

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1.1 The application site is located west of Newbottle village in the parish of Houghton-le-Spring, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, at approximate grid reference NZ 331 514. The site area is approximately 9.3 hectares, bounded by Coaley Lane to the south, Blind Lane to the west, Newbottle housing to the east and Success Road and housing to the north. It is situated approximately 1.2 km to the north west of the Houghton le Spring, and approximately 3.6 km west of Sunderland. (WA Figure 1.1 Site Location). Figure 2.3 is the aerial photography of the site and its immediate surroundings.

2.1.2 The site is crossed by a public footpath running east west across the centre of the site. The northern part of the site is woodland planting. The southern part of the site is agricultural land with a current crop of winter wheat.

2.2 Site and surroundings

2.2.1 The site is in the area of the Great North Forest. The plantation woodland area of the site was planted approximately 12 years ago as part of a larger planting scheme. The approximate area of forestry to be removed on the development site is 5ha¹. However, some planting around the perimeter of the pitches would be retained.

2.2.2 There is a disused railway which is now a footpath, known as the Lambton Way north of the site, this is shown on the development plan as a green corridor WA Figure 2.1. The former railway cutting is shown on WA Figure 2.4. Photograph 8 is the pond that is located at the bottom of the cutting. The edge of the cutting is defined by a hedgerow which is shown on photograph 7 on Figure 2.4.

2.2.3 East of the site, along the boundary of the woodland there is a further footpath (see photograph 1 and 3 in WA Figure 2.4). The footpath links with the Lambton Way and further open space to the north that separates Newbottle and Philadelphia. There is a network of other less formal paths in the vicinity.

2.2.4 The residential area east of the site is separated from it by Staddon Way. Between the housing and the road there is a noise attenuation mound (see WA Figure 2.5). These photographs show the noise mound and the level change between the houses and the site. Photograph 3 on WA Figure 2.5 shows the view towards the site from the houses further up the hill on Westleigh Road.

¹ Nursery stock trees are normally described as *semi mature* when they are greater than 20cm diameter *measured at chest height*. The main canopy species of this plantation could have a longevity of over 100 years thus at 12 years old they would not be described as mature.

2.2.5 The noise attenuation reduces in mound height towards the entrance to the housing estate. The houses further north are separated from the grassland areas to the west of them by close board fencing. (see photograph 1 on WA Figure 2.4).

2.2.6 To the north-west of the site, beyond Russell Wood and Blind Lane there is an opencast coal site which is currently undergoing restoration to a country park.

2.3 Topography and drainage

2.3.1 The proposed development site is situated to the west of Newbottle on low lying land, with levels of approximately 42m AOD in the west to 55m AOD in the east. The landform slopes downwards in a northerly direction to 50m at Success Road in the north east. Success Road to the north, slopes east to west from 61m at the eastern junction to 50m at Success Manor. Coaley Lane, to the south of the site slopes down westwards from a level of 75m at the junction in the east to 49m at the crossroads in the west. The dismantled railway to the north of the site is at a level of approximately 65m where the path crosses it north east of the site, and 48m where it meets Blind Lane. Blind Lane which is west of the site, slopes down from south to north from 49m at the crossroads in the south, to 45m at the northern junction.

2.4 Geology

2.4.1 The site lies at the boundary between Carboniferous Westphalian Coal Measures and Permo-Triassic Magnesian Limestone. The solid geology is overlain by glacial drift.

2.5 Access

2.5.1 Access to the site would be off Staddon Way on the western boundary of the site via a new junction.

2.5.2 The site is crossed by a footpath which is a right of way, (number 60), and connects to Houghton Le Spring as shown in AW Drawing No. 03 001 00 A Location plan.

2.6 Land use

2.6.1 The site comprises gently undulating farmland to the south and planted woodland to the north, the two being divided by the existing footpath.

2.7 Land ownership

2.7.1 The land for the proposed development is wholly owned by Russell Forster (Durham Estates) and is being gifted as a charitable trust to the Tyne & Wear Youth League.

2.8 Original woodland planting scheme

2.8.1 Approximately 5ha of the northern half of the site was tree planted in 1996. (Appendix 2.1 is the original planting scheme for the site). This area is part of a 18.5ha tree planting scheme which extends well beyond the site boundary.

2.9 Open space assessment

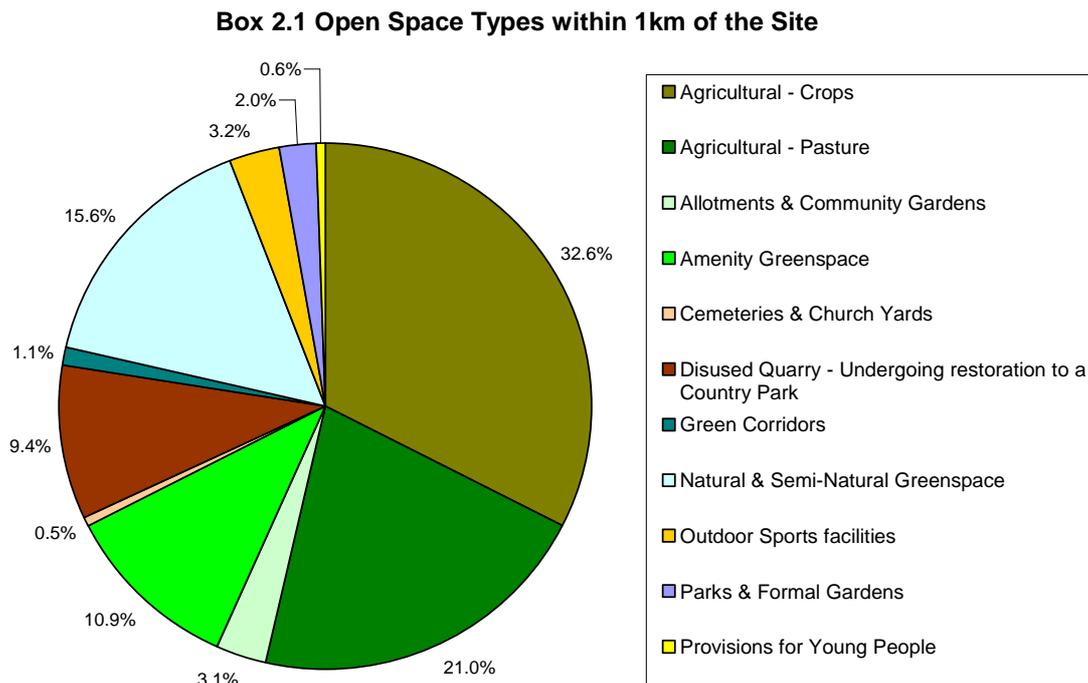
2.9.1 In order to be able to assess the potential impact of development of the site upon the amenity of public open space the types of open space in the vicinity have been surveyed. Sunderland City Council has not yet completed a formal open space study in line with the requirements of PPG17; therefore a local study has been carried out for land within 1km radius of the site for the purposes of the EIA. This study area is shown on WA Figure 2.1. The boundaries of the various spaces were mapped using the air photography as a guide. These were then checked on the ground and uses that have changed subsequent to the photograph being taken were noted.

2.9.2 The typologies for the classification were derived from PPG17 and they are summarised in Table 2.1.

	PPG17 Typology	Primary purpose
Greenspaces	Parks and gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events
	Natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
	Green corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration
	Outdoor sports facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.
	Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
	Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.
	Allotments, community gardens and urban farms	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
	Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.
Civic spaces	Civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians	Providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events

2.9.3 Appendix 2.2 includes an explanation of the criteria used to evaluate and score each space, which are derived from PPG 17. Appendix 2.4 includes the survey sheets completed during the field work.

2.9.4 The chart in Box 2.1 shows the proportion of each type of open space available within 1km of the site. The majority of the open space in the search area is agricultural land; this is not classified as accessible open space under the guidance in PPG17. The areas are shown on Figure 2.1.

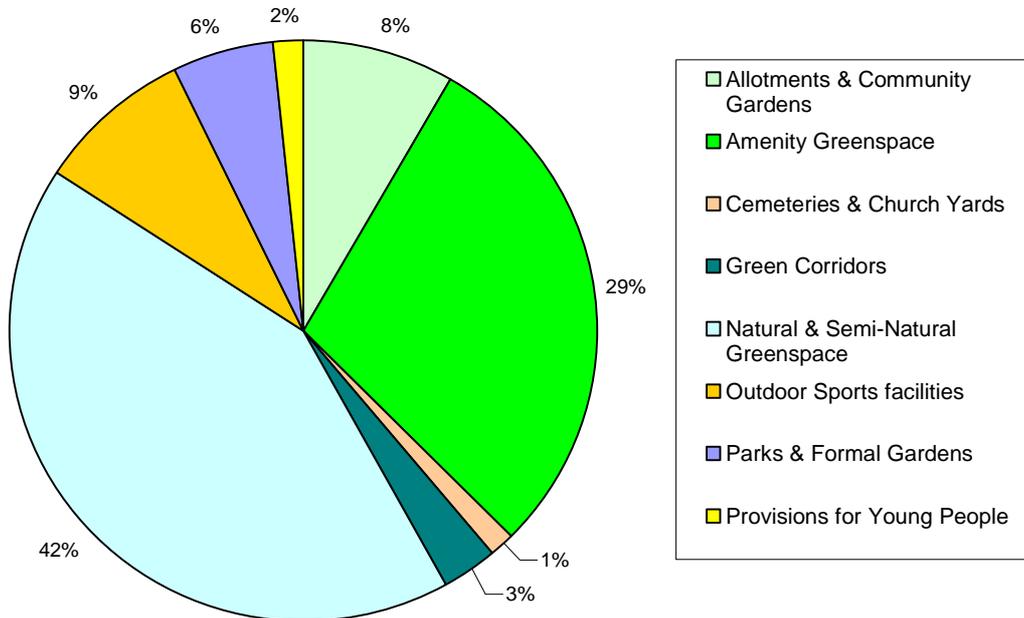


2.9.5 The Natural and semi natural greenspace which comprises 42% of the accessible open space in the study area is 29.1ha in total. Approximately 18ha of this is Russell Wood. Approximately 13ha of Russell Wood outside the application boundary is being formally dedicated by Mr Foster for recreational use by the public.

2.9.6 The amenity greenspace, which is 29% of the study area, is a total of 20.3ha, and mostly comprises smaller plots within the housing layouts. The closest area of amenity greenspace to the site is site 22 which is the area to the land to the north east of the site.

2.9.7 Currently outdoor sports facilities comprise only 9% of the accessible greenspace in the search area. There are sites amounting to 6ha in total; the largest is the playing fields off Success Road.

Box 2.2 Accessible Open Space within 1km of the site



Open Space Type	Total Area Present within 1km (hectares)
Agricultural - Crops	60.9
Agricultural - Pasture	39.2
Allotments & Community Gardens	5.7
Amenity Greenspace	20.3
Cemeteries & Church Yards	0.9
Disused Quarry - Undergoing restoration to a Country Park	17.6
Green Corridors	2.1
Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	29.1
Outdoor Sports facilities	6.0
Parks & Formal Gardens	3.8
Provisions for Young People	1.1

2.9.8 PPG17 requires **Planning Authorities** to produce formal open space assessment to inform the developer of development plans. It does not require developers to do this as part of a planning application. The PPG17 classification has however, been adopted to assist the assessment process in the absence of a completed study by the Council.

2.9.9 Policy L5 in the Sunderland states, UDP regarding targets for provision of open space:

“The Council will seek to ensure that public parks and amenity open spaces are available to the public so that within:

- I. 2.5km of every dwelling there is a district open space of approximately 30 hectares or more;*
- II. 1.0km of every dwelling there is a local park of approximately 10 hectares or more;*
- III. 0.5km of every dwelling there is a neighbourhood park or amenity open space of approximately 2 hectares or more; and*
- IV. Where appropriate (including within new housing sites, (see policy H21) "pocket" parks will be developed on other smaller sites. In any part of the city where these standards are not achieved the council will seek to bring vacant and derelict sites into use."*

2.9.10 The target for district open space may be satisfied once the country park is completed. This space is already identified as a district level open space in Figure 8.1 of the Sunderland UDP. In addition there are much larger areas of open space within 1km of the site which are in agricultural use. Development of the site would not alter this provision.

2.9.11 There are four local park sites within the study area; the Herrington Burn Country Park, the grassland at Moors Burn, the grassland on the Houghton Colliery site and the dedicated woodland of Russell Woods. The development of the site would not prevent this target being achieved. The dedicated woodland area is itself over 10ha and access to it is being promoted.

2.9.12 There are a number of neighbourhood park or amenity open space sites greater than 2ha in the study area, including the recreation grounds at Shiney Row and Sunnyside. In addition there are a number of areas (20, 24 and 73 on Figure 2.1) which combine to make an area over 2ha.

2.9.13 The pocket parks area are evident on Figure 2.1 especially within the newer housing. None of these would be lost as a result of the development.

2.9.14 In summary, the existing open space provision meets and exceeds the criteria in the Sunderland UDP and developing the site would not in this respect make a material difference to public amenity.