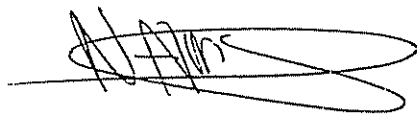


This Design Guide is a revised version of a draft document which was made available for public discussion and comment between 10th. July 1991 and 11th. November 1991.

It was approved on 20th. January 1994 by the Development Control Committee for the purposes of advice and guidance for development control following advertisement and consultations.



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Borough Planning Officer
Ogwr Borough Council

Design Guide 5

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

OGWR BOROUGH COUNCIL GUIDES TO DESIGN



FOREWORD

This series of guides to design prepared by the Borough Council has three main aims. They are:

1. To make clear the Local Planning Authority's expectations for the design of development.
2. To encourage, as a consequence, development of a high design standard that will result in a benefit in environmental and landscape terms.
3. To reduce the need for revision of the design of proposals, and thus to increase the speed of the determination of planning applications.

Five secondary aims clarify the criteria for judging the benefit that may be achieved by the design of a development. Those secondary aims of the design advice are:

- A. To create a positive area image, a sense of local identity.
- B. To ensure the integration of development into the surrounding area.
- C. To ensure the protection, and preferably enhancement, of the landscape or the townscape.
- D. To ensure the protection or enhancement of the appearance or character of areas of special interest or character.
- E. To ensure the protection or enhancement of the residential amenity of people living in the vicinity of, or who will live in, a development.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

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Design Guide 5

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Guide is one of a series produced by Ogwr Borough Council. It is about open spaces and play facilities within housing developments.

1.2. The Guide gives advice on the quality and design of open spaces in all new residential developments in the Borough. It is the 'specific planning guidance' referred to by Policy RC5 of the Draft Ogwr Borough Local Plan. That policy requires that open space on new housing sites is provided by the developer in accordance with this guide.

1.3. There is scope for flexibility. It is recognised that the advice will not be appropriate for every development. Any departure from the guidelines, however, should be fully justified by the special circumstances of the proposal.

1.4. In the past, some housing developers have been reluctant to provide sufficient Public Open Space. Resulting problems include: children playing in the

street; unsuitable areas of land being used for ball games; a diminished quality of life due to the lack of sites for passive recreation and the visual blight of an unrelieved monotony of housing. Once a housing estate has been constructed there is little the Borough Council can do to overcome these problems.

1.5. The provision of public open spaces therefore needs to be considered with the housing layout and landscaping before the submission of the planning application. For large housing sites, or sites in sensitive areas, such as Conservation Areas, developers are advised to engage the services of a landscape architect from the outset. Such a professional can ensure that open space is fully integrated into the design of the development.

1.6. Officers of the Planning Department will be available to discuss open space requirements with developers before the submission of an application. The Planning Department can be contacted at: The Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend,

Mid Glamorgan, CF31 1LX; or Telephone (0656) 643643.

1.7. The aims of the Design Guide series are set out in the foreword. There are specific objectives of this 'Play Areas and Open Space' Guide within these general aims. These objectives are:-

- a. *That sufficient land, appropriately located, and with adequate access, should be provided for public open space in new housing developments.* (See Advice Notes 1, 2, 3 & 4)
- b. *That the public open space should be properly landscaped to enhance its amenity value.* (See advice Notes 5 & 6).
- c. *That, in particular, there should be adequate provision of specially designed and equipped public open space for children's play and the elderly.* (See advice Notes 7, 8 & 9).
- d. *That opportunities for providing linear recreation facilities should not be overlooked* (See advice Note 10)

2. ADVICE NOTES

2.1. NOTE 1: 10% of the total site area of a new housing development should be dedicated to public open space.

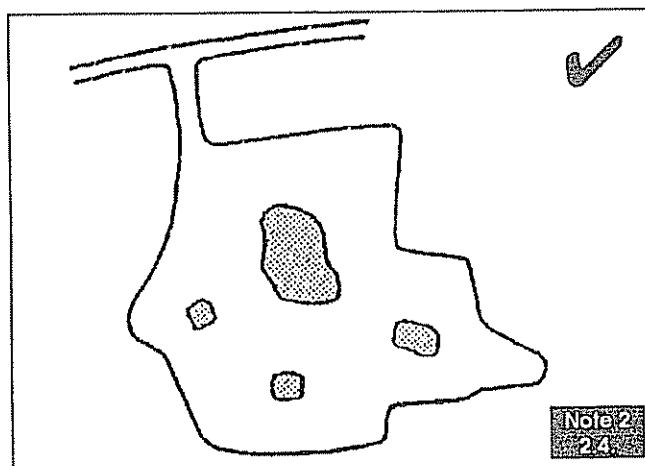
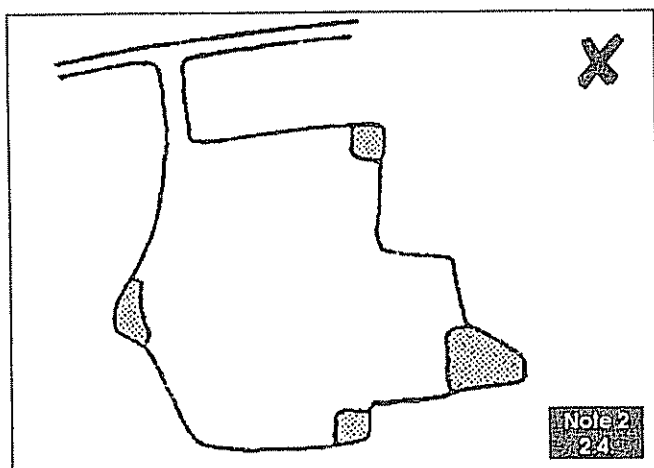
2.2. It will be expected that the majority of new housing developments should meet the 10% standard, although variations may be acceptable depending on the nature of the site and the proposed development. There are three particular cases where the standard may be varied. They are:-

(i) **Small sites** - On housing sites of less than 2 acres or 10 dwellings a reduced provision may be acceptable, particularly if there is existing open space within a reasonable distance.

often inaccessible and are usually unattractive to potential users.

2.5. The provision of public open space should be considered from the very earliest stage of the development of a layout plan. An appraisal of a proposed housing site can suggest the location of public open space. Such an appraisal could consider the following topics:

(i) **Topography** (slopes, high points, watercourses, viewpoints and solar orientation of the site) - The underlying shape of the ground can be a source of great environmental quality in the finished housing area. Sites should not be simply levelled and streams culverted. Slopes and high ground can offer viewpoints, and may suggest the location of open



(ii) **Low Density** - If the density of development is less than 4 dwellings per acre a full public open space provision may be considered unnecessary.

(iii) **Landscape Quality** - If the proposed development site contains landscape features of special quality an open space provision of more than 10% may be required.

2.3. NOTE 2: Public Open Space should be appropriately located with respect to the characteristics of the housing site.

2.4. The Borough Council is particularly opposed to the location of open space on awkwardly shaped pieces of land on site edges left over after the layout of housing developments. Such spaces are

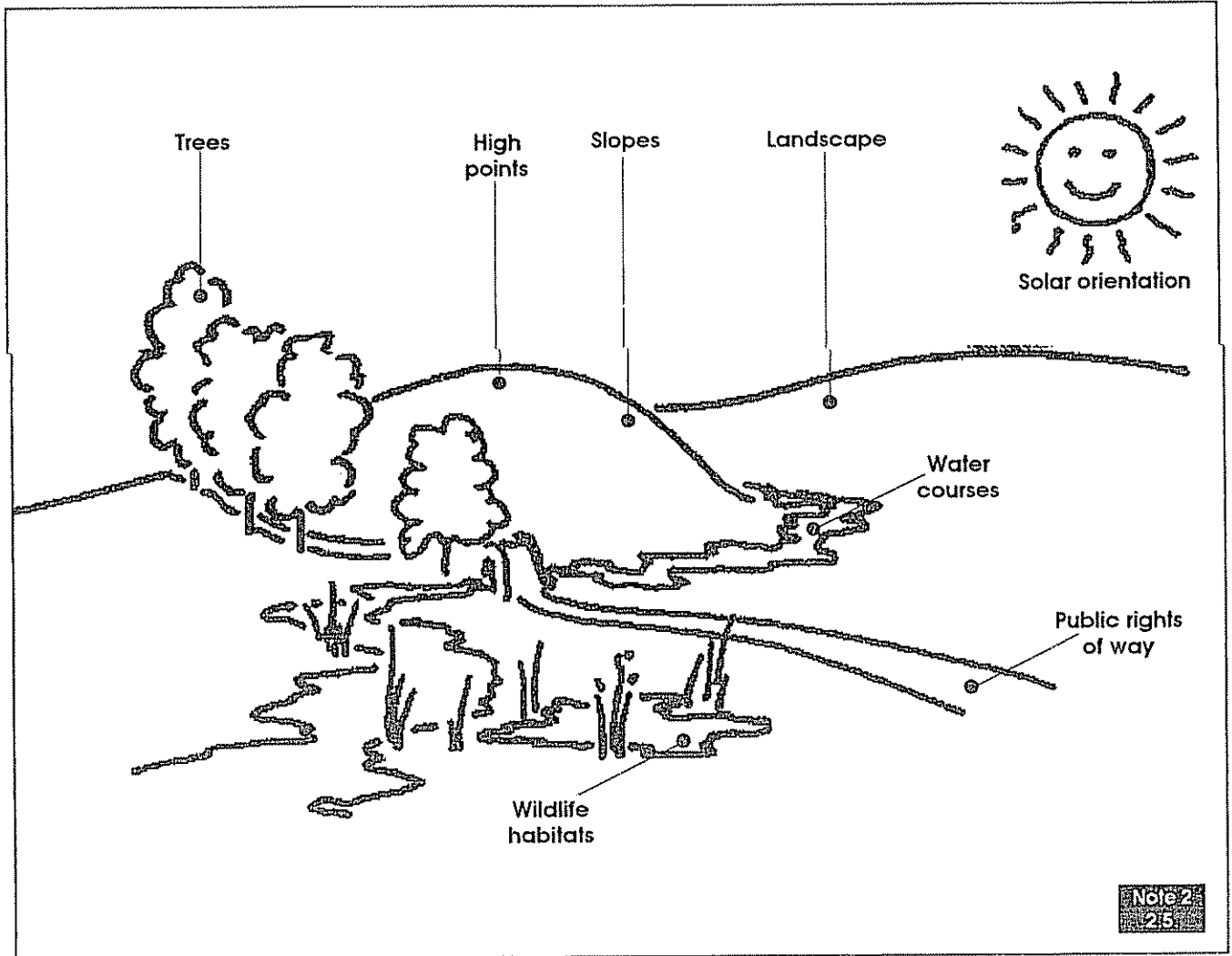
spaces. Watercourses offer opportunities for linear open spaces. The solar orientation of the site can indicate warm and sheltered sitting areas.

(ii) **Landscape** - The character of the site's existing landscape, and the future relationship of the housing to the wider landscape should be reflected in the design of a proposal. Open spaces and planting can enhance any elements of high landscape quality in the site. They can also create incidents in the larger landscape around and including the site.

(iii) **Trees** - Good specimen trees or groups of trees should be retained where possible. The Local Planning Authority will be able to advise which trees, if any, are the subject

of a Tree Preservation Order. As the construction of new buildings will not normally be allowed within 12m of the trunk of a significant tree, the existence of such a tree could suggest the location of an open space. (The Council has produced more detailed guidance on this matter in Design Guide 7 "Trees and Development".)

(iv) **Wildlife** - If there are important wildlife or plant habitats they should be adequately protected during development. If they must be removed, measures should be taken to reinstate, replace or compensate for them. It is preferable, however, that they be incorporated into the open space provision of the development, if at all possible.



(v) **Public Rights of Way** - If the site is crossed by public footpaths or bridleways they should be integrated into the housing layout, and they may suggest linear recreation facilities. Old hedgerows along the line of rights of way can be an important asset to new public open spaces and should be protected.

2.6. NOTE 3: Public Open Space should be appropriately located for its intended function.

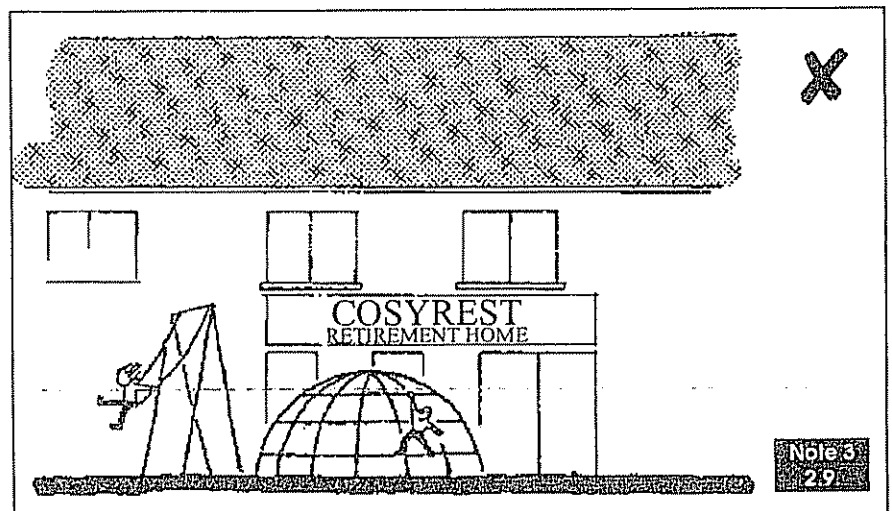
2.7. Most land for open space should be well drained (The exception would be the creation of wetland habitats for areas of ecological interest)

2.8. Most land for open space should have some degree of shelter. (The exception would be land with a primarily aesthetic purpose, such as a viewpoint).

2.9. The location of open space should take account of the character of nearby housing. A noisy play area will not fit happily close to a sheltered housing complex for the elderly. Otherwise, open space should be overlooked from adjacent property, but should be designed to cause minimal disturbance to the occupiers of those dwellings.

Open space should also be easily accessible from the housing it serves.

2.10. Amenity open space should be of a sufficient size and be located to make a significant visual impact. Tiny, scattered patches of open space are visually insignificant and represent a major problem for maintenance.



2.11. NOTE 4: Public open space requires adequate access for all members of the public and for maintenance equipment and emergency vehicles.

2.12. Footpaths leading to an open space should be designed for safe use by the disabled, by parents with pushchairs and by people with poor eyesight. Dropped kerbs, separation from busy roads, gentle gradients, variations in surface texture and clear warning of obstacles are among the details to be considered. For maintenance and emergency use, if an area of open space does not have a road frontage then an access no less than 3.65 metres wide should be provided between the site and a public highway. The access needs to be surfaced to prevent damage by wheeled vehicles. The form of surfacing, however, should be chosen to enhance the attractiveness of the open space.

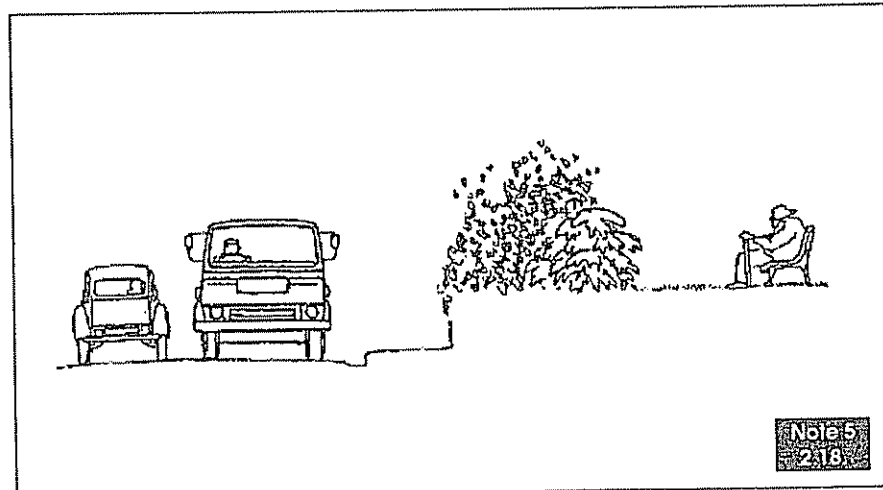
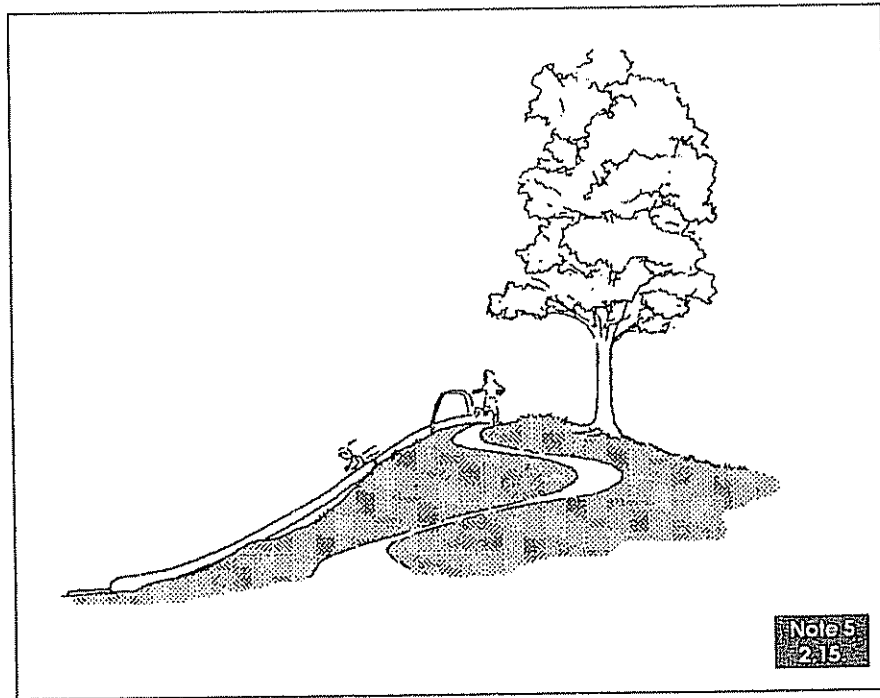
2.13. NOTE 5: Development proposals should include details of the intended landscaping of the public open spaces, and that landscaping should be designed to enhance their amenity value.

2.14. Landscaping is not just grass and a token tree. It also includes the use of earth moulding, dense shrub banks for screening or ground cover, water features and hard surfaces.

2.15. Play equipment can be integrated into the landscape by the use of slope grading and earth moulding. Equipment so treated is safer and more aesthetically pleasing than freestanding items installed on a flat surface.

2.16. Landscaped open spaces can break up housing mass and create areas of identity. This is especially important in large neighbourhoods with high density housing. Landscaped open areas and even trees planted along the street are essential to break up the hard lines of dwellings.

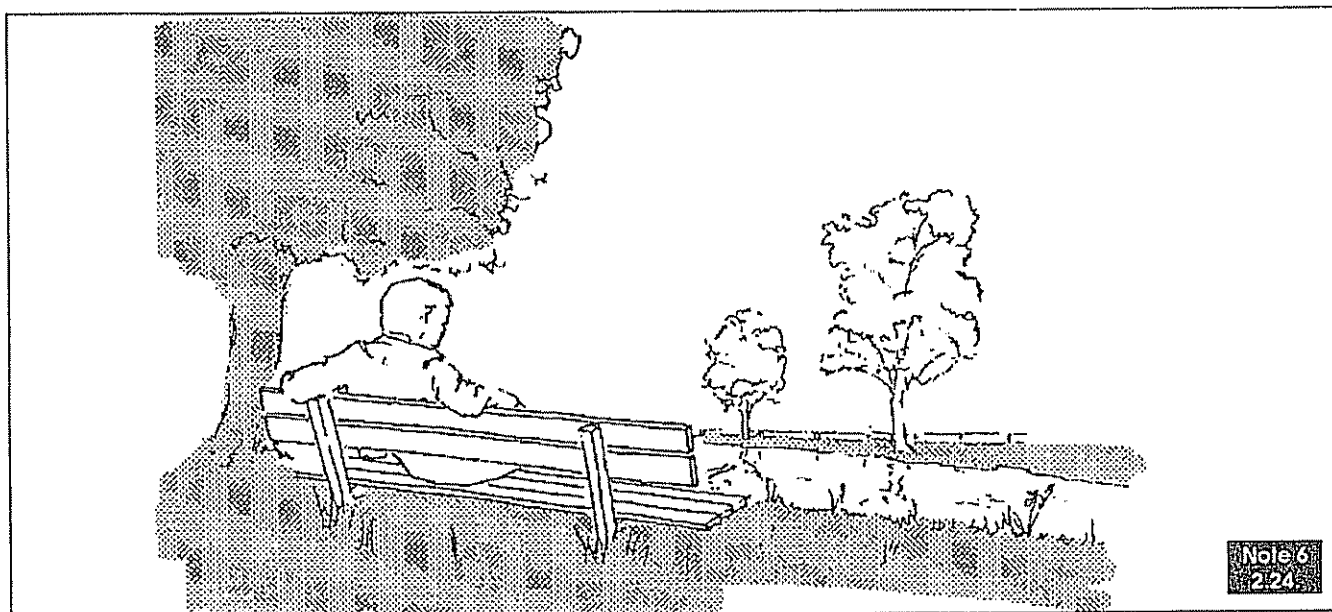
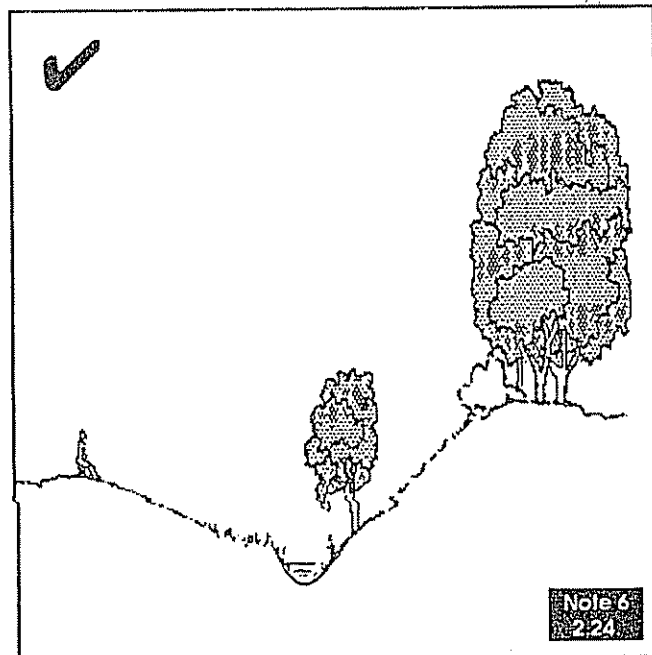
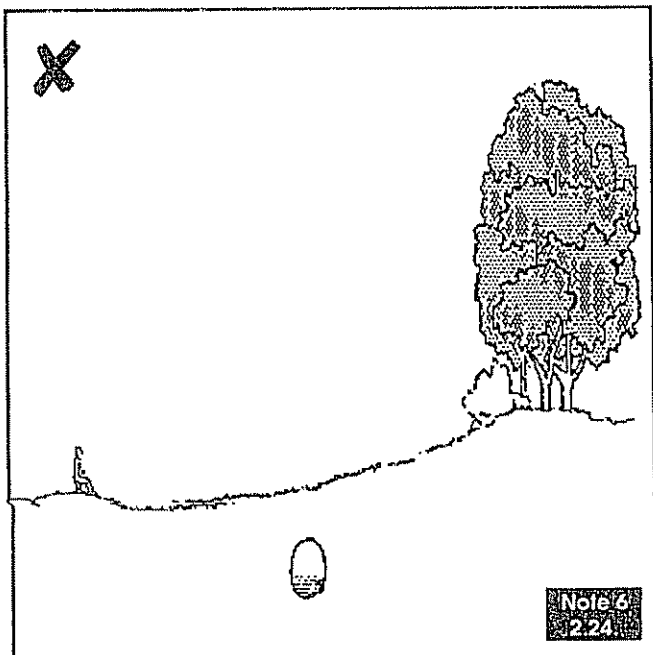
2.17. The use of varied surfaces and planting can provide an indication of the expected use of an area as well as being a way of separating uses.



2.18. Planting schemes should be designed for a specific purpose such as screening or segregation and be appropriate for the site conditions. This will usually entail the use of indigenous species of trees and shrubs in the scheme. (Further information is given in Design Guide DG7 "Trees and Development").

2.19. In some circumstances, such as the treatment of a small area of amenity open space, a combination of massed planting and ground cover may be more successful than grass. It looks better and could be cheaper in the long term because of lower maintenance costs.

2.20. Grass is only appropriate for areas without frequent access, or which are large enough to



reduce the intensity of use. The grass is otherwise worn down to muddy patches. Popular short cuts over grass will also result in worn tracks. Paths should therefore be provided along routes which people would naturally wish to follow.

2.21. Any walls and barriers included in the landscape proposals should be so designed that they do not become play features. The use of prickly shrubs can discourage children. Such plants can also provide an attractive but effective barrier between open spaces and the fenced boundaries of adjoining gardens, aiding privacy and security.

2.22. Landscaping schemes should retain established planting of quality to create a sense of maturity in new development.

2.23. **NOTE 6:** Where a development site is crossed or bordered by a water feature every effort should be made to use that feature as an opportunity to create distinctive public open space.

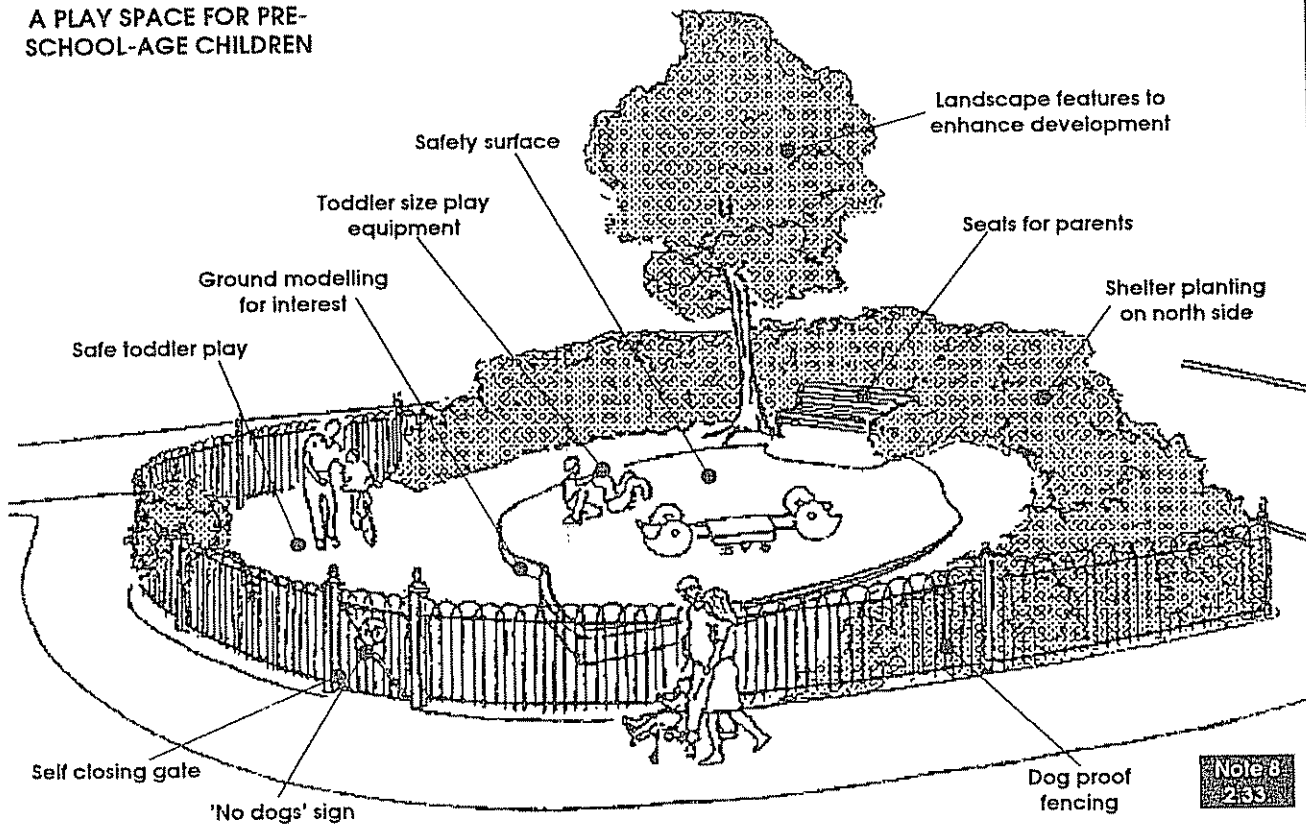
2.24. Unless it is grossly and irretrievably polluted a river or stream can form the basis of a linear recreational facility, or be used as a feature of a wider public open space. While, for reasons of safety, a stream would not be appropriate next to a children's play area it could give interest to

an amenity space such as a sitting area for the elderly. The margins of a stream could also be used to create an area of ecological interest.

2.25. **NOTE 7:** Equipped play areas for children should be provided in accord with the Borough Council's standards, or to the minimum size (see Note 8) if that is greater.

2.26. The Borough Council has approved the following minimum space standards for children's play provision on new housing developments, based on the recommendations of the National Playing Fields Association. The Council will seek to enter into planning obligations under Section

A PLAY SPACE FOR PRE-SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN



106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or other powers, to secure the appropriate provision of such facilities.

2.27 Play Space for pre-school age children:

(a) If the number of houses, but not their size (expressed in number of bedrooms) is known, then:
 Playspace = No. of houses x 5 square metres

(b) If the number of houses and their size is known, then:
 Playspace = (No. of bedrooms on site - No. of houses) x 2 square metres.

2.28. Play areas and kickabout areas for school age children:

(a) If the number of houses, but not their size (expressed in number of bedrooms) is known, then:
 Play area = No. of houses x 10 square metres.

(b) If the number of houses and their size is known, then:
 Play area = (No. of bedrooms on site - No. of houses) x 4 square metres.

2.29. Adequate provision for children's play is regarded as one of the most important aims of planning policy. It is therefore expected that the majority of housing sites should satisfy the standards.

2.30. Occasionally, the nature of the site or the proposed development will justify a variation in the standard of provision. Examples of particular circumstances are as follows:

(i) **Small Sites** - On housing sites of less than 2 acres, or 10 dwellings, a reduced provision may be acceptable, particularly if there is existing open space within a reasonable distance. (See Note 8)

(ii) **Low Density** - If the density of development is less than 4 dwellings per acre full provision of children's play space is considered unnecessary but there should be some provision for communal play.

(iii) **Sites of 1 & 2 bed flats or starter homes** - A reduced standard may be acceptable for developments of non-family dwellings. Any reduction should affect provision

for school age children rather than the provision for pre-school age children.

(iv) **Accommodation for the Elderly** - If a development is specifically designed for residents who are not likely to have children, then the standards for children's play space are clearly irrelevant. Such developments, however, may warrant a compensatory increase in the landscaped sitting and amenity areas.

2.31. **NOTE 8: The play areas to be provided in accord with Note 7 should conform to the Borough Council's basic requirements.**

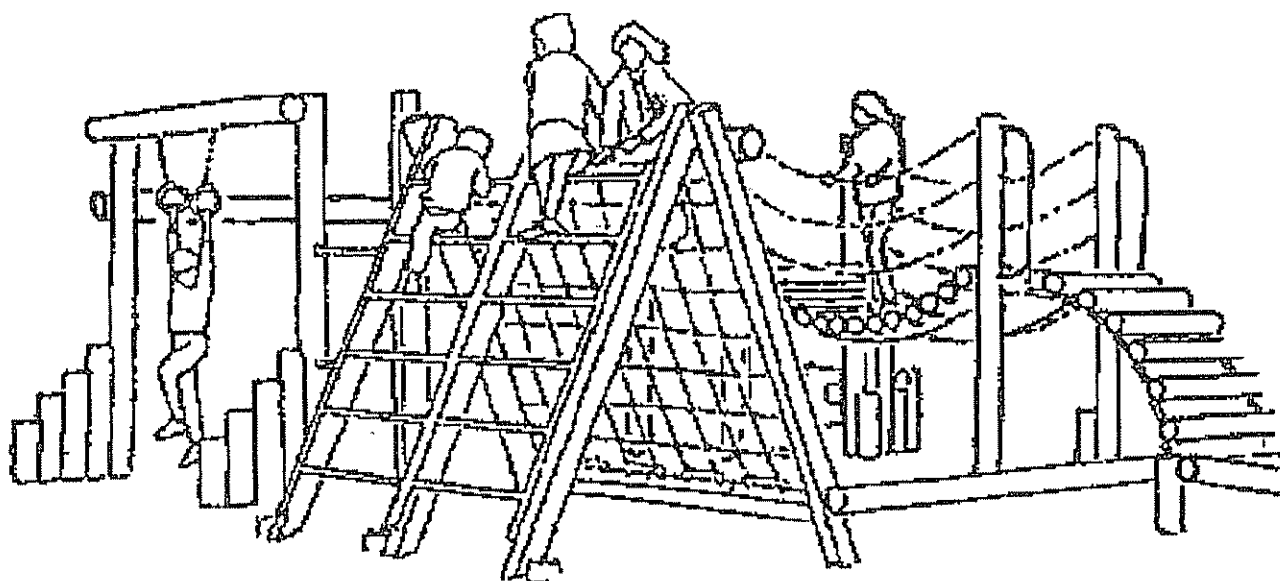
2.32. The Borough Council has approved the following requirements for play areas on new housing estates:

2.33. **Play space for pre-school age children -**

Minimum size: 100 square metres.

Accessibility: No more than 100 metres safe walking distance from dwellings served.

PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN



Note 8
2.34.

Catchment area: Each play space should serve 20-30 dwellings.

Security: Must be overlooked by adjoining dwellings; should be enclosed to keep children in and dogs out; should be segregated from streams or other water features.

Equipment: Appropriate play equipment; impact absorbing surface; seating for adults and children.

2.34. Play areas for school age children -

Minimum size: 500 square metres. For smaller housing sites, where the standards in Note 7 indicate a provision of less than 500 sq.m. play equipment for school age children should be provided in conjunction with the play space for pre-school age children. The equipment for the younger children should be segregated by a low fence or barrier.

Accessibility: No more than 400 metres safe walking distance from dwellings served.

Catchment area: Each play space

should serve 50 - 60 dwellings.

Security: Must be overlooked by adjoining dwellings; should be segregated from busy roads by siting, landscaping or fencing.

Equipment: Traditional and/or adventure play ground equipment, impact absorbing surfaces around the equipment, seating for adults and children.

2.35. Kickabout areas for school age children -

Minimum size: 1000 square metres.

Accessibility: No more than 400 metres from dwellings served.

Catchment area: Each kickabout area should serve 100-120 dwellings.

Security: Must be overlooked by adjoining dwellings; should be segregated from busy roads by siting wherever possible. Landscaping or fencing may be a sufficient safety barrier but consideration should be given to the possible consequences of ball games. The kickabout area should be sited away from

electricity pylons or transmission lines to avoid danger resulting from kite flying.

Equipment: A level area large enough to accommodate semi-organised games.

2.36. NOTE 9: The housing layout should make provision for landscaped amenity areas designed with consideration for their use by the elderly.

2.37. No standard is recommended, but it is considered that the majority of housing developments should make some provision for the elderly. Such provision is particularly important if the development specifically includes sheltered accommodation or retirement homes.

2.38. Seating should be provided in a sunny, sheltered location chosen to have an interesting view. That view may be an outlook to the landscape outside the site. If the topography allows it, to a landscaped area within the site or to an activity area such as a children's play area. If, however, the view is of an activity area, care should be taken that there is

sufficient separation to prevent conflict between use by children and the elderly.

2.39. Easy gradients and access for the disabled should be incorporated into the design of the amenity areas and their approaches.

2.40. As some elderly people have difficulty leaving their homes it is advisable to create landscaped open spaces which are visible from their living rooms.

2.41. **NOTE 10: The housing layout should make provision for linear recreation facilities, including footpaths, cycleways and fitness trails.**

2.42. **Footpaths** - are a valuable recreational asset for people of all ages as well as providing a safer and more attractive route for short journeys than the roadside footways.

2.43. Where the size of a development calls for a number of open spaces, they can be linked on a footpath circuit, like beads on a string. Existing footpaths to the countryside or to adjoining housing should also be incorporated into the layout of a new residential development.

2.44. Footpaths should generally have a minimum width of 2 metres. Gradients should not exceed 8% and should preferably be limited to 5%. If the topography of the site demands a gradient in excess of 8% it would be helpful if an alternative stepped approach, with handrails, could be provided. Junctions between footpaths and carriageways should have dropped kerbs. They could also be marked by texture changes in paving to assist people with poor eyesight. They may also require safety barriers to prevent children running into the road.

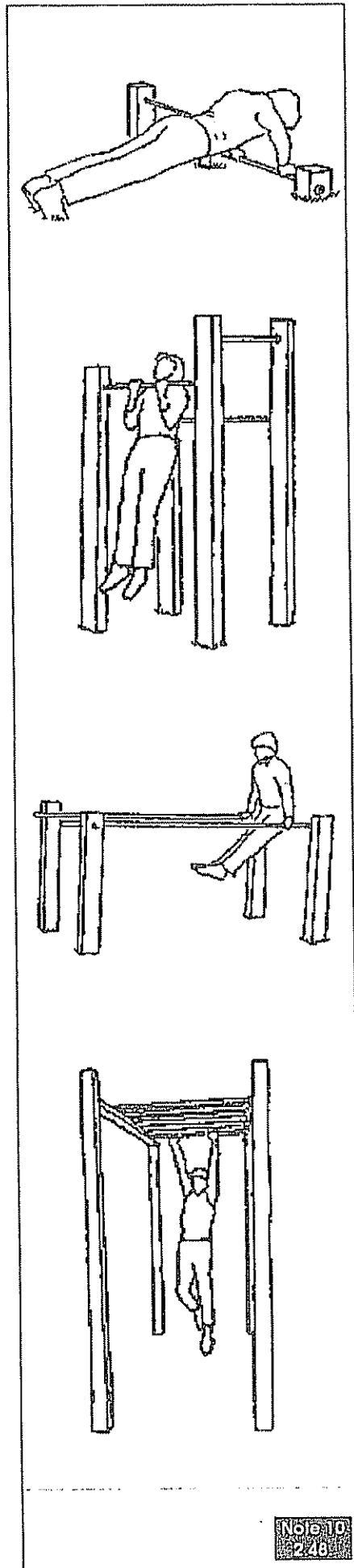
2.45. For security reasons footpaths should be overlooked from adjacent dwellings, should avoid, as far as possible, running along rear garden boundaries, and should be well lit for night-time use.

2.46. **Cycleways** - like footpaths, offer both a means of communication and an opportunity for

recreation. Cycleways can be shared with pedestrians if low usage is expected (combined pedestrian and cyclist peak flows of no more than 200 per hour). Otherwise the track should be segregated, with a minimum overall width of 3 metres physically separated into a 1.5 metre cycle track and a 1.5 metre footway.

2.47. Cycleways should be arranged to provide convenient access for non car users to facilities such as shops, schools, and health centres. They should also make links with cycleways or quiet roads outside the development. Whenever possible severe gradients should be avoided.

2.48. **Fitness Trails** - can be created in minimum space alongside footpaths. They consist of different items of sturdy exercise equipment located at intervals along a jogging track for use primarily by teenagers and adults. Because some of the equipment can have a sculptural presence it forms part of the hard and soft landscaping that can give a housing development its particular character.



NOTE 10
2.48

3. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

3.1. The Development Plan for Ogwr incorporates the relevant policies of the Mid Glamorgan County Structure Plan and the policies of the Ogwr Borough Local Plan.

3.2. The County Structure Plan Incorporating Approved Structure Plan Alterations No 1 became operational on the 12th. September 1989. There are no directly relevant Structure Plan policies.

3.3. Ogwr Borough Local Plan has passed through its deposit stage and will be the subject of a public local inquiry commencing on the 15th. February 1994. The relevant Local Plan policy is No.RC5, which states:

"Where appropriate, new residential developments shall include areas of amenity open space and equipped play areas. These facilities shall be provided in accordance with specific planning guidance approved by the Borough Council."

This document is the specific design guidance referred to by the Local Plan Policy.

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1. These notes can only offer general advice. If it is not clear how the advice notes apply to a particular development the proposal may be discussed with staff of the Borough Planning Department. Letters should be addressed to:

Mr. N. A. McGaw B.Sc., MRTPI
The Borough Planning Officer, Ogwr Borough Council,
P.O. Box 4, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend,
Mid Glamorgan. CF31 1LX.

If telephoning, ring Bridgend (0656) 643643 and ask for the Planning (Development Control) Section. The Design Guide reference to quote is **DG.5.**

11.10