



UNION4 PLANNING

GB Houses Ltd

Land to the rear of Maytree Close, Rainham, RM13 8EP

OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

March 2024



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PLANNING

Document Control

Project: Land to the rear of Maytree Close

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Author(s): Tanya Kozak

Checked By: Alan Hannify

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1-2 Paris Garden | London | SE1 8ND
0207 122 0094
planning@union4.co.uk
www.union4.co.uk

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Open Space Assessment has been prepared by Union4 Planning on behalf of GB Homes Ltd in support of a proposed development on land to the rear of Maytree Close in Rainham.
- 1.2 The proposed development comprises the construction of 4 no. residential dwellings, together with car parking, cycle parking, landscaping, children's play space and associated works.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the submitted Planning Statement which provides an overview of the proposals and assesses them against the relevant planning policy. This Open Space Assessment relates specifically to open space provision within the area and how it addresses local policy requirements.

Report Structure

- 1.4 The subsequent sections of this report are set out as follows:
- Section 2 briefly describes the proposed development and green space proposed;
 - Section 3 sets out the relevant policy context pertaining to this assessment;
 - Section 4 provides a summary of local open space provision;
 - Section 5 assesses the existing and proposed open space within the site;
 - Section 6 provides a summary and conclusion.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1 The summary description of the proposed development is as follows:

"Proposed development comprising 4 no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3), car and cycle parking, landscaping, children's play space, and associated works."

2.2 The proposed development involves the clearance of the site and construction of four two-storey dwellings in the form of two semi-detached units.

2.3 Significant greening of the site will be provided through comprehensive landscaping, with both private amenity spaces and communal/public open space.

2.4 The existing and proposed green space is as follows:

- Existing – 1,618sqm
- Proposed Communal Green Space – 134.9sqm
- Proposed Private Amenity Space – 332.4sqm

2.5 The communal, public open space will include significant greening in the form of ornamental hedgerows, new trees, amenity grass and a wildflower meadow. Benches will also be provided for relaxation and dwell time, along with a children's play area comprised of timber play equipment such as balancing logs, stepping stones and wooden animals.

2.6 Full details of the proposed development can be found within the accompanying Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement.

3.0 Policy Context

- 3.1 The overall planning policy context is set by the National Planning Policy Framework at a national level and by the Development Plan at a local level. In the case of the application site, the Development Plan comprises the London Plan (March 2021) and the Havering Local Plan (November 2021).

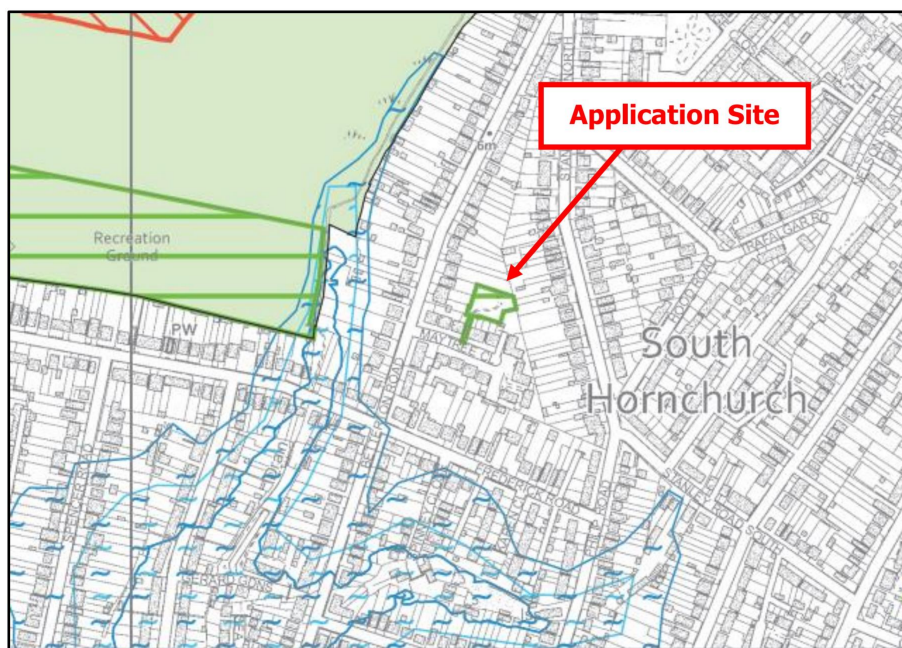
London Plan (March 2021)

- 3.2 The new London Plan was formally adopted in March 2021. It sets out the framework for how London will develop over the next 20-25 years. Its policies are used to inform decisions on planning applications across all London boroughs.
- 3.3 London Plan Policy S4 'Play and informal recreation' requires development proposals to increase opportunities for play and informal recreation where schemes are likely to be used by children and young people.

Havering Local Plan (November 2021)

- 3.4 The Havering Local Plan was adopted in November 2021 and sets out the Council's vision and strategy for future growth and sustainable development over a period of 15 years up to 2031. It is one of a series of key documents which form the Development Plan and will be the primary basis against which planning applications are assessed.
- 3.5 The site is designated within the category of 'Parks, Open Spaces, Playing Fields and Allotments', as illustrated on the Local Plan Policies Map (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Extract from the Havering Local Plan Policies Map



Source: Havering Local Plan (November 2021)

- 3.6 Policy 18 'Open space, sports and recreation' protects Havering's designated open spaces, unless it can be demonstrated that replacement provision of equivalent or better quantity and quality will be made in a suitable location
- 3.7 Paragraph 8.7.2 states that *"in applying Policy 18, open space will encompass parks and gardens, natural and semi natural green spaces, amenity space, children's play areas, allotments and cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds as defined in Havering's Open Space Assessment Standards Paper (2016)."*
- 3.8 Paragraph 8.7.3 states:
- "Havering's Open Space Assessment and Standards Paper (2016) assesses the current quantity, quality and distribution of open space within Havering and considers the demand for future provision to meet the needs of Havering's growing population. The study covers 177 sites totalling 1,283 ha. There is generally a good coverage of parks, gardens, natural and semi natural spaces and amenity greenspaces across the borough. It is acknowledged that there are some areas of deficiency, although deficiency in one type of open space is often met by another type of open space. The priority is, therefore, to protect current provision and support improvements in quality and accessibility."*
- 3.9 With regard to children's play space, Paragraph 8.7.6 states:
- "Play facilities that are safe and stimulating are essential for a child's well-being, health and future development. Whilst Havering has a good amount of, and generally good quality provision of, open space for children and young people it is important that opportunities to increase provision and quality are taken. Residential and mixed use proposals should incorporate or contribute to new play space based on the child yield expected from the development in accordance with the requirements of the London Plan and the associated Play and Informal recreation Supplementary Planning Document."*

Other Material Considerations

London Borough of Havering Open Space Assessment Report (November 2016)

- 3.10 The London Borough of Havering Open Space Assessment Report forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. It provides details of existing open space provision within the Borough, its condition, distribution and overall quality.
- 3.11 The application site features within the assessment under Site ID: 134 – Maytree Close. It is highlighted as one of the five worst scoring amenity greenspace sites, with a score of 18% and a quality and value score of 'low'. It is also listed as one of 17 sites that rate below the threshold for value and also rate low for quality. Page 44 of the report states as follows:

"Most sites that rate low for quality are observed as being fairly basic pockets of green space. These tend to lack ancillary facilities to encourage extensive recreational use. Keats Avenue is noted as being slightly overgrown and having broken glass. It is also one of only a few sites highlighted through consultation as a site viewed as being poorer in general quality and appearance. Evidence of litter and fly tipping is also observed at Maytree Close Terrace."

- 3.12 The report summary at Section 6.6 reiterates that 17 sites within the borough rate low for quality and value, stating that where they cannot be improved, some may be better suited to be/become different forms of open space or could feasibly be surplus.

4.0 Local Open Space Provision

- 4.1 This section sets out details of open space provision within the area, as described within the Council's Open Space Assessment Report, up to 1,200m from the site. The distance has been determined by utilising the accessibility standards to travel to open space provision as set out in Table 2.3 within the report.

Typology	Applied Standards
Parks and gardens	15 minute walk time (1,200m)
Natural and semi-natural	10 minute walk time (800m)
	30 minute drive time
Amenity greenspace	5 minute (400m) & 10 minute (800m) walk time
Provision for children and young people	10 minute walk time (800m)
Allotments	10 minute walk time (800m)
Cemeteries	No standard set
Civic spaces	No standard set

Parks and gardens

- 4.2 Parks and gardens are described as accessible, high-quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
- 4.3 Paragraph 4.2 of the Council's Open Space Assessment Report notes that there are 24 sites classified as parks and gardens within the borough. No site size threshold is applied in this case and therefore all sites are included within the report.
- 4.4 In south Havering, there are a total of five parks and gardens, covering a combined area of 191.34ha and equating to 2.89ha per 1,000 people.
- 4.5 The closest park and garden to the application site is Hornchurch Country Park, which is located approximately 2.4km to the northwest. Given that this distance exceeds the applied standards, it cannot be included as local open space in the context of this assessment.

Natural and semi-natural greenspaces

- 4.6 Natural and semi-natural greenspaces are identified as serving a primary purpose as wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness. These areas include urban woodland and beaches where appropriate.

- 4.7 There are a total of 22 natural and semi-natural greenspaces within the borough, with a threshold site size of at least 0.2ha. Sites smaller than this have been discounted as they are likely to have less recreational value compared to larger sites.
- 4.8 In south Havering, eight natural and semi-natural greenspaces are identified, covering an area of 238.33ha, equating to 3.61ha per 1,000 people.
- 4.9 The closest greenspace to the site is Ingrebourne Hill, 1.5km to the east of the site which has a good quality and value score. Whilst this does not meet the suggested walking time, Ingrebourne Hill is within approximately 5 minutes' drive time and thus is included as part of this assessment. We would also highlight that this distance is a short cycle ride of between 5 and 10 minutes.

Amenity greenspace

- 4.10 Amenity greenspaces are defined as areas for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
- 4.11 There are a total of 54 amenity greenspaces within the borough, 18 of which are identified in south Havering, covering an area of 37.02ha and equating to 0.56ha per 1,000 people.
- 4.12 The application site is designated as amenity greenspace, with a low overall quality score. Low scoring spaces are noted as basic pockets of green space with limited function and a lack of facilities to encourage recreational use. Further to this, the site is not publicly accessible as it is located on private land, thus providing no benefit to the local community.
- 4.13 Mardyke Open Space is approximately 350m to the west of the site, well within the suggested 5-10 minute walking time (400-800m). It includes a number of features such as sports provision and play facilities, which serve a range of needs. It has been rated as having a good quality and value score, with the play area noted as one of the top five play areas within the borough, scoring 83%.
- 4.14 The next closest designated amenity greenspace is Lessa Park and Play Area, 1km east of this site. Whilst this marginally exceeds the suggested walking time, the park is certainly within walkable and cyclable proximity to the site, offering space for relaxation and children's play. Lessa Park has been given good scores both in relation to quality and value.

Provision for children and young people

- 4.15 Provision for children and young people is described as areas designed primarily for play and social interaction such as equipped play areas, MUGAs, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.
- 4.16 A total of 40 sites have been identified in Havering as provision for children and young people. No site size threshold has been applied and therefore all sites are included within the Council's Open Space Assessment.

- 4.17 In south Havering there are 12 areas containing provision for children and young people, covering an area of 2.4ha and equating to 0.04ha per 1,000 people.
- 4.18 As noted above, Mardyke Open Space is close to the site, approximately 350m to the west. It includes a high-scoring play area (Mardyke Adventure Playground), which is located approximately 300m further to the west within the wider Mardyke Open Space, and thus within an appropriate walking distance to the site.
- 4.19 The next closest provision for children and young people is Lessa Park as identified above, 1km to the east of the site. Whilst this exceeds the suggested walking distance by 200m, we would consider this marginal and thus, the park is considered suitable for use by local residents.

Allotments

- 4.20 Allotments are areas for people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
- 4.21 There are 27 sites classified as allotments in Havering with no site size threshold applied. A total of eight allotments are identified in south Havering, covering an area of 11.89ha and equating to 0.18ha per 1,000 people.
- 4.22 The closest allotments to the site are the Bretons Farm allotments, approximately 1km north of the site which marginally exceeds the recommended walking distance. The allotments are rated as having both a good quality and value score.

Cemeteries

- 4.23 Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds are described as areas for quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.
- 4.24 There are six sites identified as cemeteries/churchyards in the borough, with three located in south Havering which cover an area of 15.38ha.
- 4.25 The closest churchyard to the site is the St Helens & St Giles Churchyard, approximately 2km southeast. The churchyard is rated with a low-quality score, but good value score.

Civic spaces

- 4.26 Civic and market squares and other areas designed for pedestrians provide a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.
- 4.27 There are four civic spaces within the borough, two of which are located in south Havering, covering an area of 0.01ha.

- 4.28 The closest area to the site which is classed as civic space is the Rainham War Memorial, approximately 2km southeast. It has a score of good in terms of quality, as well as good in terms of value.

Summary of Open Space Provision

- 4.29 Having regard to the suggested walking and driving times, the site is within appropriate distance to the following open spaces:

- Ingrebourne Hill;
- Mardyke Open Space;
- Mardyke Adventure Playground;
- St Helens & St Giles Churchyard;
- Rainham War Memorial.

- 4.30 The site is also in close proximity to the following sites, albeit marginally exceeds the recommended distance:

- Lessa Park;
- Lessa Park Play Area;
- Bretons Farm Allotments.

5.0 Open Space Assessment

- 5.1 The proposed development will result in the net loss of 1,483.1sqm of open space to accommodate 4no. residential dwellings. The scheme will include 134.9sqm of public, communal green space which will be accessible by local residents and future occupants of the site. A total of 332.4sqm of private amenity space will also be provided in the form of rear gardens.
- 5.2 Whilst the assessment of the loss of this space has been covered in detail within the Planning Statement, the key points are reiterated below for ease of reference.
- 5.3 It is unclear why the site was designated as open space given that it is in private ownership and does not provide any recreational functions or visual amenity. It is simply a fenced-off area of grass and paving which does not generate any meaningful activity. Furthermore, given the somewhat isolated nature of this space, it also creates considerable potential for anti-social behaviour and fly tipping, along with potential insurance liability issues for the landowner.
- 5.4 The poor quality of the open space was highlighted in the Council's 'Open Space Assessment Report' (November 2016) which makes clear that the site has limited merit in terms of open space value. The report provides an assessment of open spaces across Havering, including the application site which is referenced in the report as Maytree Close (Site ID 134).
- 5.5 The Council's 'Open Space Assessment Report' gave the site at Maytree Close a quality score and value score of 'low' and highlighted it as one of the five lowest scoring amenity greenspaces within the borough (scoring 18%). It is also listed as one of 17 sites that rate below the threshold for value and also rate low for quality. Page 44 of the report states as follows:
- "Most sites that rate low for quality are observed as being fairly basic pockets of green space. These tend to lack ancillary facilities to encourage extensive recreational use. Keats Avenue is noted as being slightly overgrown and having broken glass. It is also one of only a few sites highlighted through consultation as a site viewed as being poorer in general quality and appearance. Evidence of litter and fly tipping is also observed at Maytree Close Terrace."*
- 5.6 The report summary at Section 6.6 reiterates that 17 sites within the borough rate low for quality and value, stating that where they cannot be improved, some may be better suited to be/become different forms of open space or could feasibly be surplus.
- 5.7 There is no obligation for the site owners to improve the space, given that the land is private. Furthermore, any improvements would not overcome the isolated nature of the site and it is anticipated that the current problems of fly tipping and littering would continue.
- 5.8 It is therefore considered that the site is better suited to residential use, which will ensure upkeep of the site, whilst providing new homes and a beneficial, functional use.

- 5.9 When taking the above points into account, it is considered that the site does not provide any amenity or recreational value to the local community and its loss is unlikely to have any impact to local residents.
- 5.10 There are a number of opportunities for sport and recreation within the wider area, with nearby sites identified in Paragraph 4.29 above.
- 5.11 Mardyke Open Space in particular, along with the Mardyke Adventure Playground are in close walking proximity to the site and provide high quality areas for varied uses such as sport, children's play, recreation and relaxation. It is considered likely that local residents would utilise this open space in the first instance given the varied opportunities it provides as well as its high scoring quality and value.
- 5.12 The nearby Ingrebourne Hill, which is also connected to Hornchurch Country Park, provides a vast area for recreation, comprising grassed and wooded areas, cycle trails and viewpoints.
- 5.13 In contrast to these open spaces, the application site does not allow for walks, cycling or play, reiterating the unlikelihood of residents choosing this area over much higher quality local open and greenspaces which allow for a range of activity.
- 5.14 Notwithstanding the above, the proposals will include communal amenity space which will comprise significant planting such as ornamental hedgerows, new trees, amenity grass and a wildflower meadow. Benches will be provided for relaxation and dwell time, along with an area for children's play which includes timber play equipment such as balancing logs, stepping stones and wooden animals to encourage active play. In this regard, whilst the loss of open space is acknowledged, the new communal open space provided will be of a much higher quality and value and will more likely be utilised by local residents. At the same time, including new housing on the site will provide passive surveillance, thus helping to avoid any littering or anti-social behaviour which the site is currently subject to.
- 5.15 Further to the above, private amenity space will be provided in the form of rear gardens, and whilst it is acknowledged that this is not publicly accessible, it will ensure that a level of greening remains on the site to serve the purpose of outdoor recreation. Given that the existing site does not provide any outdoor use to local residents, new housing with private, rear gardens in itself would encourage new activity on the site, especially when compared to the current situation.

Mitigation

- 5.16 Given the lack of public accessibility at present, and the fact that high quality communal space will be provided, it is not considered that any further mitigation is required.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 6.1 This Open Space Assessment has been prepared by Union4 Planning on behalf of GB Homes Ltd in support of a proposed development on land to the rear of Maytree Close in Rainham.
- 6.2 The proposed development comprises the construction of 4 no. residential dwellings, together with car parking, cycle parking, landscaping, children's play space and associated works.
- 6.3 It has been demonstrated that the site as existing provides no amenity value and is not publicly accessible, meaning it provides no discernible benefit to the local community.
- 6.4 The proposals will provide significant landscaping and greening to the site, alongside new residential dwellings. Whilst the loss of open space is acknowledged, the new open space proposed will be of a much higher quality and value, with functional features such as benches and children's play equipment.
- 6.5 There are additional opportunities for sport and recreation within the local area such as at the nearby Mardyke Open Space. These areas are better suited to a variety of needs that cater for the local community and thus, are considered more favourable in terms of access to greenspace.
- 6.6 Overall, it is not considered that the loss of open space is of any detriment to the local community. The proposals represent a more functional and efficient use of land with wider benefits to the local area including new housing. Given these significant benefits, it is not considered that any further mitigation is required and the loss of the existing open space is acceptable.