standards for each relevant typology. This is likely to be based on ward geographies or Local Plan areas. Advice will be sought from the consultant on the most appropriate geography;
5. An analysis of current provision to determine if the identified standards are currently being met in each area and, if not, how provision might be improved including opportunities for enhancement in quality, links with existing rights of way, potential for new green links between open spaces and opportunities to increase the multi-functional nature of open spaces to enable the full potential to be realised;
6. An assessment of existing and future open space needs of local communities; this will be based on the future housing land requirements and proposed development strategy (which is based on projected household and economic growth) in the Local Plan;
7. Recommendations for future management and maintenance of open space;
8. Recommendations for a future SPD on open space matters which will accompany the Local Plan;
9. Consideration of any identified open spaces which are fully or partially proposed for allocation in the Local Plan to assess whether the loss of the open space can be justified. The list of proposed allocations will be supplied to the chosen consultant upon commission;
10. This study is not expected to produce an Open Space Strategy but it should consider how this audit work will inform a Strategy if this was to be prepared in the future. For example, the Audit should provide information which This should include how it could form part of a wider Green Infrastructure / Nature Recovery Network Strategy. Any linkages to wider green infrastructure networks should be identified and the set of recommendations should consider this. This should include how open space could contribute towards the requirements for biodiversity net gain.

3.4 As mentioned in the Introduction, the Council has already carried out an extensive mapping exercise and therefore the cost of this element of the audit is expected to be less than if the consultant were to undertake this from scratch.

3.5 It is not expected at this stage that the consultant would be required to attend the Public Examination into the Local Plan but, in case this is necessary, the consultants should confirm that they would be willing and able to prepare material for and/or attend an Examination at a date in the future. An indicative fee structure for this work should be set out separately and any work in relation to the public examination would be commissioned separately.

## Outputs

3.6 Upon completion of this work the Council expect to be in receipt of a full Open Space Audit of the Borough, which has included an assessment of quantity, accessibility and quality of the spaces. This should reflect the requirements above and relate to and be proportionate to the level of existing information available. The Council expect mapping to be provided as part of the assessment. In summary, the key outputs of this work will be as follows:

- A PPG compliant Open Space Assessment which identifies the open space network through the quantity, accessibility and quality of the spaces, by ward (or

other appropriate geography) and identifies deficiencies and over-supply and opportunities for enhancement, making recommendations on priorities for targeting of future resources;

- The identification of how much green space will be required and in which locations to cater for future demand arising from projections of population and household growth and taking into account emerging Local Plan policy
- The identification of potential strategic green linkages, including 'blue' links along waterways and existing/potential cross boundary opportunities. These should be identified on a diagram within the report.
- The setting of new quantity, quality and accessibility standards to guide the future provision of the different types of green space in the District. These will be identified by comparing the assessment of sites against the existing and future needs for green space provision.
- Recommendations regarding the types and locations of green space that should be prioritised for protection, enhancement or disposal. The justifications for the recommendations should be transparent and clearly based on the evidence provided and identification of local needs.
- The draft and final reports along with any supporting data should be presented in the following formats and quantity:
  - 2 draft Part 1 reports in hard copy and 4 final Part 1 reports in hard copy, including appendices. 1 electronic version of each draft and final reports including appendices.
  - The draft and final reports should be A4 colour. Consultants should send the report in MS Word and Adobe Acrobat readable format.
  - All site assessment and forecast data to be provided.
  - All maps should be provided as GIS files and Adobe Acrobat readable format.
- Location and extent of all agreed types of greenspace clearly identified on maps within the report and within a GIS layer. Council officers will provide a GIS layer and the existing audit information as the starting point for the work.
- Summary scores for the quality and accessibility of the assessed green spaces presented within the report, with detailed scores provided in a database which the Council is able to update itself when necessary.
- The report and database should include transparent explanation of how the scores have been attributed to each green space.

3.7 The output of this work will be used as part of the Council's evidence base for the Local Plan policies and determining the suitability of sites for allocation and as such will be made available to view on the Council's website. All outputs must therefore be presented in a form that permits on-line viewing. Further detailed briefing will be provided to the consultants appointed.

## **4. Project Management**

### **Management Arrangements**

4.1 The project will require meetings at the inception stage and also to discuss the draft and final reports. It is also expected that consultants will liaise with the client at regular points

throughout the commission to confirm key aspects of the work and provide general updates on progress.

4.2 The overall Project Manager on behalf of the Council will be Simon Prideaux (Chief Planning and Transportation Officer). The Project Supervisor who will deal with day-to-day issues relating to the study will be Christine Whittle (Principal Planning Officer, Planning Policy).

### **Timetable**

4.3 The indicative timescales for this project is set out below. Consultants are invited to provide any additional comment on the timetable in their submission and set out any risks and mitigation that they will put in place to meet the anticipated project deadlines.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Deadline for submission of tender	Noon Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021
Candidate shortlisting	Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Interview if necessary	To be confirmed
Successful applicant selected	Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Contract awarded	By 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Inception meeting	Within 2 weeks of award of contract
Draft report	September 2021
Final report	November 2021

(Please note that this is an indicative timetable of key milestones only. Key milestones for the project will be agreed with the appointed consultant prior to award of the contract).

### **Budget**

4.4 A budget of around £20-25K has been identified to carry out this work. If the proposal exceeds this figure you will need to demonstrate clearly the reasons why in your tender response and provide a breakdown of costs by key output set out in paragraph 6.3. Cost forms a significant part of the assessment process for appointment of the work (see 'Assessment' below). In particular, as the Council has already undertaken extensive mapping, this element of the audit is expected to be substantially less than if this had not been done.

### **Submission from consultants**

4.5 The consultant will need to clearly provide the following information in their tender response and quote:

- i. A schedule of the approach to be taken in carrying out the work;
- ii. A schedule of key tasks to fulfil the requirements of the study, including proposed consultation with stakeholders;
- iii. The names of all personnel, including those within any sub-contractors, to be involved with the commission; a brief outline of their role in the project and their experience and qualifications to undertake the tasks identified;
- iv. Details of previous work of a similar nature, including contacts/ references;

- v. A commitment to carry out all research and report preparation within the expected timeframe;
- vi. Any risks to completion should also be identified along with an assessment of the potential impact they could have on the work being carried out;
- vii. Particulars of professional indemnity, public liability and employer insurances;
- viii. Details of any conflicts of interest that may arise as a consequence of undertaking the work;
- ix. A total fixed cost for the commission, with VAT charges shown separately, together with a full breakdown of the pricing structure applicable to this contract which should identify:
  - a. the total cost of each stage of the study, broken down to show the name of the personnel involved, the number of hours to be worked by each individual and the hourly rate to be charged;
  - b. any limits to be applied to expenses.
- x. Indicative timetable for undertaking this work.

## Assessment

4.6 The Council will assess submissions in line with the requirements set out in this brief and our [Guide to doing Business with the Council](#). The Council will score each consultant on three criteria with the following weightings applied.

INITIAL EVALUATION CRITERIA	WEIGHTING
<b>Tender response</b> (understanding and appreciation of the tasks to be carried out, and robustness of proposed methodology)	30%
<b>Overall Cost</b> (value for money)	50%
<b>Ability of the team to do the work</b> (relevant experience including seniority of team members carrying out key tasks)	20%

4.7 In exceptional circumstances where more than one submission is received that satisfies all the requirements of the brief, and there is no significant difference in scoring under the initial evaluation criteria above, consultants will be invited to attend an interview at the Council's offices. Following interviews, the Council will re-score each consultant on four criteria with the following weightings applied.

EVALUATION CRITERIA IF INTERVIEWS ARE HELD	WEIGHTING
<b>Tender response</b> (understanding and appreciation of the tasks to be carried out, and robustness of proposed methodology)	24%
<b>Overall Cost</b> (value for money)	40%
<b>Ability of the team to do the work</b> (relevant experience including seniority of team members carrying out key tasks)	16%
<b>Interview</b> (Knowledge of subject and ability to follow instructions)	20%

4.8 The successful consultant will be the one with the highest overall score, applying the weightings as set out above.

## Interview



4.9 The initial selection process will be based on the response to the tender only. If considered necessary, shortlisted applicants may be invited to attend an interview after the submission deadline. Depending on any social distancing restrictions in place at the time, interviews for short listed applicants will be held either at Hyndburn Borough Council offices at Scaitcliffe House, Ormerod Street, Accrington or via online video conferencing. This will be confirmed before the interview. The interview is expected to last around one hour and will take the form of a presentation (20 minute maximum) by the tenderer and will be followed by a question and answer discussion.

4.10 The presentation should focus on the key themes set out in the written submission regarding the approach and methodology to this tender rather than general information about the tenderer's company. The number of attendees will be limited to a maximum of 3 and should form the core team who will be working on the project on a day to day basis. In the submissions, tenderers are requested to confirm their availability to attend an interview.

### **Contract**

4.11 The successful consultancy will be expected to enter into a contract with the Council to deliver the work in accordance with the agreed requirements. This will normally be a standard form of contract that the Council has prepared.

### **Contact and submission details**

4.12 If you are interested in providing the requested services to the Council, please submit a written quote via email to [simon.prideaux@hyndburnbc.gov.uk](mailto:simon.prideaux@hyndburnbc.gov.uk) and [christine.whittle@hyndburnbc.gov.uk](mailto:christine.whittle@hyndburnbc.gov.uk) by no later than **Noon on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021**.

4.13 Any contact regarding the project in the first instance needs to be with:

Simon Prideaux (Chief Planning and Transportation Officer)  
Hyndburn Borough Council  
Scaitcliffe House  
Ormerod Street  
Accrington  
BB5 5PF  
Tel: 01254 380152  
[Simon.prideaux@hyndburnbc.gov.uk](mailto:Simon.prideaux@hyndburnbc.gov.uk)

The alternative point of contact will be with:

Christine Whittle (Principal Planning Officer - Policy) Tel: 01254 380174  
[christine.whittle@hyndburnbc.gov.uk](mailto:christine.whittle@hyndburnbc.gov.uk)