



CHAPTER 8

Natural Heritage and Recreation

Aim: To protect the natural environment and provide high quality, accessible recreational facilities.

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Introduction

- 8.1** Cork City has an attractive physical setting formed by the Lee Valley and Estuary and the ridges rising to the north and south. These features are supplemented by a range of public open spaces and parks, walkways, public and private playing pitches, trees and tree groups and views out of the City, which all combine to form the natural backdrop to the built environment. The River Lee runs west to east through the heart of the City interacting with both the natural and built heritage to give a unique and distinct character. The City's waterways include environmental areas of national importance that are designated for protection.
- 8.2** The City Council recognises that there is a close relationship between the natural heritage and recreational open spaces and that an integrated approach is necessary to properly manage these elements.

Objectives:

- **To promote the sustainable use and management of the natural heritage and recreational facilities/amenities.**
- **To integrate natural heritage and recreation facilities to form a combined resource.**
- **To protect and enhance the natural heritage.**
- **To protect and provide for recreational open spaces and facilities.**
- **To improve social and physical access to the natural heritage and recreational facilities.**

Integration of Natural Heritage and Recreation

- 8.3** In order to achieve an integrated approach for the natural heritage and recreational amenities an overall policy will be developed that will make reference to both Cork City Council *Parks Strategy 2000* and the *Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study (CRFNS)*. This approach will integrate the different objectives, components and elements of the natural heritage, recreational facilities, open space and amenity areas contained in all existing policies, policy documents and plans.

- 8.4** The City Council will strive to create a network of natural heritage areas and recreational open spaces and amenity areas by promoting linkage and accessibility between these areas and by using walkways and cycleways to connect them where appropriate. The extent to which natural heritage areas and recreational open spaces are linked will depend on their catchment areas e.g. a local park linked with the local area, a neighbourhood park linked with a much larger area.

- 8.5** Linkage could be achieved through the improvement of pedestrian safety on routes to these areas, the construction of physical entrances and exits and the provision of safe crossings over busy roads. Interconnection could also be created by tree planting and signage along access routes etc. Public walkways and cycleways could play an important role in connecting open spaces and could help to structure the network that is envisaged.

- 8.6** Linkage will serve to provide higher accessibility for the wider community to green areas, provide more interaction and recreation on these sites and strengthen the existing walkways and cycleways while also supporting the City Council's general objective of encouraging alternative transportation modes.



Natural Heritage and Recreation

- To develop an overall policy that will combine the policies, objectives and proposals of the Cork City Council Parks Strategy 2000 and the Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study into an integrated approach.
- To strive to create a network of natural heritage and recreation open space/amenity areas by promoting linkage and accessibility between these areas and by using walkways and cycleways to connect them where appropriate e.g. link from Bishopstown Park – Curraheen walkway and park – Lee fields – Mardyke area – the distillery fields at Sunday's Well.

POLICY NHR 1

Natural Heritage

Cork City's natural heritage consists of natural features that are made up of physical and biological formations, e.g. undisturbed natural features – rivers, estuaries, salt marshes, reedbeds, intertidal mudflats, amenity views, urban forests, ridges, fauna and flora etc.

8.7

The *National Bio-diversity Plan* (2002) underlines the principle that environmental concerns should be integrated into all relevant sectors stating that “*Environmental policy is now based on the internationally recognised principle of sustainability, ‘the precautionary principle’, the integration of environmental considerations into all areas, ‘the polluter pays principle’ and the principle of shared responsibility for environmental protection by public bodies, private enterprise and the general public.*” This implies basing policies and decisions on ecological principles, which recognise the conservation, enhancement and sustainable use of biological diversity in Ireland and contribute to conservation and sustainable use of bio-diversity globally.

8.8

Cork City Council will endeavour to follow a sustainable development approach to protecting and managing the City's natural, cultural (formed by human actions) and archaeological heritage recognising that they are valuable resources which should be conserved for both present and future generations.

8.9

The City Council envisages the drafting of a local bio-diversity plan and a local heritage plan, which will complement each other. Furthermore, all public bodies and the public in general will be encouraged to use native species, landraces (plants of local descent) and breeds.

8.10**Local Bio-diversity and Heritage Plans**

To draft a Local Bio-diversity Plan and a Local Heritage Plan during the period of the Development Plan.

POLICY NHR 2

Amenity Views And Prospects

The City at large is appreciated by most people along important viewpoints such as the River Lee. The amenity views indicate the outer visual border of the City, the main character areas, and principle elements of the City skyline. Amenity views and prospects are defined as those views which significantly contribute to the character and amenity of:

8.11

- **The Visual Envelope of the City:** The visual envelope of the City is defined by the north ridges (Gurrabraher/Fairhill and Montenotte/Mayfield) and the south ridge (Frankfield/Douglas/Rochestown). These ridges provide the visual backdrop to the City and are visible from many viewpoints within the City.
- **The City Skyline:** The City skyline is a combination of elements: the general scale of buildings, streets and spaces, major landmarks on the skyline, other individual higher buildings, higher building groups and landscape elements. Significantly, the City skyline does not break the silhouette provided by the City ridges.
- **The Built Heritage:** Near and distant views to and from buildings that have special, historical or architectural value e.g. protected structures, institutional buildings and grounds etc. In suburban areas such amenity views and prospects can enhance or create local amenities and provide focal points which strengthen the local character and “sense of place” of these areas.
- **The Natural Heritage:** Outside the City Centre, in suburban areas, views can be dominated by landscape elements such as urban forestry and tree groups, gardens, rivers, waterways, loughs, the estuary etc.

8.12**8.13****8.14****8.15**

8.16 The City Council proposes an approach that will strengthen the relationship between amenity views and prospects and the character of particular areas. A citywide assessment of amenity views and prospects, to identify views of significant importance, is envisaged during the period of the Plan. The City Council will have a presumption against development that adversely affects important amenity views and prospects.

POLICY NHR 3

Amenity Views and Prospects

- To undertake an assessment of amenity views and prospects in the City to identify views of specific importance.
- To protect views in and out of areas of significant amenity and views and prospects which significantly contribute to the character and amenity of the visual envelope of the City, the City skyline and both the natural and built heritage.
- To have a presumption against development that compromises the quality of or adversely affects important views and prospects.

Landscape Protection

8.17 In line with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's *Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines* (2000), the City Council recognises a broad view of the landscape, embracing its complexity of form and character. The Council will take a proactive approach to the landscape with policies that seek to conserve and enhance the strongly distinctive landscape character of the City by protecting landscape elements of significance that are either intrinsically important or contribute to the general amenity of Cork City. Policies for the protection of significant landscape elements, the City ridges and the river corridors are outlined below.

8.18 The development of a comprehensive landscape assessment of Cork City will continue during the period of the Plan to further assess the significance of elements of the landscape. Particular consideration will be given to both the Landscape Protection Zones and the Ridge Protection Zones. The assessment will classify lands within the City according to their character, value and sensitivity, and identify areas where development will be permitted, controlled or restricted.

Landscape Protection Zones

8.19 Areas in need of special protection due to their sensitive character have been identified as Landscape Protection Zones (LPZs). Table 8.1 identifies the four different categories of LPZ.

TABLE 8.1
Landscape Protection Zones

Landscape Protection Zones Categories	
A	Visually important land, including land forming the setting for existing landmark buildings.
B	Land with amenity value which has potential for development as open space.
C	Areas with existing woodlands or significant tree groups, or areas with potential for new woodlands.
D	Areas which provide a habitat for wild flora and fauna.

8.20 There will be a general presumption against development in Landscape Protection Zones unless it can be demonstrated by means of a landscape assessment and appropriate landscape and building design proposals that the proposed development will enhance the overall landscape character of the site and its visual context. The onus will be on the applicant to ensure that any proposed development is integrated sensitively into the existing landscape. Proposed developments, particularly in visually sensitive areas, will have to be landscape rather than building dominated. Development proposals that have a negative impact on landscape character will not be permitted.

8.21 Planning applications will have to be accompanied by an overall design statement which includes a landscape assessment. Applications will need to demonstrate, through this landscape assessment, the impact of development proposals on the site's landscape and visual context. The assessment will need to comprehensively assess the impact of the proposal on: the landscape; trees and tree groups; flora and fauna; visual character; the historic landscape and the setting of visually important buildings. Landscape assessments should include a tree assessment, a detailed landscape plan, and a landscape management plan that provide sufficient information to enable a proper appraisal of the proposal by the City Council. Policy NHR 4 provides the means for assessing development proposals. In addition, the City Council will seek opportunities to enhance the landscape potential of any site by linking it to the existing network of natural heritage and recreation areas in the City.

Landscape Protection Zones

To conserve and enhance Landscape Protection Zones through the control of development.

Development will not be permitted where it has a negative impact on the landscape.

Development proposals will not be permitted if it is considered that they will:

- *Cause significant harm to the intrinsic character of the Landscape Protection Zone and its important landscape features.*
- *Cause undue visual intrusion in the landscape.*
- *Be inconsistent with local character.*
- *Harm the setting of buildings, structures or other landmark features.*
- *Harm the historic value of the landscape.*
- *Harm the ecological value of the landscape.*
- *Harm local and strategic views of significance.*

POLICY NHR 4**Ridge Protection Zones**

Cork City is characterised by dramatic topographical changes and prominent ridges, forming a bowl within which the City lies and providing a series of striking viewpoints from which the City can be viewed. On the northside, the ridges in the Shanakiel, Tivoli and Montenotte areas form dramatic backdrops to the River Lee as it runs through the City. At the northern gateway to the City, there are prominent ridges on both sides of the Blackpool Valley, particularly in the Farranferris and Commons areas. To the south of the City, the Maryborough Hill/Rochestown/Grange Ridge overlooks the Douglas Estuary, just outside the City boundary. A less prominent ridge bounds the northern side of the Estuary along Mahon Golf Course.

8.22

These ridge landscapes are extremely important to the character of Cork, particularly where they remain as undeveloped green landscapes occupied by trees, tree groups and woodlands, and where they occupy the highest points on the landscape. Other historic areas of the City, such as Wellington Road (see Chapter 6: Built Environment and Urban Design), Tivoli and Sunday's Well, successfully combine built form with the landscape. Where buildings occupy the ridge, trees often make a very important contribution to their character by providing a softening of the slope and the ridges themselves.

8.23

The significance of the ridges to the overall appearance of Cork is recognised through the Ridge Protection Zones. The County Council through the County Development Plan also protects elements of the southern ridge.

8.24

The Ridge Protection Zone policy applies to ridges and hillsides with substantial grassland or tree cover whose green appearance would be adversely affected by insensitive developments thereby interfering with views of special amenity value to the City and surrounding areas.

8.25

There will be a general presumption against development in ridge protection zones unless it can be demonstrated by means of a landscape assessment and through appropriate landscape and building design proposals that the proposed development will enhance the overall landscape character of the site and its visual context.

8.26

The design of any proposed development will have to be landscape rather than building dominated. Applications for development will have to be accompanied by a design statement (Chapter 11: para. 11.3 outlines the contents of a design statement). In addition, the City Council will seek opportunities to enhance the landscape potential of any Ridge Protection Zone in relation to the existing network of natural heritage and recreation areas in the City. Development proposals that have a negative impact on the landscape character and visual amenity of the ridges will not be permitted.

8.27

An application's design statement should include a landscape assessment. The assessment will need to comprehensively assess the impact of the proposal on the landscape; trees; flora and fauna; visual character; the historic landscape; and the setting of visually important buildings. The assessment should include a tree assessment, a detailed landscape plan, and a landscape management plan; providing sufficient information to enable a proper appraisal of the proposal by the City Council.

8.28

In areas used for sports or public open space in Ridge Protection Zones, policies NHR 11 and NHR 12 shall apply. Similarly, areas zoned for sports or public open space in Ridge Protection Zones will have to take account of policy NHR 5. Specific objectives for each ridge protection zone are detailed in Chapter 10.

8.29

POLICY NHR 5**Ridge Protection Zones**

- *To preserve and enhance the landscape character and visual amenity of the Ridge Protection Zones through the control of development and the adoption of measures to protect the landscape (for example implementing the Urban Forest Programme or Tree Preservation Orders).*
- *To prepare a landscape assessment for each of the Ridge Protection Zones.*
- *To require that a design statement which includes a landscape assessment accompany applications for development within Ridge Protection Zones.*
- *Development will not be permitted where it has a negative impact on the landscape. Proposals will not be permitted if it is considered that they will:*
 - *Harm local and strategic views of significance.*
 - *Break the existing ridge silhouette.*
 - *Cause significant harm to the intrinsic character of the Ridge Protection Zone and its important landscape features.*
 - *Are not located within or immediately adjacent to existing building groups.*
 - *Cause undue visual intrusion in the landscape.*
 - *Be inconsistent with local character.*
 - *Harm the setting of buildings, structures or other landmark features.*
 - *Harm the historic value of the landscape.*
 - *Harm the ecological value of the landscape.*
 - *Exceed the height of mature tree group canopies or the height of building groups.*
 - *Harm wildlife habitats.*

River Corridors Protection

8.30 Rivers and waterways play an important role in the layout and structure of the City and are an integral element of the City's landscape character. The River Lee runs west to east through the City splitting into the North and the South Channels as it does so. These channels enclose the Mardyke area and the City Centre itself, giving it a distinct "Island" character. The landscape character of the southside is defined through a network of waterways that enclose the area on all sides i.e. River Lee, Lough Mahon, Douglas River, Douglas Estuary, Tramore River and Curragheen/Twoport River. The northside of the City is characterised by ridges and valleys, traversed by the River Bride and the Glenamought River.

8.31 These waterways are important assets of the urban environment. The ongoing work of the Cork Main Drainage scheme is transforming the City's waterways. The improved quality of the water will serve to enhance their value as recreational and natural amenity assets to the City. Waterway corridors, defined as those areas that are physically or visually linked to the waterway, are multi-functional in nature. They:

- Provide opportunities for waterfront developments, new recreational facilities and leisure activities.
- Provide an important visual amenity for the City as a whole.
- Provide opportunities for tourist related development.
- Allow for the provision and enhancement of open space, public amenities.
- Provide for the preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and natural corridors.

8.32 Traditional approaches to waterside development have tended to divorce the waterway from its associated corridor, often resulting in the erosion of the corridor's character. To unlock the potential of waterways, a more holistic approach needs to be adopted; one which looks from the waterway outward, not just from land to water and acknowledges their multi-functional nature. The adoption of a 'corridor approach' to waterway development will allow the waterway to become an integral part of any proposals for development, no longer being seen as just a physical border or as a backdrop or setting. New development will need to be accommodated without damaging the character of the waterway corridor, while also respecting and enhancing the area's distinctive character.

8.33 Substantial areas of land along the City's river corridors are zoned as Landscape Protection Zones to protect the landscape and visual character of riverside locations and ensure that any development does not have a negative impact. Additionally, in other areas along river corridors, development proposals will have to ensure that there will not be a negative impact on the landscape and visual character of the site.

River corridors in the City Centre and Docklands have been identified as Quayside Amenity Areas (see Chapter 9: paras. 9.76 and 9.77 and Figs. 9.2 and 9.5). The Marina has also been identified as a Quayside Amenity Area (see Fig. 10.3). These areas will function as public spaces whose primary purpose is for amenity and enjoyment of the riverside location.

8.34

While the City's waterways have limited potential for the development of water borne transport there exists considerable opportunities for the establishment of high quality, sustainable transport routes along waterway corridors. Substantial elements of a walkway/cycleway network along waterway corridors are already in place and the City Council is committed to enhancing and extending this network where possible.

8.35

The Council will therefore require, where practicable, that proposals for development in waterside locations dedicate a minimum of 10 metres from the top of the riverbank to the provision of a public walkway/cycleway. The provision of this space will also provide the opportunity to preserve and enhance the ecological and amenity value of the waterway corridor, although may not be sufficient to preserve or enhance the landscape value of the site.

8.36

A number of waterways in the City region traverse the City and County administrative boundaries. In order to ensure these are protected and enhanced in a co-ordinated manner the City and County Councils will work together. A policy for the protection and management of waterways and river corridors is set out below. (see also Policy NHR 7 Nature Conservation Designations, Chapter 7: Policy ENV 9 Flood Risk, and Chapter 10: Policy S19 Douglas Valley and Estuary and Policy S20 Tramore River)

8.37

River Corridors

- *To achieve attractive, vibrant, accessible and safe waterway corridors recognising their value as natural assets to the urban environment.*
- *To protect and enhance the character and appearance of waterway corridors through the control of development. Proposals should be accompanied by a design statement demonstrating that they:*
 - *Do not involve land filling or the further culverting of river lengths.*
 - *Do not have a negative effect on the distinctive character and appearance of the waterway corridor and the specific characteristics and landscape elements of the individual site and its context.*
 - *Preserve the nature conservation value of the site and maximise the potential for ecological enhancement.*
 - *Protect and enhance views to and from the waterway corridor.*
 - *Improve the physical relationship and accessibility between the development site, the waterway and adjacent public/sports areas.*
 - *Provide walkways/cycleways along the waterside.*
 - *Are designed to promote surveillance.*

POLICY NHR 6

Nature Conservation Designations

Proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA)

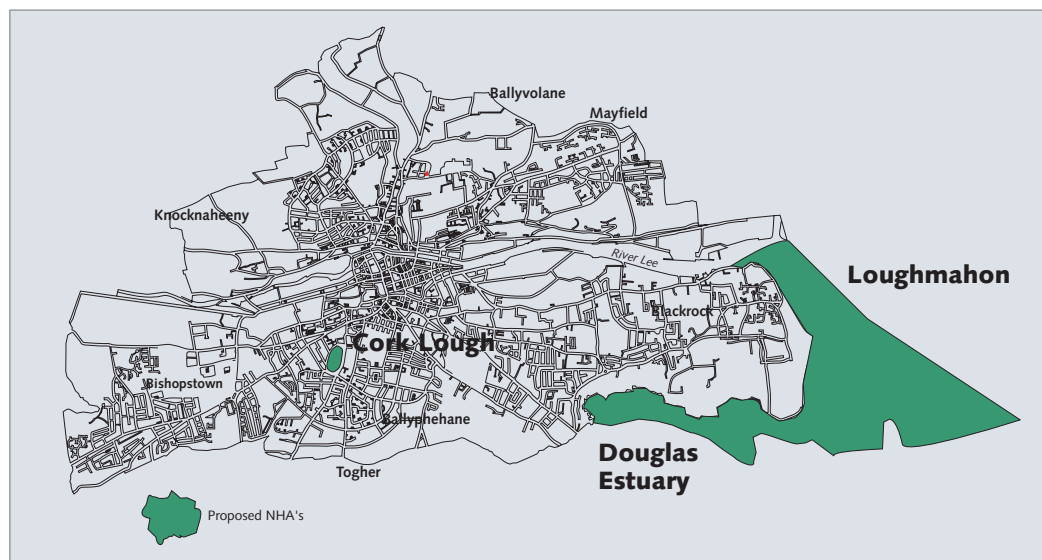
Under the *Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000* provision was made for the designation of *Natural Heritage Areas* (NHAs). The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOELG) has responsibility for designating protected nature conservation sites. Included under the designation are requirements for notification of landowners and means for objection to proposed designations. These NHAs overlap with other nature conservation designations to form a national framework for protected areas in Ireland. In Cork City, a number of areas have been designated as Proposed Natural Heritage Areas and landowners have been asked to refrain from activities which might impair or threaten them.

8.38

Proposed NHAs are (see Fig 8.1):

- Western part of Lough Mahon.
- Douglas Estuary.
- Cork Lough.

FIGURE 8.1
Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)



Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

- 8.39** In addition to the Proposed NHA designation both the Douglas Estuary and the western part of Loughmahon have also been designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for Wild Birds under the *European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds) Regulations (1994)*. The importance of these areas was based on the presence of significant salt marshes, reed beds, intertidal mudflats and nationally important numbers of wading birds.

Wildfowl Sanctuary: The Lough

- 8.40** In addition to Cork Lough's designation as a Proposed NHA it has an existing status under the *Wildlife Act 1976* as a Wildfowl Sanctuary.



Salmonid River

- 8.41** Under the EU *Freshwater Fish Directive* the River Lee is designated as a Salmonid river from its source to the Cork City Waterworks. This imposes an obligation to maintain specific water quality standards and to control pollution.
- 8.42** In general public parks and amenity areas are home to many of the more common species of flora and fauna. Certain areas, such as parts of the Curragheen River park, will be retained in a semi-wild state to accommodate a diverse range of habitats and species.
- 8.43** The City Council will consider the preparation of management plans in association with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, for each of the above-mentioned protected areas, subject to the availability of resources.

POLICY NHR 7

Nature Conservation Designations

- To continue to promote and support all existing and proposed protected nature conservation areas as valuable resources that should be preserved for present and future generations.
- To prepare management plans for such sites in association with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant bodies.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's)

The *Planning and Development Act 2000* has further outlined the legal framework and procedures to make a Tree Preservation Order. The City Council started making Tree Preservation Orders in 1980. The list will be extended as the need arises. The existing TPOs within Cork City are listed below.

8.44

Existing Tree Preservation Orders:

- Irish Distilleries, North Mall
- Westboro, Middle Glanmire Road
- Lakeview, Castle Road
- Belgrave Square, Wellington Road
- Ringmahon Road
- Roseville, Old Youghal Road
- Springmount
- Rockmahon, Castle Road
- Brookfield House (Village), College Road
- Deerpark, Greenmount
- Ardnalee, Middle Glanmire Road

Tree Preservation Orders

To make Tree Preservation Orders where there is a proven need for such a designation.

POLICY NHR 8

Urban Forestry

The term 'Urban Forest' embraces trees grown in and close to urban areas, including trees in streets, parks, gardens, on undeveloped land and those in urban woodlands. The benefits of trees to the City are mainly: aesthetic; environmental (they absorb pollutants, filter dust, reduce noise, produce oxygen and reduce carbon dioxide); ecological (they provide a habitat for wildlife); and economic (enhancing the environment helps to attract investment). Trees can also have recreational, social and educational benefits.

8.45

Cork City Council carries out an extensive tree planting programme with approximately 10,000 trees and whips planted annually. The impact of the trees planted over the last 20 years is now being felt. There is however still scope for a considerable amount of additional planting and a need to replace trees lost due to age and the effects of development. An *Urban Forestry Strategy* was developed in 1996 to co-ordinate the Council's actions in this field and it has a number of broad objectives:

8.46

- To promote the value and awareness of trees in the City.
- To establish the extent and condition of the existing urban forest.
- To develop a management and maintenance programme for trees in public ownership.
- To identify locations for new tree planting.
- To identify sources of funding for planting, management, co-ordination and promotion.

Woodland planting has been carried out at the Curragheen Amenity Walk, Beaumont Park and Glen Park during recent years. The planting of indigenous trees at these locations has contributed considerably to the aesthetics of the local environment and in providing a valuable habitat for a diverse range of wildlife.

8.47

Planting will continue at the above locations while new sites will be identified for the creation of small woodland areas. In addition, the planting of trees in parks and streets will continue. In the City Centre and historic areas, semi-mature trees, which are more vandal resistant and make an instant impact, will be used.

8.48

Tree Planting

- *To create a series of woodland pockets distributed throughout the City that will link planting to open space areas, roadside verges and City streets.*
- *To extend the planting of indigenous tree species at previously identified locations and to identify new sites suitable for the creation of small woodland areas.*

POLICY NHR 9



Recreation

- 8.49** Recreational facilities consist of public open spaces and sport facilities. Within the City there is a total area of approximately 607 ha (1,500 acres) of public open space areas. Cork City Council has provided 64 sports grounds, some of which are managed directly by Cork City Council while others are leased or licensed to clubs and organisations as a means of encouraging clubs to develop facilities further. Recreational facilities are also provided through privately owned open spaces and sports facilities.
- 8.50** The City Council's objective is to provide worthwhile recreational opportunities for the widest possible range of age groups and interests while at the same time protecting the natural environment. The Council recognises that open spaces should be planned to meet a variety of needs and thus be able to fulfil a variety of functions.

Recreation Policies

- 8.51** Public open spaces are one of the key elements in defining the quality of the residential environment. They provide passive as well as active amenity and have important ecological and environmental aspects. The City Council will apply the principle of a *Hierarchy of Parks* varying from large regional parks to small children's play areas and passive recreation spaces close to peoples homes. The hierarchy will typically allow for a neighbourhood park of about 16 ha (40 acre) and two local parks (approximately 5 acre each) based on population units of 10,000.
- 8.52** The principles, criteria and standards of the *Residential Density Guidelines* will be incorporated as part of the City Council's general strategy on natural heritage and recreation. The City Council also commissioned consultants to carry out a Recreational Facilities Needs Study for the Cork City area in order to assist with the development of a strategy to cater for the active sport and recreational needs of the City for the next five years. This study has recently been completed.
- 8.53** The City Council is committed to providing for the recreational needs of all sectors of the community, particularly disabled people, the young, the elderly, women, ethnic groups and those that are socially or economically disadvantaged, and ensuring that these needs are understood and incorporated into plans and strategies.

POLICY NHR 10

Recreation

- To apply the principle of a Hierarchy of Parks varying from large regional parks to small children's play areas and passive recreation spaces close to peoples homes.
- To incorporate the national Residential Density Guidelines' principles, criteria and standards as part of a general strategy on natural heritage and recreation.
- To provide for the recreational needs of all sectors of the community with specific emphasis on those groups with special needs.

Public Open Spaces

Public open space in the City includes major parks such as Fitzgerald's Park, Bishop Lucey Park and the Lough as well as large open space areas such as the lands adjacent to Sunvalley Drive and Clashduv Road. Also included are greens and small open space areas within private and public housing estates, amenity walks, recreational areas, sports grounds and the municipal golf course.

8.54

Standards and Criteria for Public Open Space provision

The *Residential Density Guidelines* (1999) recommend that both qualitative and quantitative standards be adopted for open space provision. See Chapter 11: paras. 11.19–11.22 for details on open space standards.

8.55

Qualitative standards are important in order to put greater emphasis on the quality of open spaces. It is necessary to provide details of the proposed landscaping, hard and soft, as part of planning applications.

8.56

Quantitative standards provide the basis to ensure a balanced distribution of open spaces throughout the City in order to meet the needs of communities. It also helps to further strengthen the City Council's hierarchical approach towards the provision of open spaces in the City.

8.57

An approach of using qualitative as well as quantitative standards for open space provision will be followed, providing for high quality open spaces giving high levels of access to recreation for local communities. This approach is of particular importance with regard to high-density development, which must be accompanied by high quality public and communal open spaces. This can help to avoid poorly located and unsuitable open spaces in residential estates, which often result in under used spaces where anti-social activities are more likely to occur.

8.58

Public Open Space

- *To protect and improve existing areas of public open space. There will be a presumption against development of public open spaces, including unzoned public open spaces within housing estates. In exceptional circumstances development of unzoned public open spaces may be considered where the public open space is not functioning effectively due to scale, location, layout or where there is some significant community gain from its development for other purposes.*
- *To provide and promote high quality open spaces that are well designed, suitably proportioned and accessible to the surrounding community. The development of open spaces should aim to enhance and protect natural features and views and be set in safe and secure environments with the emphasis on active open spaces enjoyed by all sectors of the community.*
- *To follow an approach of qualitative as well of quantitative standards for open spaces providing high quality open spaces with high levels of access to recreation for local communities*

POLICY NHR 11

Sports Facilities and Grounds

Sport is an essential component of everyday life, playing a valuable social and economic role, providing enjoyment for people and a livelihood for many others. Cork City Council is committed to enhancing the range and quality of sports facilities, to meet rising expectations so that everyone can have reasonable access to sport and to ensure that there is a network of facilities to support talented athletes.

8.59

In addition to 64 sports grounds, the City Council also operates two swimming pools at Douglas and Churchfield with advanced proposals to completely refurbish both. The City Council built a third pool at Bishopstown Leisureworld in 1997, which is operated by a management company on its behalf.

8.60

The City Council recognises that sport has an important part to play in the quality of life enjoyed in the City and should therefore be protected through policy and zoning objectives. The grouping and multiple usage of sports, recreational and community facilities could help achieve sustainable and efficient facilities, giving access to a variety of sports clubs, organisations and the general public.

8.61

Accessibility is a key element in the provision of sports facilities. The Council is committed to promoting accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport and making facilities socially and physically accessible to all sectors of the community. It is also recognised that the provision of recreational areas and sports facilities can play an important part in successful urban regeneration.

8.62

- 8.63** One of the City Council's functions is to seek to ensure that adequate land and water resources are provided for sport and recreational facilities. The recently completed *Cork Recreational Facilities Needs Study* (CRFNS) identifies a clear shortage of facilities for some sports in the City. With this in mind, the loss of existing sports facilities is strongly resisted through policies in the Plan to ensure that there is no further reduction in the supply of such facilities in the City. The RFNS also highlighted that Cork City lacked a regional scale dry sports hall/arena complex capable of accommodating a wide range of sports and competitions. The Council considers the redevelopment of Docklands as a unique opportunity to provide such a facility for the metropolitan region.
- 8.64** Existing sports grounds have been zoned to protect their value as recreational assets. The protection of existing sports facilities and access to natural resources used for sport are vital to their continued development, the quality of life for citizens and protection of the environment. However, due to the lack of available land in the City, new opportunities (particularly in the provision of playing pitches) to enhance the range of sports facilities are limited. A more practical approach needs to be adopted. This will entail close co-operation with the County Council in the provision of facilities on the urban fringe and the improvement in both the accessibility to and quality of existing sports facilities in the City.

POLICY NHR 12

Sports Facilities and Grounds

- *To protect the existing supply of sporting facilities. There will be a general presumption against the loss of sports pitches for development. In exceptional circumstances limited development may be considered if the proposed development:*
 - *Is ancillary to the principle use of the site as playing pitches and does not affect the quantity or quality of the pitches or adversely impact upon their use.*
 - *Only affects land incapable of forming part of the playing pitches and does not result in the loss of any playing pitch.*
- *To promote the provision and management of high quality sporting facilities.*
- *To facilitate access to sports facilities for all members of the community and ensure that the particular needs of different groups are incorporated into the planning, design, and management of new facilities.*
- *The City Council will continue to encourage joint provision and dual use of sports facilities in appropriate locations.*
- *To promote, in co-operation with the County Council, the urban fringe and Green Belt as important resources for the provision of sports facilities e.g. golf courses, pitches etc.*
- *To take account of the priorities set out in both national and local sports strategies when planning new facilities.*

Amenity Walks/Cycling Routes

- 8.65** The City Council will strive to improve access to and linkage between walkways and recreational amenity open spaces to form part of a citywide network. A number of proposed walkways, along with the upgrading of others, will help strengthen the linkage between such areas. These proposals are outlined in Table 8.2 below. Walkways could also be linked with sites of historical and cultural importance to create focal points and help enhance the "sense of place" of an area.
- 8.66** The dual usage of amenity walkways as pedestrian routes and cycleways will be encouraged. This will require that routes are designed and maintained to a high standard to ensure the needs, and particularly the safety, of both pedestrians and cyclists are catered for. An integrated plan for cycling, which will be prepared and implemented over the period of the Plan, will include proposals for the design and maintenance of these routes. The isolated and secluded nature of the public walkways gives rise to security issues that could be addressed by residential over-looking, lighting, park wardens or CCTV cameras etc. In addition to these measures quality design and landscaping in conjunction with adequate signage could help enhance the public realm and create a healthy and safe environment.

City Sector	New/upgraded Amenity Routes
North West	Mardyke – Daly’s Bridge – Strawberry Hill – Hollyhill Rd – Nash’s Boreen – Fairfield Rd
North West	Mardyke Walk – proposed pedestrian bridge – North Distillery – North Mall
North East	Glen Avenue – through Military Cemetery – Pope’s Rd
North East	Silverspring Lane – Lower Mayfield Rd – proposed North Ring Rd – Ballyhooly New Rd
North East	Along Glenamought River from Kilnap Bridge – Glenamought Bridge
South East	Along riverbank from Blackrock Village – Blackrock Castle
South East	Mahon Industrial Estate – Old Passage Railway Line
South East	Mahon Industrial Estate – through Bessboro – South Link Walkway
South East	Sean Cronin Park – Skehard Rd – Ringmahon Point – along Lakeland Strand – Old Passage Railway Line
South East/ South Centre	South Douglas Rd – along Tramore/Trabeg Rivers – Proposed amenity park, landfill site – Kinsale Rd – rear of Tramore Rd industrial units along Tramore River – Pouladuff Rd
South West	Magazine Rd – along Glasheen River – Orchard Grove – along South Channel of River Lee – Gaol Bridge
South West	Victoria Cross – proposed pedestrian bridge – along North Channel of River Lee – Perrot’s Inch – proposed pedestrian bridge – UCC grounds
South West	Lee Fields – proposed pedestrian bridge – rear of Sacred Heart Convent, Western Rd

TABLE 8.2
New/upgraded Amenity Routes (as indicated on Figures 10.1 – 10.5)

Public Walkways/Cycleways

- *To develop high quality amenity walkways/cycleways for the enjoyment of the community at large.*
- *To use the network of amenity walkways/cycleways to enhance the public realm by supporting and creating focal points of historical, cultural and amenity importance.*
- *To strive to create a safe and accessible network of amenity walkways/cycleways.*
- *To use amenity walkways/cycleways to help establish linkage between open spaces and recreational / amenity areas in order to create a citywide network.*
- *To signpost, name and brand amenity walkways/cycleways to make them more accessible.*

POLICY NHR 13

Environmental Management System

The City Council accepted the challenge of achieving ISO 14001 EMS certification for the Parks Department as it is in keeping with the Council's commitment to protect and enhance the natural environment. The Environmental Management System assesses the environmental impacts of the organisation and sets objectives and targets to minimise these impacts. The South East Sector of the City was chosen as a pilot for this project.

8.67

In May 2002 Cork City Council's Parks Department's South East Area Division was presented with the ISO 14001 Certificate, the internationally recognised standard for Environmental Management Systems. Cork City Council was the first local authority in Ireland to achieve this standard.

8.68

Environmental Management System

To implement an Environmental Management System on a citywide basis, extending the process to all other Park Divisions with the aim of full certification in the near future.

POLICY NHR 14

Strategic Projects

Banks of the Lee Project (Lee fields and Mardyke)

- 8.69** The Lee and Curragheen River Valleys form the largest recreational areas in the City, taking in the Lee Fields and the Mardyke and with potential to link along the Curragheen River all the way to Bishopstown. These areas contain diverse natural habitats, walks, scenic views and recreational facilities. They extend the open countryside almost to the heart of the City and are thus of special amenity value. Their protection and sympathetic enhancement, including the completion of the riverside walks are an objective of the Development Plan.
- 8.70** It is the policy of the City Council to preserve and protect the Mardyke as an amenity area of open space for recreational use by all age groups. Development of the Mardyke has been proposed through the *City Regeneration programme (2000–2006)* and specifically the *Banks of the Lee Project* with the following objectives:
- Linking the Lee Fields to the Mardyke, including the construction of a pedestrian/cycle bridge over the south channel of the River Lee.
 - Upgrading the Mardyke Walk itself.
 - Improving Fitzgerald Park.
 - Linking the Mardyke walk to the Distillery Fields by acquisition of land and gaining access to the riverside and construction of a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the North Channel.

Marina

- 8.71** In the South East of the City, the Marina area, Atlantic pond and Monahan's Road Linear Park have together got the potential to be used as a City Park to serve the wider area's recreational needs. The amenity value of this area is further strengthened through the old Passage Railway walk, the Ringmahon walkway and recreational proposals in the *Mahon Landscape Master Plan (1998)* and the *Cork Docklands Development Strategy (2001)*.
- 8.72** The City Council has largely completed the upgrading and landscaping of the Marina area formalising it as an amenity area. The upgrading of the Atlantic Pond as an amenity has made a significant contribution to the area. The completion of the Main Drainage Scheme will further improve the area by improving the water quality to the River Lee, which will make the river more accessible for recreational use. In addition, the City Council will support the development of a City Park, through the linking of the various components of the Atlantic Pond, the Marina and the Monahan's Road Linear Park.
- 8.73** This objective could be achieved through the *Docklands Development Strategy* which proposes that Monahan's Road Linear Park be connected through a "green ribbon" extending along the length of Monahan's Road from Kennedy Park through to the Marina Park.

Mahon Peninsula

- 8.74** The Mahon peninsula represents a major opportunity for amenity development. The first steps have been the development of the Mahon Municipal Golf Course and the Passage Railway Walk. The *Mahon Landscape Master Plan (1998)* outlined proposals for future development that include sport pitches on the margin of existing housing adjacent to the South Ring Road by the Jack Lynch Tunnel, the Ringmahon amenity walk, a car park on Castle Road for users of the walk, a local Neighbourhood Park and other open space/amenity areas. Some of the elements of the Master Plan have already been completed. The linkage of all the different elements is envisaged in order to create a highly accessible network of open spaces and amenity areas.

Glen Amenity Park

- 8.75** At the Glen Amenity Park on the northside of the City, a new entrance and car park (Ballyhooley Road) have recently been completed together with other improvements. The Jerry O'Sullivan Park (Colmcille Park) has been completed and is an extremely popular amenity. The North Ridge Project, straddling the City boundary west of Churchfield Industrial Estate, targeted a major redevelopment of playing pitches and extension of facilities. These proposals have largely been completed. A new park has also been established at Meelick Park, with works just commencing on an amenity area at Glenheights Road, Ballyvolane.



North West Regional Park (Knocknaheeny)

A major objective in the City Council's *Corporate Plan* (2001), the *Parks Strategy 2000* and the *Knocknaheeny Master Plan* (2001) is the provision of a regional park in the North West of the City. This part of the City suffers from a serious shortfall in quality amenities. The proposed park would meet this shortfall. It is important that the regional park be located reasonably close to existing residential areas to ensure maximum usage and benefit to the community. As there are no suitable lands within the City boundary, an area in the County, close to Knocknaheeny, has been identified as a suitable location for such a development. The City Council will seek to provide for this park over the period of the Plan.

8.76

The North West Regional Park will make provision for a variety of recreational facilities e.g. sports pitches, hard surfaces, courts, amenity walkways, pitch and putt, children's play grounds, open parkland, urban forestry etc. This will contribute significantly to the quality of the local environment and the amenity of local residents.

8.77

Kinsale Road Amenity Park

The Kinsale Road landfill site will be converted to an amenity park on a phased basis as the landfill site is decommissioned. Preliminary plans for the park include proposals for play areas, wildlife areas, walks, tree planting, water features and an area for outdoor events. It is proposed to retain some space for waste management infrastructure incorporating the existing civic amenity site.

8.78

Larger Parks, Small Local Parks and Pocket Parks

In addition to these larger parks, small local parks and pocket parks will be developed where the need is identified and the opportunity arises. A hierarchical approach will be followed for these parks. New housing developments will also be required to provide public open space of adequate size and quality to serve local recreational needs. For details of the development control standards relating to open space see Chapter 11: Development Control Standards.

8.79

Amenity Projects

- *To support the protection, sympathetic enhancement and the completion of the riverside walks.*
- *To preserve and protect the Mardyke and Lee fields as a City Park with significant historical, recreational and amenity value.*
- *To promote the development and linkage of the Marina area, Atlantic pond and Monahan's Road Linear Park as a City Park in the South East sector of the City.*
- *To support, in co-operation with Cork County Council, the development of the proposed North West Regional Park.*

POLICY NHR 15

