

# *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play*

This document is published by Fields in Trust, formerly the National Playing Fields Association. It supersedes all previous editions of 'The Six Acre Standard', the last of which was published in 2001.



# Foreword

Fields in Trust is the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association. In our first Annual Report in 1925, we made recommendations on planning for and providing outdoor recreational facilities, concentrating upon sport and children's play, particularly play areas and playgrounds. Since the 1930s our recommendations have been known as 'The Six Acre Standard'. They have formed an important part of the planning process contributing to assessments of local provision, the determination of local standards, the adoption of appropriate planning policies and the development of Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents, throughout the United Kingdom.

The recommendations in 'The Six Acre Standard', last revised in 2001, continued to highlight quantitative aspects of provision, though not exclusively so. In updating and modernising those recommendations we have decided upon a more descriptively accurate title, 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play'. We are also very much aware that governments throughout the four nations of the United Kingdom have called for more clearly defined and adopted policies for planning standards for open space, sport and recreation including outdoor facilities for sport and play. Those policies call for the local determination and adoption of standards relating to quantity, quality and accessibility. The nature of our own recommendations has therefore changed to recognise this and, for quantitative aspects in particular, benchmark standards based on research into current levels of provision in local authority administrative areas are provided.

There are a number of other significant changes to the previous publication. A detailed summary is provided on planning policy and the legal framework in England. The positions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will be dealt with by supplementary documents to follow this publication. Recognition is given to the sustainability agenda and its impact on outdoor sport and play. The importance of design is highlighted more than previously. Throughout the document emphasis is made on signposting other organisations, their websites and detailed references.

We live in times of rapid change and recreational planning is no different to other areas of life and work. Fields in Trust will therefore be producing and marketing supplements and updates on an annual basis. We hope this will find favour as a welcome service to our readership.

Alison Moore-Gwyn  
Chief Executive



# Acknowledgements

As the editor of this publication, on behalf of Fields in Trust I would like to thank many people and organisations for their guidance and contributions to the new document. In particular, appreciation goes to members of Fields in Trust's Land Protection and Planning Committee, namely:

- Paul Garber, Fields in Trust Trustee and recently retired Group Planning Director, Taylor Wimpey
- Alan Barber, Parks and Greenspace Consultant and CABE Commissioner
- Bob Evans, Director of Planning, Tandridge District Council
- Clive Self, CSA Landscape and Urban Design
- David Boswell, Director, WSP Development and Transportation
- Gary Symes, Director, PRC Group
- Jean Wenger, Director, Active Risk Management Services
- Michaela Sullivan, Head of Planning, Forth Ports
- Raymond Cole, Planning Consultant, Blake Laphorn Tarlo Lyons
- Robert White, Barrister, 4-5 Grays Inn Square
- Robin Williams, Managing Director, Asbri Planning.

Additionally, we would like to thank Dr Ann Heywood, Principal, The College of Estate Management for her expert drafting of the chapter on sustainability and Alan Barber for his positive assistance in bringing this chapter into final form. We are also indebted to Tim Smith, Partner, Berwin Leighton Paisner, for contributing to those parts of the publication dealing with legal aspects of planning and related matters. We also appreciate thanks to Ashley Godfrey Associates and Karl Hallam for undertaking survey work and stakeholder consultations. There are many other individuals who contributed informed and helpful comments throughout the drafting process and, without naming them all, we are most grateful for their assistance.

Finally I wish to thank my colleagues for all their help on this, particularly our Chief Executive, Alison Moore-Gwyn.

Don Earley  
Deputy Chief Executive



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# Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Sport and Play

## Summary

Since 'The Six Acre Standard' was last published in 2001, governments throughout the United Kingdom have more clearly defined and adopted policies for planning standards for open space, sport and recreation including outdoor facilities for sport and play. Those policies call for the local determination and adoption of standards relating to quantity, quality and accessibility.

In 2006, Fields in Trust commissioned independent research to undertake a survey of local planning authorities and consult with key stakeholders around the United Kingdom. Based on the results of that survey, it was decided that FIT should recommend Benchmark Standards to planning authorities and others and this approach has been taken up. These Benchmark Standards are recommended as a tool for assisting in the development of local standards. The recommendations are very similar to the previous recommendations in the 'The Six Acre Standard'. An estimated 70% of planning authorities either refer to, use or adopt the recommendations of the 'The Six Acre Standard' in their development plans. This underlines the practical relevance and value of the Fields in Trust recommendations.

The Benchmark Standards are based upon survey returns in England and they can clearly be applied within England. They will also be of assistance to those developing similar standards in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

## Benchmark Standard Recommendations for Outdoor Sport

### Quantity – Playing Pitches

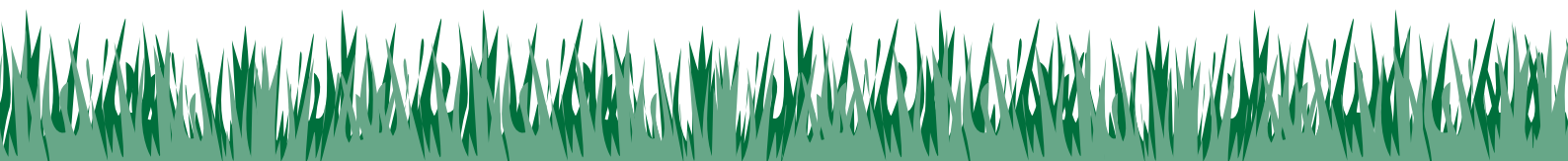
Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Urban	1.15
Rural	1.72
Overall	1.20

Note: The Benchmark Standard for rural areas is significantly higher than for urban areas. This reflects the greater number of dispersed settlements, villages and small market towns, in rural areas and their separate needs for local facilities. It should not be taken to imply that each new settlement in a rural area requires a higher level of local provision than their urban counterparts. Each new settlement must be considered in the light of its own circumstances and its own locality.

### Quantity – All Outdoor Sport (see Section 1.6 for definitions)

Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Urban	1.60
Rural	1.76
Overall	1.60

Note: Although the recommendations for 'urban' authorities and all local authorities are the same, this is not an error, since the recommendations are based on median averages, represented by the middle value of the series of returns.



## Quality – Outdoor Sport

Fields in Trust recommends the use of Technical Performance Quality Standards such as those published in 'Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' for both pitches and other outdoor facilities, namely cricket, bowls and croquet.

Alternatively, technical standards produced by Sport England, the Governing Bodies of Sport or professional or trade organisations, such as the Institute of Groundsmanship (IoG) and the Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA), can prove helpful.

Observational methodologies can prove helpful as a basic starting point, though they are no substitute for the best practice provided by technical assessments. Methods which might be considered include that provided in Sport England's electronic toolkit and the 'traffic light code' being developed by the Football Association.

## Accessibility – Playing Pitches

Playing pitches should be available within 1.2 kilometres of all dwellings in major residential areas.

## Accessibility – Other Outdoor sports

Athletics – one synthetic track with floodlighting per 250,000 people living within 30 minutes drive time (45 minutes in rural areas) of the proposed location

Tennis – community tennis courts within 20 minutes travel time (walking in urban areas, by car in rural areas)

Bowls – One green within 20 minutes travel time (walking in urban areas, by car in rural areas).

## Benchmark Standard Recommendations for Outdoor Play

### Quantity – All Playing Space

Childrens Playing Space	Benchmark Standard (hectares per '000)
Designated Equipped Playing Space	0.25
Informal Playing Space	0.55
Children's Playing Space	0.80

### Quality Benchmark for Children's Playing Space

Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards using the Children's Play Council's Quality Assessment Tool. This would not set an absolute measure, but a reasonable aspiration and benchmarks against which to measure the quality of any existing children's play space. Another tool, recommended by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), is Fields in Trust's own 'Play Value Assessment for Playgrounds', a copy which is provided as Appendix F.

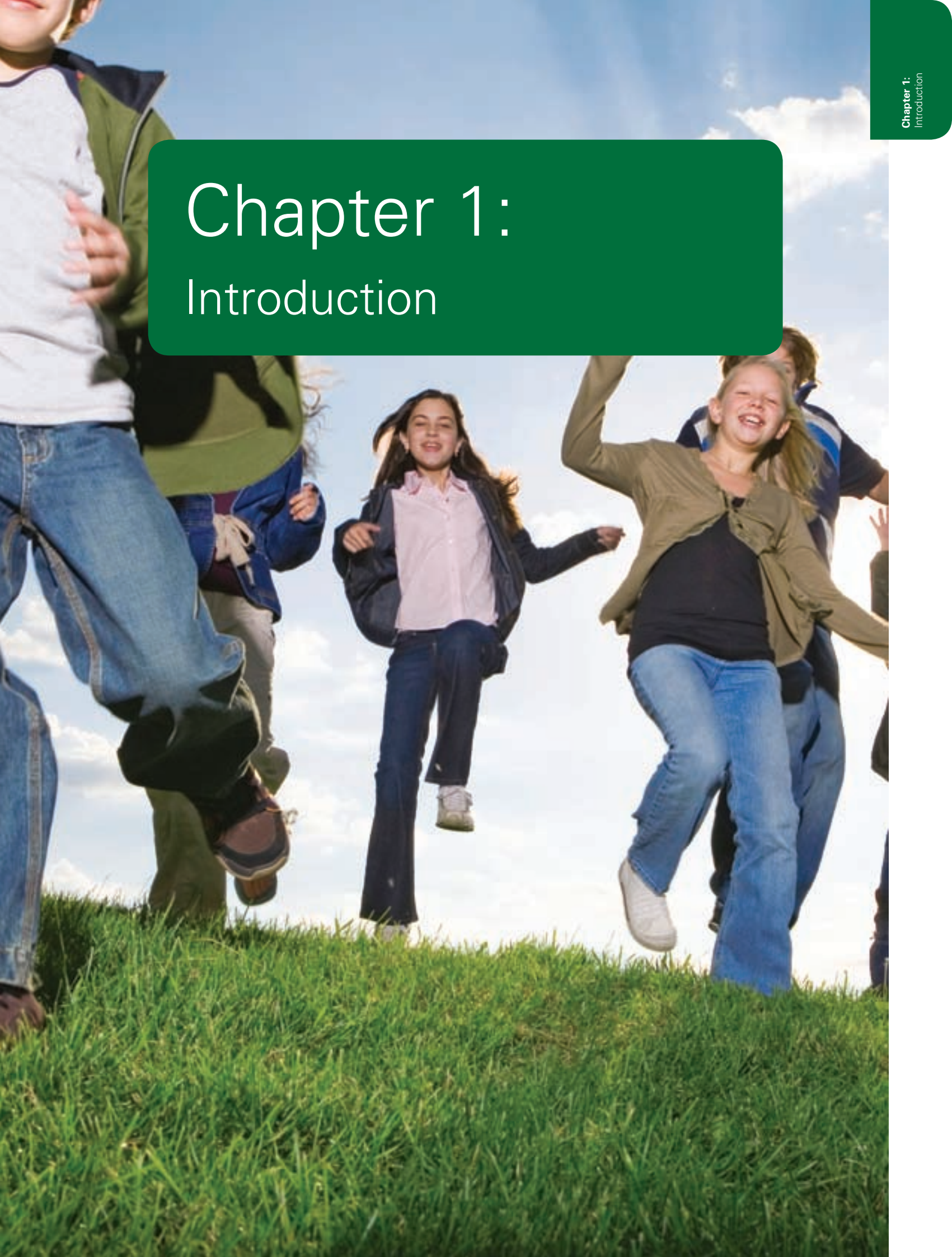
**Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Children’s Playing Space**

Type of Space	Distance Criteria (metres)	
	Walking Distance	Straight Line Distance
Local areas for play or ‘door-step’ spaces – for play and informal recreation (LAPs)	100	60
Local equipped, or local landscaped, areas for play – for play and informal recreation (LEAPs)	400	240
Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people (NEAPs)	1000	600





# Chapter 1: Introduction





# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 The Nature of this Publication

- 1.1.1 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' is a one-stop shop for those involved in providing facilities for outdoor sport and play, directed at both formal and informal use by all sections of the community.' This includes developers; planners; leisure, sport and play professionals; lawyers; surveyors and land agents; manufacturers and suppliers of sports and play equipment and facilities; landscape architects and, last but not least, the public at large. The publication concentrates on planning, particularly on standards and policy, and design principles and practice.
- 1.1.2 This document is multidisciplinary in nature, focusing on the provision, improvement and protection of these facilities in the context of open space provision more generally. It is concerned with local facilities in existing and new settlements, whether in urban or rural areas.
- 1.1.3 Much has changed in the planning system since the 'The Six Acre Standard' was last published in 2001. There is a much increased awareness of contemporary issues, including health and activity and the role of children's play in the personal development of every child. The new planning framework and guidance are guided by local community strategies which fulfil the 'well-being' obligations in the Local Government Act 2000.
- 1.1.4 New planning guidance has been put out to consultation or published as policy in different ways in the different countries of the United Kingdom. New planning legislation has been introduced, for example, in England. If we focus simply on standards, there has been long-standing criticism of the 'The Six Acre Standard' for dealing only with quantitative issues, even though this was never in fact the case for quality and accessibility have been on Fields in Trust's agenda since the NPFA was formed in 1925. There is now, however, a much clearer lead from all Governments in the United Kingdom that quantity, quality and accessibility all work together in the context of planning and standards of provision.
- 1.1.5 Against this background it was decided to rewrite Fields in Trust's recommendations on outdoor playing space. The criteria we set ourselves to guide the content of this new document was that it should be up to date, robust and soundly based, acceptable across the relevant professions, practical and useful, taking account of current law, policy and practice.

## 1.2 Moving Forward from the 'The Six Acre Standard'

- 1.2.1 The historical development of Fields in Trust's recommendations on standards and design for outdoor playing space, commonly referred to as 'The Six Acre Standard', is summarised in Appendix 1.
- 1.2.2 The planning landscape has changed considerably since the 2001 version of that document. Planning policy in terms of guidance and statements on open space, sport and recreation varies throughout the UK. This document takes its lead from planning legislation and policy in England, though acknowledgement will be made to some of the sibling legislation and guidance in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. For comparison, the underlying principles in each nation are given below.
- In England, PPG17, last revised in 2002, is set within the context of the Government's broader planning objectives, relating to urban renaissance, rural renewal, social inclusion and social cohesion, health and well-being and sustainable development
  - In Northern Ireland PPS8 sets out planning policies for the protection of open space, the provision of new areas of open space in association with residential development and the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation. It embodies the Government's commitment to sustainable development, to the promotion of a more active and healthy lifestyle and to the conservation of biodiversity

- In Scotland, SPP11 concentrates on the strategic role and importance of open space in the wider policy and legislative context of the Land Reform Act (2003) and the Scottish Executive's agenda for health improvement and increased physical activity. Recognition is given to the different challenges, opportunities and needs in rural as well as urban areas
- In Wales, TAN 16 looks at the contributions planning policies for sport, recreation and open space can make to economic development, the conservation of Wales' natural assets and the health, well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities. TAN 16 makes strong reference to the needs of young people and the significance of children's development through play.

1.2.3 Different approaches to standards are taken and these are significant.

- In England, PPG17 relies exclusively on local standards
- In Scotland, the published draft revision of SPP11 introduced minimum standards for open space in new developments for the first time varying the standards according to the type of development. However, these proposals were dropped in favour of local standards in the approved published policy of the new Scottish Government elected in 2007
- In Northern Ireland, PPS8 identifies the normal requirement for open space as 10% to 15% of the total area dependent on the site size
- In Wales, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Sections 11.1 and 11.2, supported by TAN 16 calls for locally generated standards, though it clearly recognises the helpful contribution that 'The Six Acre Standard' can make to local planning authorities formulating their own standards of provision.

1.2.4 Fields in Trust recognises the need for standards relating to quantity, quality and accessibility. Fields in Trust is aware that 'The Six Acre Standard' has been, and remains, very useful to many planning authorities, developers and communities throughout the United Kingdom. For this reason, Fields in Trust is somewhat critical of PPG17 and its companion guide in England for the Department for Communities and Local Government has sought, albeit unsuccessfully, to remove Field in Trust's recommendations from the planning landscape. Fields in Trust emphasises that it does not call for slavish adherence to its own standards. It wants them to be properly considered, as one of a number of helpful tools, in the process of determining local standards.

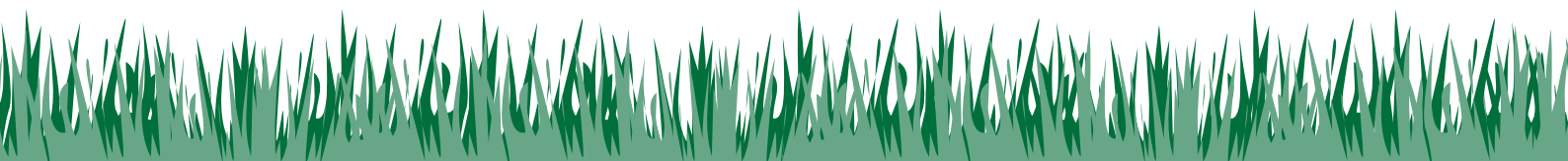
## 1.3 The Policy Context

1.3.1 The need for well planned and designed land and facilities for sport, play and informal open space use of all kinds needs to be seen in the context of Government's broader policy agenda. The key focus is sustainability, but consideration is also given below to other agendas such as those relating to health and physical activity, children and liveability.

1.3.2 The Sustainability Agenda

New priorities have been identified by Governments across the 4 nations. The provision of outdoor playing space and facilities for outdoor sport and play need to be assessed in the context of sustainability issues. Sustainability will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapters, but some of the impacts on provision which need to be considered are:

- The need for active travel and active design (see definitions below), as promoted by Sport England
- The recognition of the more efficient use of land through higher density development but also ensuring adequate provision of open space at all times
- The protection and enhancement of open space for use by the community at large, for both formal and informal recreation, and for other purposes including biodiversity, natural habitats, amenity and landscape
- The recognition of the importance of green spaces in coming to terms with the effects of climate change
- The preservation of open space in our towns and cities by encouraging the prior use of brownfield, urban fringe or green belt sites for development
- The value of recreational green space needs to be protected for future generations in a changing climate.



## Definitions

Active design is a set of design guidelines produced by Sport England to promote opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and layout of development. The guidance promotes sport and activity through the three key Active Design principles of improving accessibility, enhancing amenity and increasing awareness.

*Active travel is travel by walking, jogging, cycling or otherwise moving and travelling without motorised assistance.*

## Key Points

- Outdoor playing space provision needs to be generated in a sustainable manner, in terms of planning and design and the construction methods and materials employed
- Long-term operational viability and sustainability are also imperative
- A long-term view is essential and land and facilities need protecting through planning, charity and contract law.

### 1.3.3 The Health and Physical Activity Agenda

The 2005 Department of Health report 'Choosing Activity – a physical activity action plan' lays out the Government's commitment to increasing physical activity in line with the Chief Medical Officer's recommendations. This specifically helps to fight the obesity crisis. The action plan recommendations include:

- A total of 60 minutes of at least moderately intensive physical exercise daily for children and young people
- 30 minutes a day of at least moderately intensive exercise for adults on 5 or more days of the week.

## Key points

- The physical and cultural landscape is changing and the environment needs shaping to encourage more active lifestyles
- Choice and a range of options are needed so that people can be active on a daily basis
- Everyday activity needs building into daily routines such as walking to the shops and cycling to school, and choice to participate in a wide range of leisure-time, sport, play and recreation activities.

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) offers more recent guidance on public health in the context of physical activity and the environment, namely 'Guidance on the promotion and creation of physical environments that support increased levels of physical activity' (2008).

## Key points

- Planning applications for new developments to prioritise the need for people to be physically more active, as a routine part of daily life
- Pedestrians, cyclists and users of other modes of transport involving physical activity to be given highest priority when designing and maintaining streets
- New workplaces to be linked to walking and cycling routes.

### 1.3.4 The Community Safety and Tolerance Agenda

The Respect programme was introduced as the Government's initiative to tackle anti-social behaviour by creating neighbourhoods 'where people feel confident, safe and supported' and 'where people will be able to come together with others in the neighbourhood to build trust, share values and agree what is acceptable behaviour'.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families launched the staying safe consultation in the summer of 2007. This initiative recognised that:

- Keeping children and young people safe is a top priority
- Childhood has changed but children still need to thrive and develop

- Staying safe is vital to health and well-being
- Children still need time for learning, exploring, playing and doing positive activities.

The Staying Safe Action Plan (2008) sets out the work the Government is to take forward over the next three years to drive improvements in children and young people's safety.

'The National Community Safety Plan 2008-2011 (published 2007) sets out the Government's community safety policies. Key themes include:

- Making communities stronger and more effective
- Further reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, and building a culture of respect
- Protecting the public and building confidence
- Improving people's lives so they are less likely to commit offences or re-offend.

### **Key Points**

- A poor physical environment is associated with fear of crime and neglect by authorities leading to the public withdrawing from public spaces and a spiral of decline
- Public services need to respond quickly to signals of neglect, such as broken windows, litter and abandoned cars, before problems multiply
- Taking part in sport, constructive activities and volunteering has a long-term beneficial effect on young people's lives helping self esteem and personal development, encouraging new perspectives, interests and aspirations, and promoting positive involvement in community and national life.

#### 1.3.5 The Education Agenda

The Government's 'Every Child Matters' programme now provides the framework for the delivery of all services to children. Its 5 outcomes are:

- To be healthy
- To stay safe
- To enjoy and achieve
- To make a positive contribution
- To achieve economic well-being.

Reference is made to children's recreation in the context of enjoyment.

The extended schools agenda should result in more opportunities for use of school premises than hitherto and the Government also plans to offer children at least 5 hours of sport a week by 2010, two in the curriculum and two outside of school hours.

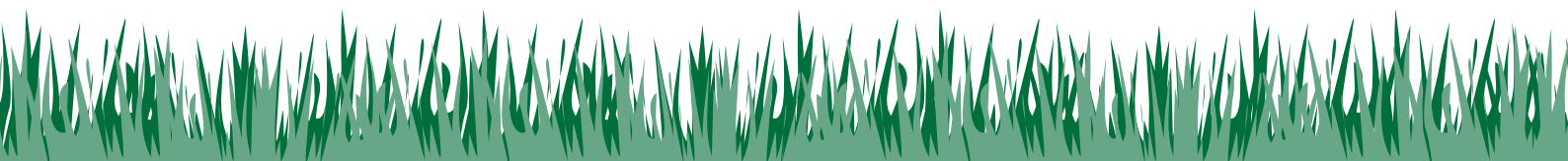
The Government is investing in new school facilities to a greater extent than ever before.

### **Key Points**

- The extended schools initiative intends to make more resources available 'so that by 2010 all secondary schools will be open from 8 am to 6 pm all year round'.
- The Building Schools for the Future programme will be the main vehicle for investment in sport and other leisure time facilities in coming years, though arrangements need putting in place for community use.
- The Building Schools for the Future and City Academies programmes bring forward the prospect of increasing disposals of school grounds, particularly playing fields.

#### 1.3.6 The Liveability Agenda

The 'Living Places' document sets out the Government's approach to making cleaner, safer, greener public spaces. It conveys the message 'that everyone has a right to good parks and green spaces close to his or her home or place of work', echoing one of the key messages given out by the NPFA when it was established in 1925.



The provision of green spaces and play space for children will be particularly important in the context of the Housing and Communities agency's commitment to build 3 million houses by 2020.

The Government is committed to the creation of networks of accessible, high quality parks and diverse green spaces in all towns and cities. Green space objectives will be best achieved by partnerships including those involved with regeneration, neighbourhood renewal, crime reduction, promoting cycling and walking, combating obesity, promoting preventative healthcare, providing safer routes to school and building citizenship and neighbourhood pride.

### Key Points

- The quality of public space, real or perceived, plays a vital role in the vicious or virtuous cycles which characterise communities on the up, in decline or in recovery; high quality green spaces go a long way to encouraging people to use facilities positively and actively
- Playing spaces are part of a continuum of green space infrastructure which delivers environmental and other benefits alongside its recreational role
- There is a strong relationship between levels of deprivation in an area and the condition of the local environment; facilities such as parks and play areas tend to be worse and less accessible in deprived areas
- Child and pedestrian deaths are more common in deprived areas.

#### 1.3.7 The Sport for Sport's Sake Agenda

At the end of November 2007, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport gave a landmark speech to the Youth Sports Trust School and Sports Partnership Conference. Reference was made to the government's promises made when London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games. Those promises included a commitment to helping provide a world class school sport system, a world class community sport system and a world class elite sport system. The pressing need was to concentrate on the community system based on the clear understanding that sport matters in itself and that competitive sport is a good thing. Sport can be promoted on educational grounds, health grounds, and justice grounds but it can stand alone as a matter of passion, activity, competition and fun, about winning and losing and being part of a team effort.

### Key points

- World class community sport is a valid objective for government
- Sport is important in its own right
- Competition through sport is a good thing
- Facilities, coaches, volunteers, development programmes and funding packages all go together
- The greatest virtue of sport is found in the sheer joy of playing and competing.

#### 1.3.8 The Agenda for Children's Play

In December 2007, the Rt Hon Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families made an announcement to Parliament concerning the government's 'Children's Plan'. Important, specific references were made to children's play including parents' regret that their children no longer play out as they did when young because of safety worries; concerns about healthy lifestyles and lack of healthy activity impacted on by sedentary, home-based interests and poor diet. The need for positive independent play was acknowledged and funds earmarked for the provision of stimulating, dedicated outdoor play facilities. A national play strategy was promised for 2008 and this will provide the national infrastructure to support the local authority-wide play delivery strategies being promoted and assisted by Play England.

### Key Points

- Play is important in its own right in regard to the development of children
- Play contributes significantly to other agendas, including health
- Play out of doors is important
- Play should be relatively safe, stimulating and enjoyable
- Play deserves Government recognition and resources.

## 1.4 The Value of National Standards

1.4.1 For too long, standards have only been associated with spatial provision of different forms of open space per 1000 population. Certainly since the 1980s, the NPFA, now Fields in Trust, has been consistent regarding the importance of standards and recommendations relating to quality and accessibility. Today, the importance of all three types of standard are recognised throughout the United Kingdom.

1.4.2 Standards are clearly useful but they can be of limited value if, for example, they are applied to geographical areas inappropriately or on the basis of unreliably collected and interpreted data. The use of standards is not an exact science but too often it is regarded as such.

1.4.3 National standards are helpful in determining local standards and measurement against them allows local authorities to benchmark provision within their own administrative areas and with other authorities with similar population profiles. Some of the benefits and disadvantages of standards are listed below.

1.4.4 Benefits of National Standards:

- A starting point for locally determined standards
- A benchmark for levels of provision within and outside a local authority's area
- Relative ease of understanding and application
- A cost-effective use of limited resources compared with exhaustive local studies, particularly when poorly designed or implemented
- A fair and equitable foundation for ensuring appropriate provision throughout the community
- A useful tool for providing clarity within the planning system for authorities, developers and the community in terms of negotiating provision in new developments
- A resource for the protection of particular forms of provision
- A tool for supporting the case for better quality provision and more accessible provision.

1.4.5 Disadvantages of National Standards:

- Not always based on sound empirical, local evidence
- Do not take account of local circumstances and differences not always adjusted in a timely manner in response to change
- Have a limiting effect on local consultation and engagement, and may not involve meaningful consultation with the public at large
- Applied inappropriately, such as for open space generally rather than outdoor playing space as now identified as desirable in national planning guidance
- Used as a crutch by planners and others
- Often applied with lack of clarity and uncertainty about minimum, desirable or optional levels of provision
- Minimum standards interpreted as maximum levels of provision.

1.4.6 It should be noted that some of the benefits and disadvantages apply equally to local standards as much as national standards.

1.4.7 National standards for outdoor playing space are used to encourage provision and its use. We are therefore dealing with children, young people and adults. It is arguable that a national standard is appropriate for children – play is a universal need. We also need to accept the limitations placed on children in terms of time allowed for play, whether they can go out alone, with friends, siblings or with adults, and the distances they are allowed to travel by their parents or others involved in their care. Play provision is not subject to supply and demand and should be available close to home, and at no cost. Fields in Trust accepts that all of these arguments do not apply in the same way to adults, though their need for very local provision remains paramount, particularly for the less mobile such as the disabled, the unwaged and those without private transport.





## 1.5 The Interrelationship of Quantity, Quality and Accessibility

1.5.1 Quantity, quality and accessibility standards for outdoor playing space and facility provision collectively drive the amount of use of that provision, impacting on the absolute numbers participating and the number of returning visitors. The diversity of recreational spaces also drives up the numbers benefiting – particularly in parks in our towns and cities, and in village recreation grounds or playing fields. Every small plot of green space has the capacity for diverse use, such as formal or informal play, enjoying nature and relaxation and providing places for walking and picnicking. These factors collectively have the potential to ensure good use of that precious resource called land; they encourage greater numbers to adopt an active lifestyle; and they also help people, young and old, to play and socialise with others. The quality of facilities needs to be high and maintenance and improvement must be attended to. Use and participation, whether for sport or play, is dependent on choice, location, quality and access. Downgrade any one of them and use and participation will start to dwindle. Long term protection, dealt with in detail in Chapter 7, is also of fundamental importance.

### 1.5.2 Quality and Children's Play Outdoors

In the 2004 report 'Getting Serious about Play', a review of children's play for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, play was described by the acronym VITAL. VITAL was shorthand for the common elements of successful play opportunities, whether outdoors or indoors, unsupervised or supervised. VITAL asserts that play should be:

- Value-based
- In the Right Place
- Top Quality
- Appropriate
- Long-term.

1.5.3 The publication 'Best Play', produced by FIT, the Children's Play Council and PLAYLINK (and also supported by Playboard Northern Ireland, Play Scotland and Play Wales) also addressed the question as to what play provision should do for children. Criteria for an enriched play environment were identified as:

- A varied and interesting physical environment
- Challenge in relation to the physical environment
- Playing with natural elements – earth, water, fire, air
- Movement such as running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing
- Manipulating natural and fabricated materials
- Stimulation of the five senses
- Experiencing change in the natural and built environment
- Social interaction
- Playing with identity
- Experiencing a range of emotions.

1.5.4 Play England is also producing advice entitled 'Play Indicators Project: Interim Guidance for Local Authorities'. This provides clear descriptions and definitions of the indicators, data sources and methods of collecting and analysing relevant data. Pilot work was carried out in Chelmsford, Kirklees, Manchester, Bolton, Kensington and Chelsea, and Bristol.

### 1.5.5 Quality and Outdoor Sport

Similar considerations apply to sport facilities. In 'Guidance on long-term recreational land protection', Sport England and Fields in Trust identified the following key factors:

- Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards
- Located where they are of most value to the community to be served
- Appropriately landscaped
- Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition within available finance
- Positive management, and
- The need for repair and replacement over time as necessary.

If factors such as those above are taken into account and incorporated as appropriate into quantity, quality and accessibility standards then such facilities will have the best chance of being valued and respected by owners, users, grant providers and the public alike. Protection, by public opinion and political will, also stands to be enhanced.

#### 1.5.6 Definitions of planning standards

PPG17 (2002) states that local authorities should set standards, which include:

- Quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed)
- A qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities), and
- Accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).

With the rider that the qualitative component should also be used to determine the nature of new facilities, Fields in Trust fully supports these definitions.

## 1.6 The Definition of Outdoor Playing Space

1.6.1 Outdoor playing space refers to land and facilities used for outdoor sport and play. While sport and play are the primary purposes for outdoor playing space, it also contributes importantly in terms of informal recreation, amenity, and biodiversity. It is important to recognise that outdoor playing space is not the same as open space, although, as just illustrated, it often provides for a variety of open space uses.

1.6.2 *The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 defines open space in Section 336 as 'any land laid out as a public garden or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground'. It does not define outdoor playing space.*

1.6.3 *Fields in Trust's definition of outdoor playing space is 'space that is accessible and available to the general public, and of a suitable size and nature, for sport, active recreation and play.'*

1.6.4 The priority is for land and facilities which provide a setting for physical activity, whether formal or informal, but this is not to the total disregard of more informal and passive activities and recreational pursuits. Where appropriate, multi-functionality is one of the most important attributes for open space, including environmental benefits and other benefits to the wider community. In 'Green Future', Alan Barber offers the CLERE Model as a codification of functions, pointing out that it is the multifunctionality of urban green spaces which makes the greatest demands on their good management.

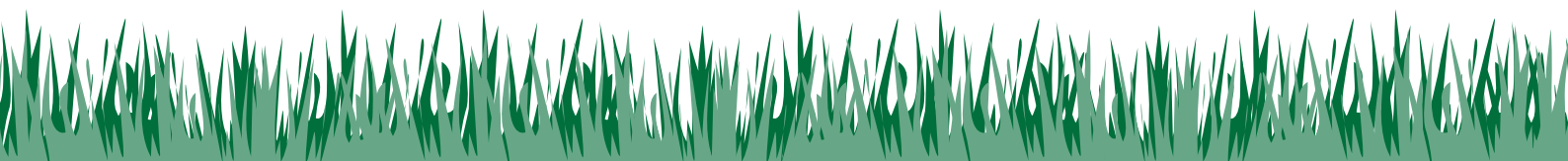
1.6.5 The CLERE Model for Multifunctional Urban Greenspace functions as:

- As an agent for Community development and education
- As Landscape to be conserved
- As an Ecosystem providing urban services
- As a Recreational resource for health and well-being
- As a contributor to the local Economy.

1.6.6 Facilities falling within the definition of outdoor playing space are:

- Facilities for pitch sports such as football, cricket or lacrosse, including training areas
- Facilities for other outdoor sports, such as bowls, athletics and tennis, including training areas
- Designated areas for children's play containing a range of facilities and an environment designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play, including play areas and playgrounds of all kinds
- Amenity open space suitable for casual or informal play, particularly in housing areas
- Facilities for teenagers and young people.

1.6.7 Sports facilities in the ownership of local authorities at all tiers, and the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, and sports clubs are included, provided they meet the leisure time needs of the public or their members.



- 1.6.8 It should be noted that, consistent with the approach to playing pitch strategies taken by Sport England, and the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999, artificial pitches are counted as covering twice the area of natural turf because of their capacity for more intensive use.
- 1.6.9 Such facilities in the education sector and those in the ownership of the Defence Estates are specifically excluded unless they are available for public use by written agreement. The informal or unauthorised use of such facilities by the public falls outside of the definition.
- 1.6.10 Below a list is provided of facilities or land that should be excluded from the definition of outdoor playing space. Notwithstanding their exclusion from the definition, they can make a valuable contribution to the total recreational provision of communities, particularly those that are deficient in recreational space generally. However, such facilities or land should not be regarded as substitutes for elements of outdoor playing space as defined in Paragraph 1.6.6.
- Outdoor sports facilities which are not as a matter of policy and practice available for public use, including grounds of Her Majesty's Services, educational facilities and professional sports stadia
  - Verges, woodlands, commons, the seashore, nature conservation areas, allotment ornamental gardens and parks (except for clearly defined areas within them for sports, games, practice and play)
  - Golf facilities
  - Water used for recreation, except where it forms an interactive feature of an outdoor play area
  - Sports halls or leisure centres and other indoor provision
  - Commercial entertainment complexes and theme parks
  - Car parks for non-recreational users.

## Reading and References

'The Six Acre Standard' National Playing Fields Association (2001)

'Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'  
Department of Communities and Local Government (formerly Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at the time of publication) (2002)

'Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17'  
(formerly Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at the time of publication) (2002)

'Planning Policy Statement 8 (PPS8) Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation (2004)'  
Department of the Environment, Northern Ireland (2004)

'Consultation on Scottish Planning Policy 11: Physical Activity and Open Space (2006)'  
Scottish Executive, Development Department, Planning Division (2006)

'Scottish Planning Policy: SPP11 Open Space and Physical Activity' Scottish Executive (2007)

'Planning Policy Wales', Welsh assembly government (2006)

'Technical Advice Note 16, Sport, Recreation and Open Space', a draft for consultation,  
Planning Division, Welsh Assembly Government, (2006)

'Green Future', Alan Barber, Green-Space (2005)

'Choosing Activity – a physical activity action plan' Department of Health (2005)

'Building Health: Creating and enhancing places for healthy, active lives: What needs to be done?'  
National Heart Forum, Living Streets and CABE (2007) – refer in particular to the chapters by Alan Barber on 'Urban Green Space' and Don Earley on 'Outdoor Playing Space'

'The Foresight study' Human Nutrition Research Unit, Cambridge (2007)

'No Fear: Growing up in a Risk Averse Society' Tim Gill, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (2007)

'The Respect Action Plan' Home Office (2006)

'Ten Year Youth Strategy' Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007)

'The National Community Safety Plan' Home Office (2005)

'Every Child Matters – Change for Children' Department for Education and Skills (2004)

For other ECM documents go to the web site below.

For Building Schools for the Future Documents go to the BSF' web site below.

'Government Response to ODPM Select Committee Report on Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener. (2003)

'World Class Community Sport' speech by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to the Youth Sports Trust School and Sports Partnership Conference (November 2007)

Statement to Parliament on 'The Children's Plan' by the Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families (December 2007)

'Staying Safe: Action Plan', DCSF-00151-2008, Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008)

'The National Community Safety Plan 2009-2011' the Home Office (2007)

'Getting Serious About Play – a review of children's play', Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2004)

'Best Play' – National Playing Fields Association, PLAYLINK and the Children's Play Council (2000)

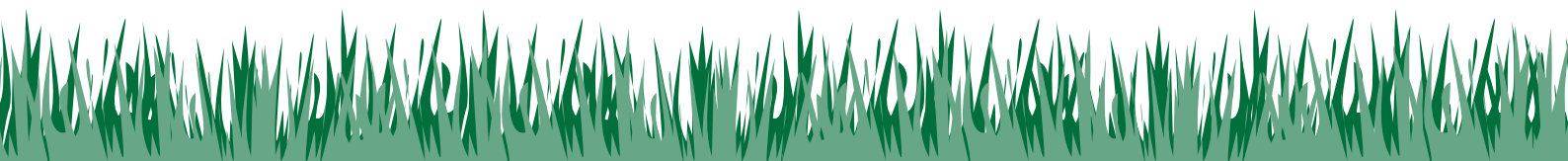
'Play Indicators Project: Interim Guidance for local authorities': draft document, not published at the time of going to print, Play England (2008)

'Making the Case for Play' Tim Gill and Issy Cole Hamilton, Children's Play Council (2002)

'Guidance on Long Term Land Protection' Don Earley, Sport England and the National Playing Fields Association (2002)

Barber, A. 'Green Future: a study of the management of multifunctional urban green spaces in England' Alan Barber, published by GreenSpace (2005)

'The Town and Country Planning Act 1990' The Stationery Office Limited



# Websites

Fields in Trust

[www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org)

## Government planning sites for the four nations

Department for Communities and  
Local Government  
Department of Environment, Northern Ireland  
Scottish Executive  
Wales Assembly

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

[www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)  
[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

## Other government sites in England

Department of Culture, Media and Sport  
Department for Health  
Home Office  
  
Department for Children, Schools and Families

[www.culture.gov.uk](http://www.culture.gov.uk)  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)  
[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)  
[www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)  
[www.dcf.gov.uk](http://www.dcf.gov.uk)  
[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)  
[www.bsf.gov.uk](http://www.bsf.gov.uk)

## National Sports Councils

Sport England  
Sports Council for Northern Ireland  
Sportscotland  
Sports Council for Wales

[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)  
[www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)  
[www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)  
[www.sports-council-wales.org.uk](http://www.sports-council-wales.org.uk)

## National Play Councils

Play England  
Playboard Northern Ireland  
Play Scotland  
Play Wales

[www.playengland.org](http://www.playengland.org)  
[www.playboard.org](http://www.playboard.org)  
[www.playscotland.org](http://www.playscotland.org)  
[www.playwales.org.uk](http://www.playwales.org.uk)



# Chapter 2:

## Planning Policy and the Legal Framework



# Chapter 2: Planning Policy and the Legal Framework

This Chapter is written in the context of planning legislation, policy and practice in England. It is based on information taken from the Government's planning portal. There are variations in other United Kingdom countries and details can be accessed via their websites, given below.

## 2.1 The Strategic Framework

- 2.1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) goal is that places and communities will be planned, built, upgraded and managed in a way which respects and sustains the global, national and local environments. DCLG is responsible for planning in England. It states that sustainable development principles will be firmly embedded into DCLG's identity, culture, policies, programmes and operations.
- 2.1.2 England is one of the most crowded countries in the world. Over 90% of the population lives in urban areas covering just 8% of the land area. Decisions relating to the future planning of our towns, cities and countryside are very important. Good planning contributes to urban and rural regeneration and helps to ensure that people have decent, affordable homes in well-designed, accessible environments whilst safeguarding our open spaces and countryside. It is essential that there is an effective planning system to achieve the over-arching aim of creating sustainable communities.
- 2.1.3 The planning system is being reformed with a view to making it simpler, faster and more accessible. The policy statement Sustainable Communities: delivering through planning (2002), sets out the Government's aims. The reforms seek to change the culture of planning, making it a positive tool to steer development actively to the benefit of everyone. The Department for Communities and Local Government Housing Green Paper, 'Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable', sought views on the Government's proposals to increase the supply of housing, to provide well designed and greener homes that are supported by infrastructure and to provide more affordable homes to buy or let. Paragraphs 15 to 18, page 61, make reference to parks and greenspaces, the Green Flag Award Scheme, the role of CABE Space, PPG17, green space funding responses to the Barker Review and the provision of green space as a key component in Growth Areas and the new Growth Points programme.
- 2.1.4 England has a plan-led system, with national planning policy set by DCLG. Draft plans are produced by local planning authorities. Local authorities also have responsibility for decisions on planning applications for new buildings or changes to existing buildings or the local environment. Appeals against refusal of planning permission and inquiries into draft plans are dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate – see the Planning Inspectorate website.
- 2.1.5 The DCLG's Planning Portal gives information on planning guidance and policy documents, research and statistics and links to other related sites which further explain the planning system.
- 2.1.6 The new plan system was introduced by the government by 'The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004'. A two-tier system is now used, comprising:
- Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) – these are prepared by regional planning bodies, except in London where the spatial development strategy is prepared by the Mayor of London; they set out broad spatial planning policies for how each region should develop over the next 15 to 20 years or so
  - Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) – used in conjunction with the Regional Spatial Strategies, these determine how the planning system helps shape the community and comprise a series of documents as described below. Appendix B gives further background on Local Development Framework documentation.
- 2.1.7 Great emphasis is placed by the Government on public participation in the planning process. Each planning authority is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement, setting out how communities can contribute to and participate in the revision of planning documents and consideration of planning applications.

## 2.2 Planning Policy – Planning Policy Statements and Guidance

- 2.2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government determines national policies on different aspects of planning and the rules governing the operation of the system. National Planning policies are set out in new-style Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), which are gradually replacing Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs). PPSs and PPGs of particular significance to planning for outdoor playing space are summarised below.
- 2.2.2 Government policies set out in PPSs and PPGs need to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of regional spatial strategies, by the Mayor of London in relation to the spatial development strategy in London, and by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development documents. They may also be material to decisions on individual planning applications.
- 2.2.3 The emergence of new policy occurs at an ever increasing rate. The Government has also embarked upon a programme of replacing planning policy guidance with planning policy statements. It is therefore advisable to check the relevant government web site (currently [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk) in England) to ensure that the information given here remains current or, if not, to locate replacement information.

### PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)

- 2.2.4 This deals with the government's objectives for the planning system, the key principles behind national planning policies to ensure that local plans and decisions taken on planning applications contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, and planning for and delivering sustainable development. Government policies on matters such as social cohesion and inclusion, protection and enhancement of the environment, prudent use of national resources, design and community involvement are addressed. All of these are of significance to planning for outdoor playing space. Specific reference is made to accessibility, in terms of location and physical access, for all members of the public to leisure and community facilities; to the delivery of safe, healthy and attractive places to live, and making provision for healthy activity.

### PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)

- 2.2.5 PPG17 provides the most detailed guidance on Government policy in respect of land and facilities for outdoor sport and play. Its key planning objectives (paragraph 1) are concerned with:
- Supporting an urban renaissance
  - Supporting a rural renewal
  - Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
  - Health and well being
  - Promoting more sustainable development.
- 2.2.6 The need for robust local assessments of needs and opportunities, normally undertaken at a district level, is emphasised. Paragraph 2 states 'As a minimum, assessments of need should cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population for open space and built sports facilities'. Reference is made to the definition of open space and a typology of open space types is given. Specific reference is made in this to parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space and provision for children and teenagers, all of which may fall within the definition of outdoor playing space, depending on facilities provided and the nature of use.
- 2.2.7 The audits should cover accessibility, quantity and quality (paragraph 3). They should lead to identification of specific needs, quantitative and qualitative deficiencies or surpluses (paragraph 4). The assessments and audits should lead to clear strategies supported by effective planning policies (paragraph 5).
- 2.2.8 In paragraphs 6-9, PPG17 is unequivocal in its support for locally set standards and the need to cater for local circumstances, area specific demographic profiles and existing facilities in the area concerned. Local standards should include qualitative and quantitative elements and accessibility. Standards are to be included in local plans.



- 2.2.9 Paragraph 10 seeks to protect facilities unless they can be shown to be 'surplus to requirements'. For open space, this is stated to include 'consideration of all the functions that open space can perform'. Local authorities are charged with undertaking robust and up-to-date assessments. In the absence of such an assessment however, an applicant may seek to demonstrate through an independent assessment, that land or buildings are surplus to requirements. Developers must consult the local community and demonstrate that their proposals are widely supported by local stakeholders.
- 2.2.10 Development may provide an opportunity for remedying deficiencies in provision (paragraph 12) or an opportunity to exchange one site for another, provided the new site is at least as accessible and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality. Qualitative improvements should be the aim where possible (paragraph 13).
- 2.2.11 Paragraph 15 gives specific policies regarding development on playing fields. It states that in the absence of an assessment of need, planning authorities should give very careful consideration to planning applications for development on playing fields and where no such assessment has been undertaken, development should not be allowed unless:
- The proposed development is ancillary to the use of the site as a playing field (eg new changing rooms) and does not adversely affect the quantity or quality of pitches and their use
  - The proposed development only affects land which is incapable of forming a playing pitch (or part of one)
  - The playing fields that would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field or fields of equivalent or better quantity and quality and in a suitable location
  - The proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh the loss of the playing field.
- In the context of developments within open spaces, warning is given against incremental loss and insensitive development (paragraphs 16 and 17).
- 2.2.12 Paragraphs 18 and 19 give guidance on enhancing existing open space and sport and recreational facilities. It is stated clearly that because land and facilities are of poor quality and under-used, it should not be taken that they are unwanted or that there is an absence of need in the area. Consideration should be given to the compatibility of recreational use to adjoining land uses, encouragement to better accessibility and promotion of better use by good design. Planning authorities are charged with protecting local amenity when considering applications for floodlighting.
- 2.2.13 Paragraphs 20 to 32 deal with planning for new open space and sports and recreational facilities. General principles are given in paragraph 21 including promoting accessibility by active travel and for those with disabilities, improving the quality of the public realm by good design, providing open space areas in commercial and industrial areas, and considering security and personal safety especially for children.
- 2.2.14 Provision is to be made for local facilities (through new facilities or by enhancing existing ones) where planning permission is granted for new developments (paragraph 23). Planning obligations are to be used where appropriate. These are discussed later.
- 2.2.15 In planning for new open spaces, authorities should seek to improve the local open space network, create public open space from vacant land and incorporate open space within developments on previously used land (paragraph 24). The urban fringe can be a valuable resource for sport and recreation where insufficient land is available within urban areas to meet need. Facilities should be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport as alternatives to car use (paragraph 25).
- 2.2.16 Local facilities in rural areas should be located in, or adjacent to, villages. Larger facilities should be located in, or on the edge, of country towns. Care and sensitivity need to be given to location. Special justification is needed for facilities in open countryside, though proposals for farm diversification should be given favourable consideration.

- 2.2.17 Paragraphs 27 to 30 deal with sports and recreation provision in designated areas, including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest ('in or near' in this case) and Green Belts. In regard to the latter, planning permission should be granted for proposals to establish or modernise facilities where the openness of the Green Belt is maintained. Development should be the minimum necessary and non-essential facilities treated as inappropriate.
- 2.2.18 Paragraph 33 encourages the use of planning obligations to meet local quantitative or qualitative deficiencies of provision. Authorities may seek obligations where the provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs. Assessments of local needs and the setting of appropriate standards are needed to justify obligations.
- 2.2.19 The Annex to PPG17 refers to the definition of open space used in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground. However, in applying the policies in PPG17, open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

### Assessing Needs and Opportunities: a Companion Guide to PPG17 (2002)

- 2.2.20 This Guide reflects the Government's policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation, as set out in Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17). The long term outcomes PPG17 aims to deliver are stated as:
- Networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities, in both urban and rural areas, which meet the needs of residents and visitors, are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable
  - An appropriate balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision
  - Clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and land owners in relation to the requirements and expectations of local planning authorities in respect of open space and sport and recreation provision.
- 2.2.21 The Guide seeks to build on examples of good planning practice, whilst also taking account of the recommendations of the (then) Government's Urban Green Spaces Taskforce and the need for local authorities to prepare Community and Cultural Strategies. It set out how local authorities can use the planning system to help deliver accessible, high quality and sustainable open spaces and sport and recreation facilities meeting local needs and valued by local communities.
- 2.2.22 The Guide was presented in four main parts:
- *Guiding Principles and Concepts* underpinning the effective planning and delivery of accessible, high quality and sustainable open spaces and sport and recreation facilities
  - A five-step process which authorities can follow when undertaking *Local Assessments*
  - A suggested framework for the *Implementation* of policies and provision standards through the development control process
  - *Tools and Techniques* which local authorities may find useful when undertaking assessments and drafting policies.

### PPG2: Green Belt (2001)

- 2.2.23 There are five purposes of land in Green Belts:
- Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
  - Preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another
  - Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
  - Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns
  - Assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.



Once Green Belts have been defined, the use of land in them has a positive role to play in fulfilling a number of objectives including:

- Providing opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population
- Providing opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas
- Retaining attractive landscapes and enhance landscapes near to where people live.

2.2.24 The extent to which the use of land fulfils these objectives is however not itself a material factor in the inclusion of land within a Green Belt, or in its continued protection. The purposes of including land in Green Belts are of paramount importance to their continued protection and take precedence over the land use objectives.

2.2.25 In regard to the construction of new buildings, it is inappropriate unless it is for one of a number of stated exceptions. Included as permissible are essential facilities for sport and recreation, for cemeteries and for other uses of land provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. The visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within, or conspicuous from the Green Belt which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

### **PPS3: Housing (2006)**

2.2.26 PPS3 underpins the delivery of the Government's strategic housing policy objectives and its goal of ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. It is concerned with the development of high quality housing on a sustainable basis within the context of a strategic approach, responsiveness to the market and collaborative working, justified on an evidence-based modus operandi.

2.2.27 In achieving high quality housing residential environments, consideration is to be given to creating places, streets and spaces to meet local needs which are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, having their own identity and maintaining and improving local character. Designs and layouts are to make efficient and effective use of land and innovation is encouraged.

2.2.28 Good design quality will include consideration of providing, or enabling good access to, 'community and green and open amenity and recreational space (and play space) as well as private outdoor space such as residential gardens, patios and balconies'. PPS3 calls for a design-led approach to the provision of car-parking space, that is well integrated with a high quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, child and vehicle friendly'. Biodiversity is also to be retained or re-established.

2.2.29 Where family housing is concerned, the needs of children are to be taken into account and there should be 'good provision of recreational areas, including private gardens, play areas and informal play space'. These are to be well-designed, safe, secure and stimulating, with safe pedestrian access.

2.2.30 A key objective is for planning authorities to make effective use of the land resource, by re-using land that has been previously developed and contributing to the national target, of 60% of new housing to be provided on previously developed sites, which includes land and buildings which are vacant or derelict, or in use but has potential for re-development.

### **PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (Consultation Paper)**

2.2.31 This sets out how planning authorities should, in the wider context of economic development, plan positively for sustainable growth and respond to the challenges of the global economy in their plan policies and planning decisions. Little reference is made in the draft to sport and recreation, though cycling, walking and other modes of sustainable transport are encouraged. It would be beneficial if recognition were given to the contribution made by sport, recreation and play to economic development, including for example commercially operated 5-a-side football initiatives, particularly where they offer free or subsidised use to children and young people, whether in or out of school.



2.2.32 Planning authorities should have regard to 'the current and future infrastructure, services and facilities such as public and private amenity space, in particular green and open space'.

**PPS6: Planning for Town Centres (2005)**

2.2.33 PPS6 covers town centres and town centre uses by promoting their vitality and viability, growth and development. These uses include the provision of leisure, entertainment and more intensive recreation facilities.

2.2.34 Among Government's wider policy objectives referenced are:

- Promoting high quality and inclusive design
- Improving the quality of the public realm and open spaces
- Providing a sense of place and a focus for civic activity
- Ensuring that town centres provide an attractive, accessible and safe environment for businesses, shoppers and residents.

**PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004)**

2.2.35 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.

2.2.36 The Government's objectives for rural areas are concerned with raising the quality of life and the environment, promoting sustainable patterns of development, improving economic performance and promoting a sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural sector.

2.2.37 People who live or work in rural areas should have reasonable access to a range of community services and facilities. Local planning authorities should, where possible, ensure that new development is supported through improvements to public transport and to walking and cycling facilities. They should also identify suitable buildings and development sites for community services and facilities to meet the needs of the whole community, including disabled users. Reference is also made to support for the provision of small-scale, local facilities (e.g. childcare facilities) to meet community needs outside identified local service centres, particularly where they would benefit those rural residents who would find it difficult to use more distant service centres. These local facilities should be located within, or adjacent to, existing villages and settlements where access can be gained by walking, cycling and (where available) public transport.

2.2.38 In countryside around urban areas, while the policies in PPG2 continue to apply in Green Belts, local planning authorities should ensure that planning policies in Local Development Documents address the particular land use issues and opportunities to be found in the countryside around all urban areas, recognising its importance to those who live or work there, and also in providing the nearest and most accessible countryside to urban residents.

2.2.39 Planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of this land, whilst reducing potential conflicts between neighbouring land uses. This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through support for country parks and community forests) and facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities.

**PPG8: Telecommunications (2001)**

2.2.40 PPG8 gives guidance on planning for telecommunications development – including radio masts and towers, antennas of all kinds, radio equipment housing, public call boxes, cabinets, poles and overhead wires.

2.2.41 This is set against Government policy which is to facilitate the growth of new and existing telecommunications systems, whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. The Government also has responsibility for protecting public health.





- 2.2.42 The statement sets out more detailed national guidance and addresses issues, including the need for annual 'pre-roll out' discussions between local planning authorities and communications operators. Guidance is also given on pre-application discussions, consultation and publicity, environmental considerations, mast and site sharing, design, health considerations and compatibility with other developments.
- 2.2.43 In the light of the increasing numbers of telecommunications structures on playing fields, recreation and sports grounds, FIT has published its own policy and advice and this is available on the website.

### **PPS 9: Biodiversity and Geographical Conservation (2005)**

- 2.2.44 This sets out planning policies on the protection of biodiversity and geographical conservation, through the planning system, based on key principles to be adhered to by regional planning bodies and local planning authorities. The principles include the need for up-to-date information, appropriate weighting for sites of international, national and local importance, and policies promoting opportunities for incorporating beneficial diversity and geographical features, within the design of development.

### **PPS 11: Regional Spatial Strategies (2004)**

- 2.2.45 PPS11 sets out the procedural policy on Regional Spatial Strategies, which are considered earlier in this chapter.

### **PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks (2004)**

- 2.2.46 PPS12 sets out the Government's policy on the preparation of local development documents which will comprise the local development framework. More detail on LDFs is given in Appendix B.

### **PPG 13: Transport (2001)**

- 2.2.47 PPG13's objectives are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local levels and to promote more sustainable transport choices, both for carrying people and for moving freight.
- 2.2.48 Land use planning has a key role in delivering the Government's integrated transport strategy. By shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land uses, planning can help to reduce the need to travel, reduce the length of journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking, and cycling. Government policy is also concerned with congestion and pollution and achieving better access to development and facilities.
- 2.2.49 The objectives of PPG13 are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local levels to:
- Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and freight
  - Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling
  - Reduce the need to travel, especially by car.
- 2.2.50 Other matters relevant to sport, play and recreation are to:
- Ensure that development comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services, offer a realistic choice of access by public transport, walking, and cycling, recognising that this may be less achievable in some rural areas
  - Give priority to people over ease of traffic movement and plan to provide more road space to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in town centres, local neighbourhoods and other areas with a mixture of land uses

- Ensure that the needs of disabled people as pedestrians, public transport users and motorists – are taken into account in the implementation of planning policies and traffic management schemes, and in the design of individual developments
- Consider how best to reduce crime and the fear of crime and seek, by the design and layout of developments and areas, to secure community safety and road safety.

2.2.51 PPG13 states unequivocally that people should come before traffic. Places that work well are designed to be used safely and securely by all in the community, frequently for a wide range of purposes and throughout the day and evening. Local authorities in partnership with the police should promote designs and layouts which are safe (both in terms of road safety and personal security) and take account of crime prevention and community safety considerations.

2.2.52 FIT has published its own advice on the use of Home Zones by children at play and described in Chapter 5 on 'Planning and Design Principles'.

#### **PPG24: Planning and Noise**

2.2.53 PPG24 guides local authorities on the use of planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise. It outlines considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications both for noise-sensitive developments and for those activities which generate noise. It explains the concept of noise exposure categories for residential development and recommends appropriate levels for exposure to different sources of noise.

2.2.54 Noise can have a significant effect on the environment and on the quality of life enjoyed by individuals and communities. PPG24 aims to provide advice on how the planning system can be used to minimise the adverse impact of noise, without placing unreasonable restrictions on development or adding unduly to the costs and administrative burdens of business. It outlines some of the main considerations which local planning authorities should take into account in drawing up development plan policies and, when determining planning applications for development, which will either generate noise or be exposed to existing noise sources.

2.2.55 The impact of noise can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The planning system has the task of guiding development to the most appropriate locations. It is hard to reconcile some land uses such as housing, hospitals or schools, with other activities which generate high levels of noise, but the planning system should ensure that, wherever practicable, noise-sensitive developments are separated from major sources of noise.

#### **PPS 25: Development and Flood Risk (2006)**

2.2.56 Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) sets out Government policy on development and flood risk. It aims to ensure flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process, to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and to direct development away from areas of highest risk. Where new development is exceptionally necessary in such areas, policy aims to make it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall.

2.2.57 PPS25 sets out the requirements for Flood Risk assessments. Such assessments may be of a relatively minor nature relating to small development on a low risk site, or may be required for major housing developments, including related open space. The Environment Agency should be consulted and advantage should be taken of local knowledge of flooding in the community.

## **2.3 Planning Applications**

### **Outline Planning Applications and Reserved Matters**

2.3.1 Applicants for planning permission should always obtain pre-application advice before submitting an application. This gives an opportunity for requirements such as open space and/or play facilities to be identified and discussed. It also gives an opportunity for the prospective applicant to be advised about the possible Section 106 obligation process for providing such facilities and the arrangements for maintenance and ownerships.



- 2.3.2 Outline applications enable a planning authority to decide upon the general principles of how a site can be developed. Often they are used where applicants are looking for formal agreement about the amount and nature of development that can take place on a site, prior to preparing detailed proposals, although (as will be appreciated from what follows) applicants for outline permission now need to provide appreciably more at the application stage than ever they used to. It is therefore, no longer possible to apply for what was termed a 'bare outline' permission, which gave no more details than the nature and scale of the proposals.
- 2.3.3 Outline permission is granted subject to a condition requiring the subsequent approval of one or more reserved matters. Reserved matters cover:
- Layout: the way in which buildings, routes and open spaces are provided within the development and their relationship to spaces and buildings outside the development
  - Scale: the height, width and length of each building proposed in relation to its surroundings
  - Appearance: the aspects of a building or place which determine the visual expression it makes, excluding the external built form of the development
  - Access: this covers accessibility to and from the site for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, in terms of the positioning and treatment of access and circulation routes and how these fit into the surrounding access network
  - Landscaping: this is the treatment of public and private space to enhance or protect the site's amenity through hard and soft measures, such as planting of trees and hedges or screening by fences or walls.
- 2.3.4 When an application is submitted for outline planning permission, detailed consideration will always be required on the amount and use of development. In addition, even if layout, scale and access are reserved, a basic level of information on these issues is required in the application. As a minimum, therefore, applications should always include information on:
- Use: the use or uses of the proposed development and any distinct development zones within the site, need to be identified
  - Amount of development: that is the amount of development proposed for each use
  - Indicative layout: an indicative layout with separate development zones proposed within the site boundary, where appropriate
  - Scale parameters: an indication of the upper and lower limits for height, width and length of each building within the site boundary
  - Indicative access points: an area or areas in which the access points of the site will be identified.
- 2.3.5 Design and access statements are required to support outline applications and play a role in linking general development principles to final detailed designs.
- 2.3.6 Where a planning authority is to determine an application for outline planning permission and it is of the opinion that, in the circumstances of the case, the application ought not to be considered separately from all or any of the reserved matters, it can within one month, commencing on the date of receipt of the application, notify the applicant in writing that the application can not be determined unless further details are submitted, specifying the reasons why such details are required.

### Full Planning Applications

- 2.3.7 The content of a full planning application will depend upon the complexity and scale of the development. However, the following information will always be required:
- Planning application form: signed, dated and completed in full
  - Certificate of Ownership/Agricultural Holdings (Certificate A, B, C or D): signed, dated and completed
  - Location plan: up to date, often Ordnance Survey at a scale of 1:2500 or 1:1250 showing at least two named roads, surrounding buildings and the direction north. The application site, including the means of access to a public highway, is normally clearly edged with a red line and any land owned by the applicant is normally edged blue

- Block plan: normally at a scale of 1:500, or a specified larger scale, showing the development site and adjacent road, any existing buildings, extensions or hardstandings on the site, the location of existing buildings on adjoining sites, the site's boundary treatments, the location and spread of all trees on or overhanging the site and the direction north
- Existing and proposed floor plans: normally at a scale of 1:100 or a specified larger scale
- Existing and proposed elevations: normally at a scale of 1:500 or a specified larger scale; elevation drawings are not normally required for change of use applications involving no external works.

Design and access statement: this should include a reasoned analysis of the approach to the design of a proposal including the provision of open space and the arrangements for accessing it.

Fee: the correct application fee.

2.3.8 In addition to the above information, a range of other information may be required such as that listed below:

- Supporting Planning Statement
- Environmental Statement
- Green Travel Plan
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Nature Conservation and Ecological Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Land and Groundwater Contamination Survey
- Tree Survey.

## 2.4 Planning Agreements and Obligations

2.4.1 Planning Obligations are also referred to as Section 106 Agreements in England. They are private agreements negotiated in the context of planning applications between planning authorities and applicants. Such obligations can also be secured through unilateral undertakings offered up by applicants.

2.4.2 In general terms, planning obligations might be used to:

- Prescribe the nature of a development
- Secure a contribution from a developer for loss or damage created by a developer
- Mitigate a development's impact.

The outcome of these three purposes is to ensure that a development accords with published local, regional and national policies.

2.4.3 The use of planning obligations is ruled by the principle that planning permission should not be bought or sold. Unacceptable development can not be legitimised because of benefits offered by an applicant. As a matter of law, a planning obligation only has a part to play in the decision-making process on an application, if it serves a planning purpose and has more than a minimal connection with the development in question.

2.4.4 Policy on planning obligations is governed by Circular 05/2005 published by the (then) Department of Transport, Regions and Local Government. According to the circular, planning obligations should only be sought where they meet the following tests and therefore are:

- Relevant to planning
- Necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms
- Directly related to the development
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development
- Reasonable in all other aspects.



- 2.4.5 Contributions may be in kind or the form of a financial contribution. Payments may be as a lump sum, an endowment or phased payments with triggers for their release. Maintenance payments may be appropriate where the provision of facilities is predominantly for the benefit of users from the development and this will include open space and outdoor facilities for sport and play. Pooled contributions may be appropriate where the combined impacts of developments create the need for facilities or infrastructure. This is sometimes operated as a tariff system with a charge being levied, for instance, on each new dwelling in a housing scheme. In such cases, each applicant's contribution must be fair and equitable. Whatever form the contribution takes, it must be transparent with a clear audit trail.
- 2.4.6 The future of planning obligations is presently uncertain. In the Planning Bill, published by the Government at the end of November 2007, there is a proposal to replace much of the planning obligations' negotiation with a statutory formula known as the 'community infrastructure levy'. Until the Bill becomes law and detailed regulations are published, it is not clear what the full extent of the community infrastructure levy will be but the likelihood is that it will replace many elements of 'planning gain', which traditionally have formed part of planning obligations.

## 2.5 Planning Conditions

- 2.5.1 Circular 11/95 provides guidance on the use of planning conditions, including when and how they should be used. Model conditions are presented and the circular also sets out when conditions are unacceptable. Section 70(1)a of the Planning Act enables the planning authority to impose such conditions as it thinks fit. Conditions can also be imposed by the Secretary of State or their Inspectors under sections 77, 79 and 177 of, and Schedule 6 to, the Planning Act. Unless otherwise stated, planning permission runs with the land and successors in title will be bound by any such conditions. In some areas there may also be powers under local acts which complement or vary the powers in the 1990 Act.
- 2.5.2 The following key points apply to planning conditions:
- Conditions may be imposed regulating the development or use of land under the control of the applicant even if it is outside the site which is the subject of the application
  - The planning authority may grant planning permission for a specified period only and although this is rare, there will always be a condition that the permission will be implemented within a set period (usually 3 years) otherwise it will lapse
  - Conditions should normally be consistent with national planning policy; they should also normally accord with the provisions of local plans
  - Generally, conditions which duplicate the effect of other legislation, should not be imposed
  - Reasons must be given for the imposition of every condition
  - Conditions imposed on planning permissions should not be duplicated by a planning obligation.
- 2.5.3 The Planning Act allows for retrospective planning applications to be made for development carried out without permission and for applications for planning permission to authorise development which has been carried out without complying with some planning condition, to which it was subject.
- 2.5.4 Informal discussions with planning authorities can be very helpful before an application is made. They can help achieve a fit between the details of the applicant's project and the authority's requirements. They can reduce the need for conditions, explore the possible terms of conditions which remain necessary and ensure that these are tailored to the circumstances of the case. Planning authorities may have model conditions which can be made available to assist and guide applicants.
- 2.5.5 It is for the planning authority to consider in the particular circumstances of a development, whether a condition should be imposed. Reasons must be provided. Where a matter can equally well be addressed by a condition or an obligation, a condition should be used rather than an obligation. This is because the imposition of restrictions by means of a planning obligation deprives the applicant of the opportunity of seeking to have restrictions removed by an application or appeal.

## 2.5.6 The relevant tests

Case-law has established that a condition may only be imposed on the grant of planning permission if it:

- Serves a planning purpose
- Fairly and reasonably relates to the development
- Is otherwise reasonable.

The tests applied by the Secretary of State seek to ensure that conditions should only be imposed when they are necessary and effective and do not place unreasonable burdens on the applicant. The elements below comprise the test. Each condition should be:

- Necessary
- Relevant to planning
- Relevant to the development to be permitted
- Enforceable
- Precise
- Reasonable in all other respects.

## 2.6 Community Participation

2.6.1 Community involvement and participation in the planning system is of fundamental importance. Participation is encouraged at local, regional and national level. The Government's objective is to engage the public in every aspect of the system, starting with the Statement of Community Involvement, through preparation of other parts of the Local Development Framework and on to outline and full planning applications. The public is also encouraged to take part in appeals and breaches of planning control.

2.6.2 PPS1 states that 'community involvement in planning should not be a reactive, tick-box process'. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference.

2.6.3 In respect of development proposals PPS1 requires the planning authority to:

- Consult on formal proposals
- Ensure that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible
- Provide and seek feedback.

2.6.4 Details of the Government's overall approach to community involvement are set out in 'Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives'. The exact nature of consultation will depend upon the scale and diversity of any proposed development and the extent to which it has been publicised previously. Whatever the form of the consultation it is important that the applicant agrees it with the planning authority beforehand, even if the planning authority is minded to oppose the scheme.

## 2.7 Town and Village Green Legislation

2.7.1 Town and Village Greens evolved under customary law as areas of land where local people indulged in lawful sports and pastimes. These might include organised or ad-hoc games, picnics, fetes and similar activities.

2.7.2 Section 15 of the Commons Act 2006, changed the legal definition of a town or village green and set out the qualifying circumstances in which land may be newly registered. Essentially anyone can apply to have land registered as a green if it has been used by local people for recreation 'as of right' (that is, without permission, force or secrecy) for a period of at least 20 years, and (if the use no longer subsists at the date of application) the use did not cease more than 2 years before the date of the application or more than 5 years before the date Section 15 of the act came into force.





- 2.7.3 Section 15 makes the following changes to the existing law relating to the registration of new greens:
- It provides a period of grace after use of land by local people 'as of right' has been ended by the landowner, when an application to register it as a green can still be made (under the old legislation, an application had to be made immediately after use 'as of right' had been ended)
  - It provides an exemption for landowners in certain circumstances where planning permission has been granted on the land and implemented in a way that will render the land unusable as common land
  - Any period of statutory closure (eg during a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak) is to be disregarded when deciding whether there has been 20 years' use 'as of right'
  - It allows a landowner voluntarily to register his land as a green.
- 2.7.4 New measures have been introduced in the Commons (Registration of Town or Village Greens) (Interim Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2007 and came into force on 6 April 2007. A new more modern application form and comprehensive guidance notes to help applicants and registration authorities complete the process are also available.
- 2.7.5 Registration of Town and Village Greens is the responsibility of county councils, unitary authorities, metropolitan councils and the London Boroughs. A database of registered town and village greens in England is available and dates from around 1993. It is no longer kept up-to-date with subsequent new registrations of greens or amendments to existing registrations, because Defra does not receive details of amendments to the registers. For up to date details of such greens contact should be made with the local registration authority.

## 2.8 Planning Policy Statement and Climate Change

- 2.8.1 Planning and Climate Change sets out how planning, in providing for the new homes, jobs and infrastructure needed by communities, should help shape places with lower carbon emissions and resilience to the climate change now inevitable. The guidance includes (paragraph 42) a call on planning authorities to expect development to:
- Deliver a high quality environment
  - Provide public and private open space as appropriate so that it offers accessible choice of shade and shelter, recognising the opportunities for flood storage, wildlife and people provided by multifunctional greenspace
  - Give priority to sustainable drainage systems
  - Create opportunities for sustainable transport, including the preparation and submission of travel plans and providing for safe and attractive walking and cycling opportunities.
- 2.8.2 Refer also to Sections 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 5.3, 5.4 and appendix H.

## 2.9 The Role of Sport England as the Statutory Consultee on Development of Playing Fields and Related Requirements

- 2.9.1 Following strong campaigning by both Fields in Trust and the Central Council for Physical Recreation during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the then Conservative government was persuaded to appoint a statutory consultee to protect playing fields from undesirable development.
- 2.9.2 As a result, in August 1996, Article 10 of The Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, was amended to require a local planning authority to consult Sport England on any application for planning permission for development that:
- (i) is likely to prejudice the use, or lead to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field; or
  - (ii) is on land which has been: used as a playing field at any time in the five years before the making of the relevant application and which remains undeveloped; or allocated for use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement; or

(iii) involves the replacement of the grass surface of a playing pitch on a playing field with an artificial, man-made or composite surface.

2.9.3 For the purpose of the consultation, a playing field is defined (in Article 10 (2) (1) (i)) as the whole of a site that encompasses at least one playing pitch.

**Article 10 (2) (1) (ii) provides the following definition**

*A playing pitch means: 'a delineated area which, together with any run-off area, is of 0.4 hectares or more, and which is used for association football, American football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo'.*

It is important to note that, among other outdoor sports facilities, tennis courts and bowling greens are not included in this definition. Hence, it is reasonable to argue that the measures brought in were effectively concerned with developments on playing pitches, which is a different matter to developments on playing fields and the protection of those facilities. A better definition would simply be for a playing field to be any open space used for outdoor sports, and possibly other outdoor recreational activity and play. A pitch should not be a necessary pre-requisite of a playing field.

2.9.4 Additionally, the minimum size of 0.4 hectares has long been recognised as too large and governments have been urged to adopt a minimum size of 0.2 hectares. At the time of writing, the prospect of this change being taken up is more likely in Scotland and Wales than England.

2.9.5 When consulted on an application for planning permission, Sport England will consider the proposals in the context of its policy on planning applications for development on playing fields. Its policy is to "... oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, or land used as a playing field or land allocated for use as a playing field in an adopted or draft deposit local plan, unless, in the judgement of the English Sports Council, one of the specific circumstances applies".

2.9.6 Five specific circumstances are identified as exceptions. These are:

E1 A carefully quantified and documented assessment of current and future needs, has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the English Sports Council, that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment area and the site has no special significance to the interests of sport.

E2 The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields and does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches, or adversely affect their use.

E3 The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming a whole or part of a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing area of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site.

E4 The playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development, would be replaced by a playing field or playing fields of an equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development.

E5 The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing field or playing fields.



- 2.9.7 Fields in Trust believes that the consultation procedure with Sport England might offer greater protection if it applied to land that has been used as a playing field at any time in the ten years, before the making of the application and that the size of a defined playing pitch was reduced to 0.2 hectares. The first of these changes would make planning procedures consistent with the Department for Children, Schools and Families' approach to the protection of school playing fields (see paragraph 6.16). The second of the recommended changes would help to protect land that was suitable for playing small-sided games, including mini-soccer, a game that the Football Association made mandatory for children under 10, playing in one of its recognised leagues, as long ago as the beginning of 1999-2000. Ministers have committed to consultation on the 0.2 hectare aspect of the definition within 2008.
- 2.9.8 Fields in Trust holds strong reservations and objections to some of the Sport England policies:
- Firstly, they confuse developments which are positive for outdoor sport (such as floodlighting or pavilions) with those that will result in a loss of facilities
  - While exceptions E2 and E4 can be fully supported, exception E1 is called into question because of the possible lack of accuracy of the necessary assessments and questions as to whether any assessment previously undertaken remains valid at the time of consideration of an application, and the subjective nature of the final part of the exception which states that 'the site has no special significance to the interests of sport'
  - Exception E3 needs to be viewed with caution since land that is incapable of forming the whole, or part, of a playing pitch may have the potential to be used for non-pitch sports training purposes or for informal recreation
  - Exception E5 is the most problematic since the provision of facilities for indoor sport is not considered by Fields in Trust to be equivalent to land that is used for outdoor recreation. The facilities should be complementary, not one replacing the other. This policy has also resulted in a disproportionate amount of the consequential investment being spent on indoor as opposed to outdoor facilities. Again, this policy is subjective.
- 2.9.9 While Sport England must be notified of relevant planning applications and any objections it raises must be taken into consideration by local planning authorities, it does not have the power itself to prevent development.
- 2.9.10 Fields in Trust's other concern is that with respect to open space generally, the statutory consultee process is skewed towards sporting interests. Inevitably lots of other valuable open space comes under threat, including informal open land, children's play spaces and small sporting facilities like bowling greens. The Government has been urged to take the lead in considering introducing statutory trustee arrangements for other open space uses, but there has been no consultation on this as yet in England.

### **The Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998**

- 2.9.11 In December 1998, the Government issued The Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998, which requires that before any local planning authority in England proposes to grant planning permission for the development of a playing field, against the advice of Sport England, they must also consult the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (now the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government). The Secretary of State may then, if so minded, call-in the application for determination. The direction applies to:
- (i) local authority land;
  - (ii) land currently used by an educational institution as a playing field; and
  - (iii) land that has at any time in the five years before the making of the application been used by an educational institution as a playing field;
- and where Sport England has objected to a planning application because:
- (i) there is a deficiency in the provision of playing fields in the local authority area; or
  - (ii) the proposed development would result in such a deficiency; or
  - (iii) an alternative or replacement playing field is proposed that does not match (whether in quantity, quality or accessibility) the existing playing field.

- 2.9.12 In these circumstances, the local planning authority must notify the Secretary of State through the Regional Government Office and must not grant planning permission until at least 21 days after the notification. If the Secretary of State wishes to intervene, a public inquiry will normally be held to consider the issues. Unfortunately, Government has not always followed the advice given by Sport England as its statutory consultee and advisor generally on playing field matters.
- 2.9.13 While this direction applies only to land that is owned by a local authority or used by an educational institution, development proposals affecting other recreational land may be subject to The Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999.

#### **The Town and Country Planning (Development Plans and Consultation) (Departures) Directions 1999**

- 2.9.14 These directions apply to applications for planning permission for proposals that do not accord with the provisions of the development plan. Such applications are known as departures. Where a departure application contains proposals of a specified type, for example, more than 150 houses or flats, more than 500m<sup>2</sup> of retail, leisure, office or mixed commercial floorspace, or 'any other development which, by reason of its scale or nature or the location of the land, would significantly prejudice the implementation of the development plan's policies and proposals', there is a similar requirement to notify the Secretary of State as in The Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction 1998 before the local planning authority may grant planning permission. 'Applications involving development that would result in the loss of open space or playing fields both publicly and privately owned', are included in the category of development that might significantly prejudice the implementation of the development plan's policies and proposals.
- 2.9.15 It is for local planning authorities to decide whether a proposal comes within the scope of the directions. However, it is clear that if a development plan follows the guidance contained in PPG17 and includes policies resisting the loss of playing fields, a proposal involving such a loss should at least be considered for referral to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

#### **The School Standards and Framework Act 1998**

- 2.9.16 Section 77 of The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, requires local authorities and school governing and foundation bodies, to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills before they dispose, or change the use, of school playing fields. The Department for Education and Skills' Guidance entitled 'The Protection of School Playing Fields and Land for City Academies', was revised in July 2007 and provides advice on the making of such applications and sets out the criteria that will be used to determine the outcome. Section 77 applies to playing fields that are used, or have been used, at any time during the preceding 10 years by a maintained school for the purposes of the school.
- 2.9.17 The underlying aim of this process is to ensure that approval for disposal or change of use of school playing fields, is given only where the funds that are raised are ploughed back into sport and education and where the remaining area of the school's playing fields meets the present and future needs of the school and the community. Disposal of school playing fields is regarded as an action of last resort and all other sources of funding need to have been demonstrated as unavailable. The future needs of the school concerned (assuming it is not closing) and other local schools for playing fields need to be satisfied, in the context of Building Bulletins 98 or 99 for the former and the School Premises Regulations on playing fields for the latter. Existing, formally agreed community use is safeguarded. The use and reapplication of proceeds is also covered with priority given first to new outdoor sport or leisure facilities, then new indoor sport or leisure facilities and finally other educational facilities. Proceeds can only be used for capital purposes.
- 2.9.18 All applications made under Section 77, are referred to an independent advisory panel known as the School Playing Fields Advisory Panel. The Panel comprises representatives of Fields in Trust, the Central Council of Physical Recreation, Learning Through Landscapes, the National Association of Head Teachers and the Local Government Association. Sport England is represented by an observer member. The purpose of the Panel is to provide the Secretary of State with objective advice on the extent to which each application has satisfied the published criteria. The establishment of the Panel was one of the measures contained in the Government's strategy for sport, 'A Sporting Future for All', published in April 2000.



## Reading and References

'Sustainable Communities: delivering through planning' Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002)

'The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004' The Stationery Office Limited (2004)

For further information on planning policy statements and planning policy guidance notes and to order copies or obtain downloads go to [www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144098](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144098)

For information on Fields in Trust policy positions, including telecommunications, go to [www.fieldsintrust.org/media/policy\\_statements.php#policy2](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/media/policy_statements.php#policy2)

Circular 01/2006: 'Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System' Department for Communities and Local Government (2006)

'Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995' The Stationery Office Limited

Circular 05/2005 'Planning Obligations' Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005)

**Planning Obligations: Practice Guide and Model Planning Obligation** (Section 106) Agreement, Department for Communities and Local Government (2006)

Copies of legislation, guidance and other useful information on village greens can be downloaded from the DEFRA web site as below:

[www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/common/town-villagegreens/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/common/town-villagegreens/index.htm)

'Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1' Department of Communities and Local Government (2007)

'The Sterne Review: The Economics of Climate Change' HM Treasury (2006)

'Community Involvement in Planning: the Government's Objectives' Department of Communities and Local Government (2005)

'Housing Green Paper'  
[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforthefuture](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homesforthefuture)

'Supplement to PPS1 on Climate Change'  
[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppsclimatechange](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/ppsclimatechange)

### For guidance on consultation go to:

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/ThePlanningSystem/DG\\_10022603](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/ThePlanningSystem/DG_10022603)  
[www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/genpub/en/1108751860515.html](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/england/genpub/en/1108751860515.html)

# Websites

## Government planning websites

England	<a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning">www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning</a>
Northern Ireland	<a href="http://www.planningni.gov.uk">www.planningni.gov.uk</a>
Scotland	<a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/planning">www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/planning</a>
Wales	<a href="http://www.cymru.gov.uk/topics/planning">www.cymru.gov.uk/topics/planning</a>

## Department of Communities and Local Government

For Planning Policy Guidance and Statements	<a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk">www.communities.gov.uk</a>
The Planning Portal	<a href="http://www.planningportal.gov.uk">www.planningportal.gov.uk</a>

## Other Planning Sites

The Planning Inspectorate	<a href="http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk">www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk</a>
Planning Advisory Service	<a href="http://www.pas.gov.uk">www.pas.gov.uk</a>
Planning Aid	<a href="http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk">www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk</a>
Royal Town Planning Institute	<a href="http://www.rtpi.org.uk">www.rtpi.org.uk</a>
Town and Country Planning Association	<a href="http://www.tcpa.org.uk">www.tcpa.org.uk</a>

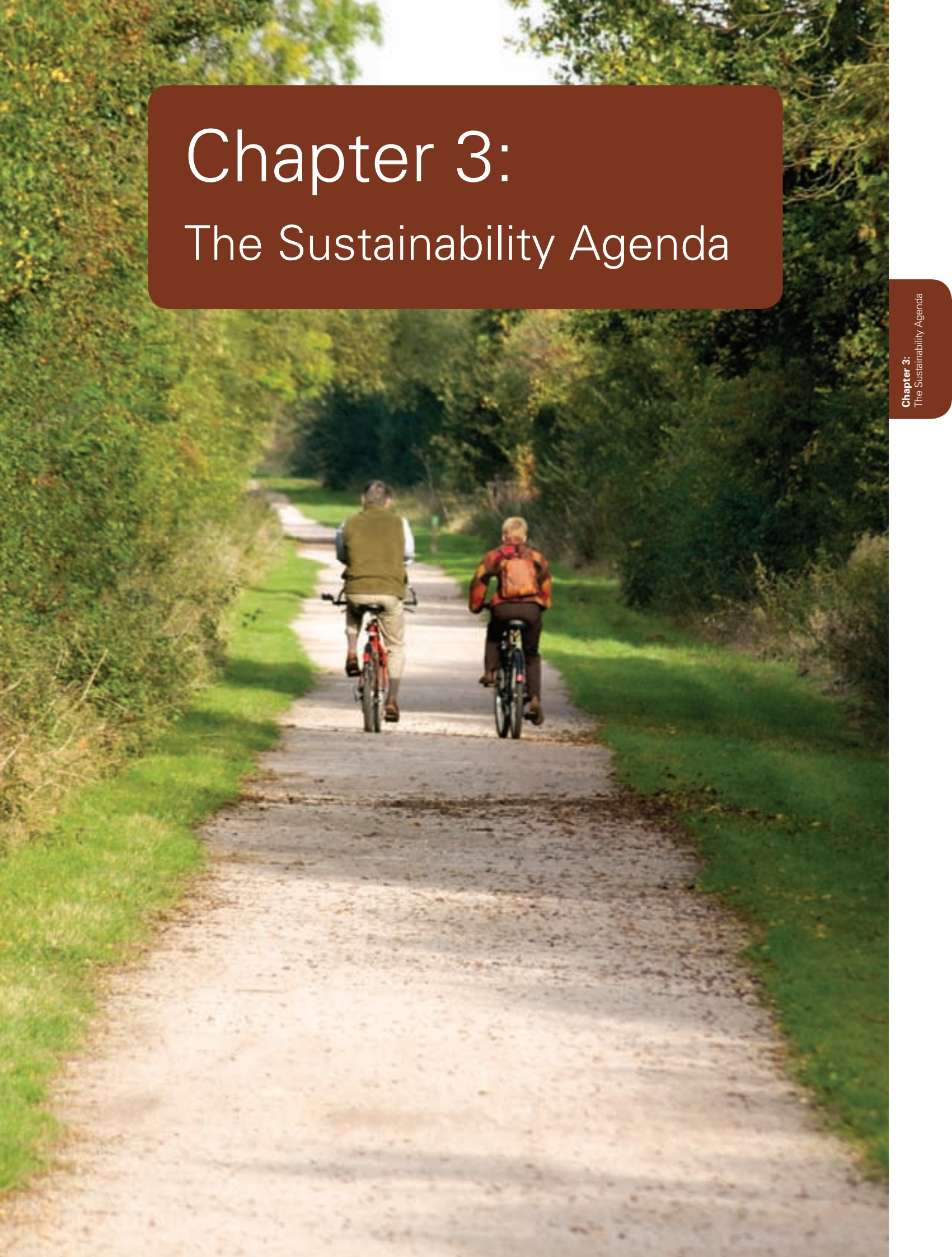
## General

Fields in Trust	<a href="http://www.fieldsintrust.org">www.fieldsintrust.org</a>
Sport England	<a href="http://www.sportengland.org">www.sportengland.org</a>





# Chapter 3: The Sustainability Agenda



# Chapter 3: The Sustainability Agenda

## 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Sustainable development was defined by the UN Brundtland Commission in 1987, as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. Guidance for Managing Sustainable Development (BS8900:2006) interprets sustainable development as: 'an enduring, balanced approach to economic activity, environmental responsibility and social progress.' As to sustainability, Jonathan Porritt as Chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission puts it succinctly as: 'Something is sustainable if you can carry on doing it. If you can't, it isn't.'
- 3.1.2 It is, thus, an holistic concept, requiring breadth of vision and integration between the triple bottom line social, economic and environmental aspects of a scheme for successful delivery of sustainable development to be achieved. This concept became the purpose of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, popularly known as the 'Earth Summit'. The Summit was attended by representatives of over 150 national governments, including Britain, and set out a comprehensive programme to achieve a more sustainable pattern of economic growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 3.1.3 The Earth Summit also agreed a framework of action to reduce the risk of 'global warming' by reducing the emission of 'greenhouse gasses'. Since that time, mitigation of Climate Change has been increasingly linked to the pursuit of Sustainable Development. This is evident in the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy which was presented to Parliament in March 2005 and published as 'Securing the Future' (DEFRA 2005). This publication also recognises the importance of protecting recreational land, including playing fields, noting, "... there must also be access to a variety of well-managed and maintained green spaces for leisure, sport, recreation and general public benefit to help people choose healthy lifestyles, in urban as well as rural areas".
- 3.1.4 The implications of sustainable development are informed by the general priorities for action set out in 'Securing the Future'. These are:
- Climate change and energy, including adaptation to climate change and urban freshwater management
  - Sustainable communities
  - Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement
  - Sustainable consumption and production.

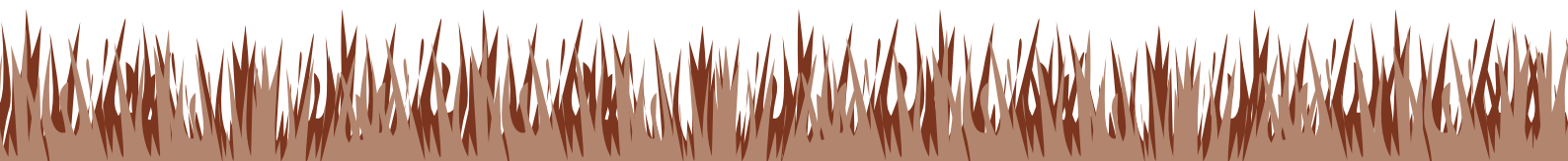
## 3.2 Climate Change and Energy

- 3.2.1 There is considerable overlap between what is necessary to achieve sustainable development and what must be done to mitigate the causes of climate change. A degree of climate change due to past emissions of greenhouse gases is now inevitable and its effects are likely to be serious for our economic future, if not for social survival; the need is therefore both to act to reduce further change (by reducing emissions) and to adapt to the inevitable climate change. In the UK, climate change is likely to mean increased sea levels (by up to 0.8m in 2100), wetter winters and hotter, drier summers.
- 3.2.2 The UK Government has committed to reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases by 20% below 1990 levels by 2010. This is in excess of commitments made under the Kyoto protocol. In order to achieve these cuts, emissions must be reduced in the following key areas: energy suppliers; business; transport; households; agriculture and the public sector. Responses to this requirement include increased production of renewable energy; production of energy through combined heat and power (CHP); penalties for emissions imposed through the climate change levy; emissions trading; the development of low carbon vehicle fuels; carbon labelling on vehicles; energy labelling of buildings; and the implementation of the existing and proposed Codes for Sustainable Buildings, which it can be anticipated will apply to those ancillary to sport and play. Lowering energy use is also essential for the much larger stock of existing buildings, affecting their management as well as their design.



### 3.3 Adaptation to Climate Change

- 3.3.1 The mitigation of climate change is a global endeavour and requires global agreements of which the Kyoto Protocol is only a first step. However, global temperatures will continue to rise as a result of previous carbon emissions and even international action to reduce them in line with UK and EU targets will only slow down the rate of increase from the middle to the end of the present century. This means that plans must be put in place now to adapt to climate change, noting that this is for local action and should play a major part in responsible land-use planning. Following on from Kyoto, the United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Bali in 2007. This culminated in the adoption of the Bali roadmap, which charts the course for a new negotiating process to be concluded by 2009 that will ultimately lead to a post-2012 international agreement on climate change.
- 3.3.2 The UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) was set up by Government in 1997 and is funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and based at the University of Oxford. UK CIP helps organisations assess how they might be affected by climate change so they can prepare for its impact and provides a bridge between researchers and decision-makers in government organisations and business. UKCIP is part of a wider programme of research into climate change being undertaken by DEFRA.
- 3.3.3 An important part of UK CIP's work is to develop scenarios for climate change for the UK, reaching down to regional and sub-regional level. These are based on the best scientific knowledge currently available and indicate the probability of various types of climate activity. The most important overall prediction is that a steadily rising annual temperature, although unlikely to exceed 1°C in the span of each generation, will bring a greater frequency of extreme weather events. There is increasing evidence that this is being experienced nationally as well as globally. The 1976 drought which adversely affected playing fields, distressed several tree species and caused building subsidence on shrinkable clay soils, is an earlier example of an extreme weather event in the UK. The summer floods of 2007, the wettest June on record, provide a more recent case. Globally, the top ten warmest years on record have occurred in the 12 years previous to 2006 which, in turn, was the highest ever seen in 347 years of Central England temperature measurement.
- 3.3.4 UK CIP has high and low scenarios for 2020, 2050 and the 2080s. There is convergence between high and low scenarios up until around the 2040s. This reflects the long 'shelf life' of historic carbon dioxide emissions. Divergence beyond circa 2040 is dependent on action taken now to reduce carbon emissions. 2080s high is regarded as a worst case scenario but predictions are not yet available beyond the end of the century. Climate Change scenarios (UKCIP02) suggest that average annual temperatures may increase by between 1°C and 5°C by the 2080s, with summer temperatures expected to increase more than winter temperatures. There will also be a change in the seasonality of rainfall, with winters up to 30% wetter by the 2080s and summers up to 50% drier.
- 3.3.5 These climate change scenarios do not take into account the predominance of hard surfaces in urban areas. The 'Heat Island Effect' is caused by high thermal gains of buildings, roads and other urban structures during periods of hot weather (explaining why temperatures in inner London can significantly exceed those of surrounding areas during summer months). This can result in significant impacts to human health and increased energy use in an effort to ameliorate effects, for example, through the use of air conditioning.
- 3.3.6 'Adapting cities for climate change: the role of the green infrastructure' (S Gill et al) is a paper relating to extensive measurements taken in Greater Manchester. This research, undertaken by the authors at Manchester University's Centre for Urban Regional Ecology (CURE), suggests that green spaces, mainly for recreation in the more densely built centres, have a significant cooling effect through evapo-transpiration of living green surfaces. The authors assert that this beneficial effect is set to increase with climate change and is increased further where mature trees provide shade to reduce solar gain. Trees are also more resistant to drought than natural grass surfaces and enhance biodiversity and landscape quality. Biodiverse and attractive landscapes provide economic benefit, attracting tourists and local people to spend leisure time in parks and playing fields. Plants and trees also have urban and suburban benefit, stabilising soil, preventing erosion, reducing water run-off and forming visual, wind and noise barriers, softening the built environment.



- 3.3.7 When soil moisture levels drop, surface temperature rises, ultimately making large grass areas part of the problem than part of the solution if allowed to dry out. This happened most notably in the summer of 2003. The summer of 2003 is set to be typical before the middle of the present century. Ground water stress will increase. In 1961-1990, soil water was recharged by the end of September. By the 2080s this will move to the end of November.
- 3.3.8 Whilst this research, which is part of the ASCCUE project (Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in Urban Environments), explains other benefits provided by green spaces, such as shade and flood prevention, the most profound yet obvious implication is that all such grounds should be irrigated. It also exposes the case for planting drought-resistant species to be flawed. Plants which have evolved to minimise leaf transpiration and which cannot substitute for natural grass swards, have no real place in adapting to climate change. A radically-different approach to urban freshwater management is, it is argued, necessary.

### 3.4 Urban Freshwater Management

- 3.4.1 Climate Change predictions do not suggest any significant change in rainfall quantity up to the end of the century, but predict significant changes in its pattern of distribution and intensity. There is already a water crisis in the UK which is largely a result of a failure to invest in water infrastructure. In the South East of England, over-dependence on natural aquifers and a dryer climate, is already leading to water use restrictions. Reservoirs in the North are not linked by pipeline to reduce water shortages in the South. In the absence of any plan for major investment to improve the collection, storage and distribution of rainwater nationally, more local solutions must be sought.
- 3.4.2 Wetter winters and dryer summers suggest that rainwater stored in reservoirs, large and small, can be available to supply irrigation systems to green areas, maintaining high quality natural turf swards for sport and play and helping to reduce urban temperatures, particularly during nighttimes. At the semi-domestic scale, the provision of rainwater harvesting and collection systems for new buildings, can slow the rate of surface water run-off during extreme rainfall events and thus help reduce flood risk, whilst also helping in times of water shortages, for example, enabling garden irrigation during hose pipe bans.
- 3.4.3 At a larger scale, sustainable urban drainage schemes (SUDS) aim to increase the amount of precipitation returning to groundwater and to mitigate surface water run-off. Green roofs on buildings perform a similar function as well as contributing towards landscape and biodiversity objectives. New developments should be required to direct most rainfall via SUDS to forms of storage which will provide water for irrigation.
- 3.4.4 Whilst it is easier to imagine this being done where small spaces are part of a new development and rainwater capture can be implemented via SUDS or an enlarged version of rainwater harvesting from the surrounding properties, it is a very much bigger challenge to retro-fit such arrangements into the existing urban form in order to provide water to irrigate much larger, existing green spaces. Internationally, there are already schemes whereby water from surrounding roads is first used to top up park lakes in cities as wide apart as Boston, USA and Sydney, Australia. Paris is an excellent example of a city where freshwater infrastructure is managed for street washing as well as park irrigation.
- 3.4.5 However, the space needed for new lakes and the loss of water in hot weather through evaporation, indicates that underground storage chambers will also be needed. This may sound expensive and unlikely in our own time, but the quest for sustainability and the challenge of climate change, suggest that freshwater engineering on such a scale will be essential, not just to provide green parks and recreation grounds as well as domestic gardens, but to sustain living, working and playing in urban areas to levels of comfort which will not inhibit their economic, social and environmental growth in the time of future generations.
- 3.4.6 At a very practical level, local authorities throughout the UK and Ireland have reacted to the various initiatives aimed at rainwater harvesting and the need to mitigate surface water run-off, by imposing severe restrictions on the amount of surface water being returned to the existing systems. In many cases, a new pitch development is not allowed to return any surface water to the existing system. New synthetic turf pitches and tracks have sub-soil drainage systems aimed at clearing the rainwater from the surface layer as quickly as possible, to ensure maximum playability of the facility. Although the presence of the pitch does not create any more surface water from the area than would have collected naturally before construction, it is perceived that this quantity of water will enter the surface water system with a greater intensity.

In many cases this is true. Impervious constructions such as asphalt footpaths, car parks and non-porous athletics tracks all speed up the rate of run-off and can create 'flash flooding' in extreme cases. In the case of a well constructed synthetic turf pitch, this need not be the case. For example, the depth of construction materials, the sub-soil drains and the peripheral collector drains all help absorb the water from the surface and attenuate the rainwater for a considerable time, certainly much more than would be the case if the area has been developed from a 'brown-field' site. It is current practice for many planners and drainage departments to treat new artificial surface developments as they would a supermarket car park, that is, as a large, impervious area, capable of overpowering the existing drainage system due to almost instantaneous run-off. For this reason attenuation tanks, which retain the peak flows, are having to be considered as part of most new pitch and track developments, at some considerable cost to the developer.

### **3.5 Creating and Delivering Sustainable Communities**

- 3.5.1 Changes to the planning system in England, described in Chapter 2, are mainly driven by the need to implement the principles of sustainable development in all new development. 90% of the UK population live in settlements of more than 10,000 people. 'Delivering Sustainable Communities' is the Government's programme for the sustainability of towns and cities. It is particularly relevant to large scale urban growth planned for London and the South East, as well as for the regeneration of designated areas in the North, termed Pathfinders, where housing market renewal is sought.
- 3.5.2 Key aims of the new urban policy are to contain at least 60% of growth on 'brownfield' land i.e. that which has previously been occupied by built development, and to increase housing density to at least 30 dwellings per acre. Mixed-use development is also sought to further reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car.
- 3.5.3 'Securing the Future' (DEFRA 2005) provides a detailed prescription for 'sustainable communities'. These include:
- A sense of community identity and belonging
  - User-friendly public and green spaces with facilities for everyone including children and older people
  - Transport facilities, including public transport, that help people travel within and between communities and reduce dependence on cars
  - Facilities to encourage safe local walking and cycling.
- 3.5.4 'Sustainable communities' are intended to make less demand on the environmental capital available to future generations. In achieving sustainable communities, the Government seeks, inter alia, to:
- Actively seek to minimise climate change, including through energy efficiency and the use of renewables
  - Protect the environment by minimising pollution on land, in water and in the air
  - Minimise waste and dispose of it in accordance with current good practice
  - Make efficient use of natural resources, encouraging sustainable production and consumption
  - Protect and improve biodiversity (e.g. wildlife habitats)
  - Enable a lifestyle that minimises negative environmental impact and enhances positive impacts (e.g. by creating opportunities for walking and cycling, and reducing noise pollution and dependence on cars)
  - Create cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods (e.g. by reducing litter and graffiti, and maintaining pleasant public spaces).
- 3.5.5 The Government sums up sustainable communities as 'places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well-planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all'.



- 3.5.6 In 'Green Future' Alan Barber defines Sustainable Communities as: '... those whose physical design, appropriateness of scale to amenity, forms of self-correcting governance and decision-making, educational goals, ecological management, consumption of energy and natural resources, shared values of citizenship, equity and fairness, investment in the public realm and civic institutions, protect the rights of future generations to meet their own needs for happiness, prosperity, and an enduring society'.
- 3.5.7 This definition not only covers the economic, social and environmental goals of sustainable communities, but makes all of these subordinate to the aim of protecting the interests of future generations. This embeds the inter-generational imperative at the core of the 'Bruntland' definition. It also captures the civic, cultural and educational aspects of 'community', all of which relate to the traditions associated with participation in outdoor sport and recreation, which FIT wishes to perpetuate through the provision and protection of local playing space.
- 3.5.8 Careful design means that streets can be linked to parks and open space in a way which increases the 'liveability' of higher density developments. According to a study by CABE, a view of trees is, along with the availability of natural areas nearby, the strongest factor affecting people's satisfaction with their neighbourhood. They found that if green spaces are surrounded by housing or are in some way a continuation of the home environment, then they are shared by residents and are unlikely to suffer from the kind of maintenance problems that arise when there is a lack of perceived ownership. Economic studies carried out by CABE, also demonstrate a positive economic benefit for house prices and commercial premises directly adjacent, or near to, a park. Small businesses choosing a new business location, rank open space, parks and recreation, as a number-one priority. They note that a network of clearly linked green spaces, rather than isolated parks, potentially contributes to spreading the value uplift across a wider area.
- 3.5.9 The quest for more compact urban development and greater use of brownfield land, presents a challenge to the conservation of the open space within the built form for sport and recreation. Fields in Trust takes the consideration that new goals for making towns and cities more sustainable should not, and need not, compromise the provision of adequate playing space. Fields in Trust does, however, acknowledge that 'Delivering Sustainable Communities' puts pressure on providers to optimise the quality, maintenance and use of such spaces and to reduce their energy needs, including encouraging access by non-vehicular means.
- 3.5.10 The Sustainable Development Commission published 'Every Child's Future Matters' in 2007. This clearly expounded the need to improve the quality of life, without damaging the environment and adversely affecting future generations, as a necessary part to building a society that cares for its children and young people. It called for a broader recognition in children and young people's policy and services, that the environment is a key determinant of well-being, alongside more established economic and social factors. A higher priority is needed for efforts to improve children's everyday environments, in their homes, the streets, at school and in the community, acknowledging their right to a safe, enjoyable and rewarding recent and sustainable future. Problems like fumes, congestion, litter, loss of green space and containing carbon emissions, compromise these things.
- 3.5.11 In summary, sustainable communities can be defined by the following descriptors:
- Active, Inclusive and Safe: Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
  - Well Run: With effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
  - Environmentally Sensitive: Providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
  - Well Designed and Built: Featuring a quality built and natural environment, including facilities for outdoor sport and play
  - Well Connected: With good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
  - Thriving: With a flourishing and diverse local economy
  - Well Served: With public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to peoples' needs and accessible to all
  - Fair for Everyone: Including those in other communities, now and in the future.



### 3.6 Protecting our Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment

3.6.1 Natural resources include raw materials such as minerals and biomass; environmental media such as air, water and soil; flow resources such as wind, geothermal, tidal and solar energy; space; and biological resources (flora and fauna). The Government seeks to take an ecosystems approach towards environmental limits rather than examining cause and effect piecemeal and has set out policy guidance in a number of documents, including:

- The Air Quality Strategy 2000  
[www.airquality.co.uk](http://www.airquality.co.uk)
- The Biodiversity Strategy for England  
[www.ukbap.org.uk/EBG/england\\_biodiversity\\_strategy.asp](http://www.ukbap.org.uk/EBG/england_biodiversity_strategy.asp)
- The first Soil Action Plan for England 2004-2006  
[www.defra.gov.uk/ENVIRONMENT/land/soil/pdf/soilactionplan.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/ENVIRONMENT/land/soil/pdf/soilactionplan.pdf)
- Directing the Flow-priorities for future water policy  
[www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/strategy/pdf/directing\\_the\\_flow.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/water/strategy/pdf/directing_the_flow.pdf)
- Planning Policy Statements see Chapter 2

Through these measures the Government intends to increase biodiversity, enhance stewardship of the land, reduce emissions of air pollutants and improve efficiency of land use.

3.6.2 Our surroundings matter. The historic environment is an important component of the tourism industry and of commercial land and property values. Consideration and protection or enhancement of the historic environment (both built structures and their settings) is an important feature of a sustainable development proposal.

3.6.3 Biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and green spaces contribute to a high quality of life. However development pressures, poor land management and fragmentation of habitats, have contributed to the loss of both habitats and species. As mentioned previously, climate change presents another challenge. It is expected that certain animal and plant species will need to move north as the climate changes, while others may extend their ranges in other ways and to do this, they need corridors of suitable and connected land; such land will include play spaces and playing fields.

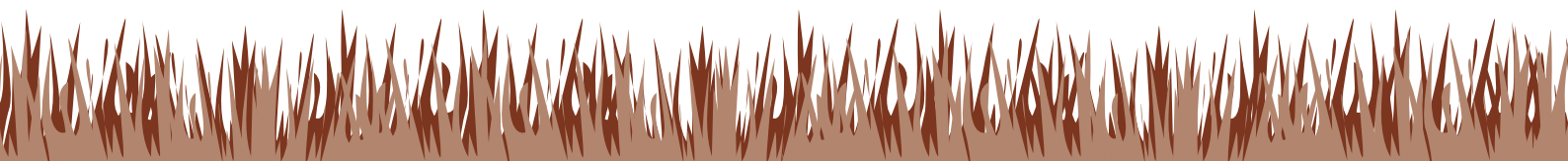
3.6.4 Biodiverse and attractive landscapes provide economic benefit, attracting tourists and local people to spend leisure time in the region. Plants and trees also have urban and suburban benefit, stabilising soil, preventing erosion, reducing water run-off and forming visual, wind and noise barriers, softening the built environment. They can also provide shading to reduce solar gain – a study in Merseyside showed a 7 degree reduction in temperature where there was a 50% cover of vegetation (compared with an area with 15% vegetation coverage).

3.6.5 Government Planning Statement PPS 9, notes that ‘Development proposals provide many opportunities for building-in beneficial biodiversity or geological features as part of good design. When considering proposals, local planning authorities should maximise such opportunities in and around developments, using planning obligations where appropriate’.

3.6.6 Whilst larger schemes have greater potential for regenerating habitats and providing new habitats, smaller schemes should also play their part, incorporating appropriate species, enabling green corridors and contributing to the overall quality of the local environment. Design, construction techniques and material choices can all support individual species, for example, through dry stone walls, nesting boxes, green roofs, and hedging, rather than fencing.

3.6.7 To summarise: with these policy issues in mind, land use and ecology sustainability issues include:

- Protecting existing habitats, species and migration routes
- Support for species identified in the local biodiversity action plan
- Supporting and increasing the ecological value of the site
- Linking green spaces and habitat.



### 3.7 Sustainable Consumption and Production

- 3.7.1 Sustainable consumption and production is about achieving more with less. It is about specifying appropriate and durable materials and minimising their use; it includes waste measurement and reduction through sound management practices; it involves looking at the costs of actions and materials over the lifecycle of the product or development (Whole Life Costing) and being aware of materials provenance. It is also about helping people to make better choices, through community engagement, education and offering healthier and more sustainable options. It is as applicable to the outdoor sport and play sector as any other industry or endeavour.

### 3.8 Other Sustainability Issues of Direct Relevance to Outdoor Sport and Play Provision

- 3.8.1 From amongst these wider issues pertaining to sustainable development, the following issues are also of direct importance to the provision of playing fields and facilities for outdoor sport and play facilities:

- Materials specification and waste management
- Building efficiency
- Energy use and efficiency and the use of renewable energy
- Getting to and from sport and play facilities
- The contribution of sport and play to health and wellbeing.

#### Materials Specification and Waste Management

- 3.8.2 Materials used in the construction of buildings, the public realm and infrastructure, have environmental impacts, ranging from the energy used to create them, impact on human health and biodiversity, substances released to the environment during use and pollution when finally disposed of. Specification of materials with lower environmental impacts can greatly reduce the environmental and health impacts of developments. Timber has been the subject of high profile research and campaigns and certification schemes now exist to ensure that timber has been taken from responsibly managed forests.

- 3.8.3 Waste is a major issue everywhere; its disposal and treatment – even for recycling – presents several issues since it:

- Requires storage whilst awaiting removal
- Needs transport to treatment or disposal facilities
- Takes up land for disposal or treatment facilities and has the potential to cause pollution
- Requires energy for disposal or recycling (although recycling still uses less energy than is used in producing pristine materials)
- Loses resources which could usefully be re-used – materials that are currently perceived as waste can also be a resource with value.

A sustainable resource management approach will help to minimise the contribution, that both constructing and occupying a new sport or play facility will make towards the problem. This is done by designing the development to use materials efficiently, specifying materials which are reclaimed or recycled wherever possible, managing the construction process to minimise waste produced and ensuring that waste produced during the build process or by building occupiers, can be separated into different types ('waste streams') and collected for re-use or recycling.

#### Building Efficiency

- 3.8.4 The location and design of a building and its public and private space make a major contribution to its sustainability performance. However, this can be undermined if the individual buildings are poorly designed, use unsustainable materials and are resource inefficient.

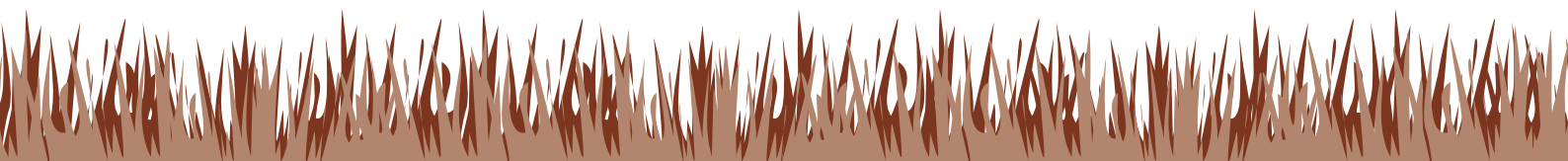
- 3.8.5 The Government has introduced a Code for Sustainable Homes which applies to all housing developments that are publicly funded. Use of the BREEAM standard for non-residential buildings including those ancillary to outdoor sport and play provision, gives the opportunity for the creation of energy and resource efficient buildings.

## Energy Use and Efficiency and the Use of Renewable Energy

- 3.8.6 Given the contribution of CO<sub>2</sub> and waste heat emissions to climate change and the implications of that change for human health and security, energy use and efficiency are key issues in the sustainable provision of sports and play facilities. True renewable or 'zero carbon' technologies (such as PVs or photovoltaics) generate no greenhouse gas emissions, whilst 'low carbon' technologies such as combined heat and power (CHP), or ground source heat pumps, can nevertheless make a substantial contribution to sustainable energy. Renewables can be categorised into those technologies that deliver electrical power (e.g. photovoltaics, wind turbines), those that deliver thermal power (e.g. solar hot water, ground source heat pumps) and those that deliver both heat and electricity (e.g. CHP). Advice on the energy efficiency of buildings can be obtained from the BREEAM website.
- 3.8.7 Given the open nature of many sports and play facilities, it is worthwhile considering the role that renewable energy sources could play in their provision. This could range from small scale inputs such as solar powered signage, through to scheme-wide CHP (combined heat and power systems) for schemes of a significant size.
- 3.8.8 There is a range of renewable energy technologies which could be suitable for these facilities such as changing accommodation, including solar thermal provision of hot water, macro and micro wind turbines, ground sourced heat pump systems, use of biomass for heating or alternative fuel sources and photovoltaic panels.

## Getting To and From Sport and Play Facilities

- 3.8.9 In a sustainable society, people need to be able to reach employment and facilities, places of education and families and friends. However, over-reliance on car travel has created local air quality problems, safety and health issues and contributes to climate change through the production of greenhouse gases. In addition it can increase isolation for people without access to cars (disproportionately affecting older people, women, disabled people and the less well-off), particularly where the loss of local facilities occurs where public transport is not available.
- 3.8.10 There are five key ways to tackle the issue:
- Reduce the need to travel, ensuring that there are facilities close to where people live and work – it is of interest to recall that the NPFA's stated aim when formed in 1925, was for sport and play facilities to be provided within walking distance of everybody
  - Locate new homes close to existing facilities or in areas where public transport can be used to reach appropriate facilities
  - Increase and improve public transport, encouraging a shift away from car use
  - Reduce the need for personal car ownership or solo journeys, enabling shared car journey or car clubs
  - Reduce the dominance of cars in the street so that people feel safer when walking or cycling.
- 3.8.11 Reduced parking provision as part of an integrated package of transport measures, plays an important role in encouraging people to use alternatives to the car. Poorly designed roads and streets with random on-street parking arrangements, can detract significantly from the appearance of a location, be it rural, suburban or urban. Large expanses of car parking are usually unattractive and intrusive. Location, choice and design measures can significantly reduce the impact of parking on an area.
- 3.8.12 Traffic management is a key element to encouraging people to walk or cycle. Home Zones, 'quiet lanes' and prioritisation of pedestrians and cyclists on appropriate streets, are important in improving perceived and actual safety. Traffic calming at the design stage – so called 'psychological traffic calming' – can reduce the need for subsequent measures such as signage, chicanes and speed humps.



- 3.8.13 Public transport needs to be accessible but also reliable and safe. In part this will be affected by wider traffic management, but larger developments present opportunities for improved waiting facilities, information provision and new routes. With these policy issues in mind, the key sustainability issues for sports and play facilities include:
- Site location
  - Availability and access to public transport
  - Car parking – standards and flexible spaces
  - Cycle routes and facilities
  - Access to facilities
  - Traffic calming through design measures
  - Car clubs.

### **The Contribution of Sport and Play To Community, Health and Wellbeing**

- 3.8.14 Well planned and designed community infrastructure provides places for people to meet and interact as well as meeting specific needs such as attending a meeting, going for a jog or playing a game of netball. In times of increasing mobility and distance from families, community facilities and open spaces can help to create a vibrant community of place, rather than a dormitory settlement where people never meet their neighbours and travel elsewhere for leisure and services.
- 3.8.15 Facilities and open spaces need to be appropriate to the existing and predicted new community and should be planned to create inclusive communities, removing barriers and encouraging positive interaction between groups. They are part of building communities where people feel confident that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others. Information about local facilities needs to be provided so that residents, visitors and workers know what is available in the locality and are encouraged to use them from the start – habits form quickly and are hard to break.
- 3.8.16 Building community facilities and providing open spaces is only half the story – once in place they need to be managed and often, involving the local community in their management, increases their sense of ownership and therefore use of the amenity. Strategies for medium and long-term management and funding / revenue generation, are crucial at an early stage. Where large-scale community based infrastructure is to be provided (such as SUDS, Neighbourhood Heating and significant areas of open space), community management companies or development trusts may be appropriate.
- 3.8.17 Community involvement in planning should not be a reactive, tick-box process. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference. Effective community involvement, involving children and young people as well as the older population, requires an approach which:
- Tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time
  - Enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options; it is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked up
  - Consults on formal proposals
  - Ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible
  - Provides and seeks feedback.
- 3.8.18 Intensification of land usage is likely to require the provision of new community facilities and open spaces. Interaction with statutory and voluntary bodies and the local community, helps to ensure that needs are prioritised and resources spent wisely on meeting the needs of the neighbourhood. Services and facilities will usually need to meet the needs of the existing and new community and should be planned, so that the surrounding community does not feel excluded and the new development contributes to the sustainability of the neighbourhood as a whole.

3.8.19 Key issues around community for sustainable development include:

- Ensuring that the development makes a positive impact on the existing community
- The degree of community participation in the development proposal
- The provision of information about local facilities to residents, visitors and workers
- Management of community facilities.

3.8.20 As more people use a neighbourhood, this has added benefits such as discouraging crime and making people feel safer, reducing isolation for people who are not able to travel and increasing the cohesiveness of a community. It encourages people to move about on foot and to use green spaces, providing mental and physical health benefits.

Good place-making is a vital part of both regeneration and new developments in urban and rural environments, creating places where businesses wish to locate and where people wish to live, work and relax.

3.8.21 Key issues of community and place-making include:

- Effective and efficient use of land
- Approaches to design, context, landscape and connectivity
- Re-use of suitable buildings
- Focus on the pedestrian, safety and navigability
- Local character
- Access to green space and play space
- Affordable housing
- Lighting strategy.

### **3.9 The One Planet Living Initiative**

3.9.1 The One Planet Living (OPL) programme is based on ten guiding principles, which act as a framework to highlight the sustainability challenge in a given situation and as a mechanism for developing and presenting solutions. It aims to encourage projects which improve quality of life, without consuming excessive natural resources. The concept derives from a methodology known as 'ecological footprinting'; this works out the area of land per head of population, required to meet human needs, including food production, transport, waste disposal, and resources. The available area on a global basis, is just under 2 hectares (ha) per head of population. The current ecological footprint for each UK citizen is about 6 ha, three times the equitable global level. This calculation demonstrates that the imperatives behind the drive for more sustainable development and lifestyles, are both compelling and urgent.

3.9.2 The 10 One Planet Living Principles can be applied to a project with the aim of reducing its ecological footprint. The ecological footprint of construction can be reduced by such measures as sourcing materials locally and seeking out reclaimed and low-impact materials. The ecological footprints of the residents that will live there, can be reduced by increasing the efficiency of resource use within the homes and incorporating green lifestyle elements, such as reducing the need for cars.

3.9.3 The ten guiding principles are summarised as:

- Zero carbon – achieve net zero carbon dioxide emissions from OPL developments
- Zero waste – eliminate waste flows to landfill sites and for incineration
- Sustainable transport – reduce reliance on private vehicles
- Sustainable and local materials – transform patterns of materials supply
- Sustainable water – achieve a positive impact
- Local and sustainable food – grow, develop and use
- Natural habitats and wildlife – regenerate degraded environments, halt biodiversity loss
- Culture and heritage – protect and enhance
- Equity and fair trade – ensure a positive impact on other communities
- Health and happiness – better health and quality of life.



### 3.10 Concluding Remarks

- 3.10.1 Success in delivering sustainable development, lies at the heart of good development planning and design; it also meets corporate social responsibility objectives and contributes towards meeting global sustainability objectives. There are significant benefits from operating in a sustainable manner, at societal, corporate and individual levels, not least the encouragement and provision of healthy lifestyles in genuinely good places to live, work and play.
- 3.10.2 By way of summary, the key points are:
- All economic development must be contained within the finite capacity of the physical environment
  - Current generations must take action now to protect the interests of future generations, if future generations are to enjoy a comparable quality of life
  - Climate change now dominates the sustainability agenda, but many of the actions necessary are entirely compatible with sustainable development
  - Government policy for sustainable communities should be applied where possible to the existing urban fabric, not to simply guide new development
  - Providers of recreational land, must have regard to both the mitigation of and adaptation to, climate change
  - Mitigation requires global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In reducing energy consumption, travel is as important a consideration as buildings
  - Adaptation requires an understanding of future scenarios for the probability of extreme weather events, as provided by UK CIP
  - The role of green spaces of all types will become more important in adapting urban areas to a changing climate
  - Water remains a plentiful and renewable, not a finite, resource, but its management will require radical change in order to protect green spaces and sustain their value in ameliorating predicted climate changes, both flooding and drought
  - The multifunctionality of all green spaces means that playing fields and other spaces for recreation must play a part in protecting biodiversity at a local scale, as well as providing a range of other eco-system services
  - Trees, preferably forest species, must be planted wherever possibly compatible with the needs of outdoor sport and active recreation
  - Streets must be reclaimed from traffic to provide local play space. They should also support a thriving tree population and their design should include the recycling of rainwater for irrigation.



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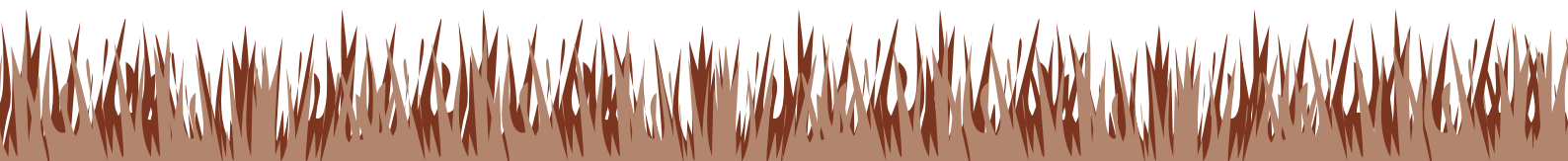
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A soccer player in a blue uniform is running on a grass field. The player is seen from the back, with her hair in a ponytail. A white soccer ball is on the grass in the foreground. The background is a blurred green field.

# Chapter 4:

The New Approach –  
Benchmark Standards  
for Quantity, Quality  
and Accessibility

# Chapter 4: The New Approach – Benchmark Standards for Quantity, Quality and Accessibility

## 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 In 2006, Fields in Trust commissioned a postal survey of local planning authorities throughout the United Kingdom and consultation with key stakeholder organisations, in relation to local and national standards of provision for outdoor provision for sport and play. This was against a background presumption across the United Kingdom in favour of local, as opposed to national, standards and the need for standards to address matters relating to quantity, quality and accessibility. The purpose behind the survey and consultation was to provide an evidence-based framework for recommended Benchmark Standards, in the context of current policy and practice relating to the disciplines of planning, development, leisure, sport and play.
- 4.1.2 The purpose of this guidance is therefore to complement moves to ensure that the provision of outdoor playing space is appropriate to local needs. Fields in Trust intends that the recommendations in this publication should be of particular value to those who are:
- Developing 'local' standards for new developments
  - Concerned with ensuring sufficient outdoor playing space is maintained and enhanced in existing neighbourhoods
  - Planning new developments.
- 4.1.3 The 'Benchmark' is not intended as a 'maximum' or 'minimum standard' in the context of quantity. It provides guidance, based on the use of median averages. The median is the middle of a distribution: half the scores are above the median and half are below the median. The median is used because it is less sensitive to extreme scores than the mean and this makes it a better average measure than the mean for highly skewed distributions.
- 4.1.4 Fields in Trust does, however, recommend strongly that any moves to adopt standards below the appropriate 'Benchmark' could only be justified where full public participation and support for such a move can be robustly evidenced.
- 4.1.5 Appendices C and D provide a Summary Report on the Survey Work and the Report of Stakeholder Consultations, respectively. These have contributed significantly to this document and the recommended approach of using Benchmark Standards.

## 4.2 The Summary of the Proposed Benchmark Standards for Sport

- 4.2.1 Quantity – Playing Pitches

**Table 4a – Benchmark Standards for Pitch Sports**

Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Urban	1.15
Rural	1.72
Overall	1.20

Note: The Benchmark Standard for rural areas is significantly higher than for urban areas. This reflects the greater number of dispersed settlements, villages and small market towns in rural areas and their separate needs for local facilities. It should not be taken to imply that each new settlement in rural areas requires a higher level of local provision than their urban counterparts. Each new settlement must be considered in the light of its own circumstances and its own locality.



#### 4.2.2 Quantity – all outdoor sport

**Table 4b – Benchmark Standards for All Sports (see definition in Section 6.1)**

Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Urban	1.60
Rural	1.76
Overall	1.60

Note: Although the recommendations for ‘urban’ authorities and all local authorities are the same, this is not an error, since the recommendations are based on median averages, represented by the middle value of the series of returns.

#### 4.2.3 Quality – Outdoor Sport

Fields in Trust recommends the use of Technical Performance Quality Standards such as those published in ‘Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities’ for both pitches and other outdoor facilities, namely cricket, bowls and croquet.

Alternatively, technical standards produced by Sport England, the Governing Bodies of Sport or professional or trade organisations, such as the Institute of Groundsmanship (IoG) and the Sport and Play Construction Association (SAPCA), can be useful.

Observational methodologies can prove helpful as a basic starting point, though they are no substitute for the best practice provided by technical assessments. Methods which might be considered include those provided in Sport England’s electronic toolkit and the ‘traffic light code’ being developed by the Football Association.

#### 4.2.4 Accessibility

##### Playing Pitches

Playing pitches should be available within 1.2 kilometres of all dwellings in major residential areas.

##### Other Outdoor sports

Athletics – one synthetic track with floodlighting per 250,000 people living within 30 minutes drive time (45 minutes in rural areas) of the proposed location

Tennis – community tennis courts within 20 minutes travel time (walking in urban areas, by car in rural areas)

Bowls – one green within 20 minutes travel time (walking in urban areas, by car in rural areas).



## 4.3 More Detailed Commentary on Fields in Trust's Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Sport

### Sport – Quantity

- 4.3.1 Fields in Trust's Benchmark Standards for playing pitches and all outdoor sports have been developed as a result of its survey of local authorities in England.
- 4.3.2 The Rural and Urban Area Classification, devised in 2005, was used as the basis for classifying local authorities. Urban settlements with populations greater than 10,000 comprise output areas for the urban domain. The rural domain is represented by output areas being one of village, hamlet and isolated dwellings, and town and fringe settlements. Each local authority area is made up by a number of output areas, some rural, some urban. An area was defined as urban if the majority of the output areas within its boundary were urban, and similarly for rural areas. This approach is used both here for standards for outdoor sport and later in this chapter for outdoor play.
- 4.3.3 Active Spaces is a database established and maintained by Sport England of all sports facilities in England, including pitches, both grass and artificial, and other outdoor facilities. It is a significant tool in helping define the supply side of facilities.

### Sport – Quality of Playing Pitches

- 4.3.4 There are two general methods of assessing the quality of pitch provision, the first and most important being a detailed technical assessment, which usually requires professional skill and greater planning and financial investment. Such assessments can, however, lead to well-founded plans for capital improvement and future maintenance regimes, providing better value for money and more sustainable future provision.
- 4.3.5 The alternative, favoured by some because of relatively low financial cost, is the non-technical visual survey. This provides a quick and relatively easy-to-use tool by people who may have comparatively little background or training in undertaking pitch assessments. The downside however, may be significant with potential problems arising out of subjective variation, difficulties of interpretation of information generated and uncertainty as to when to call for more accurate technical assessment.
- 4.3.6 Fields in Trust's recommendation is that owners or users should, wherever possible, commission a full technical assessment leading to planned capital improvement and maintenance programming over a number of years. Fields in Trust does, however, recognise that this may be beyond the means of some smaller organisations, such as parish councils or clubs with very low turnover. Such organisations should, however, be cautious about the use of non-technical tools and make full use of experienced professionals working with first or second-tier local authorities, the governing bodies of sport, or professional organisations such as the Institute of Groundsmanship on a pro bono basis if possible. Alternatively, very experienced club members/volunteers are invaluable.

### Playing Pitches – Full Technical Assessments

- 4.3.7 Fields in Trust stresses the need for full technical assessments, by means of performance quality assessment and standards. The Fields in Trust publication 'The Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' provides detailed design performance quality requirements and operational maintenance benchmarks for the following facilities and is strongly recommended:
- The 5 acre playing field (traditional summer and winter use)
  - Natural turf association football pitch
  - High standard natural turf association football pitch (can also be used for rugby football)
  - Natural turf rugby football pitch
  - Natural turf hockey pitch
  - Natural turf cricket outfield
  - Natural turf cricket square
  - Natural turf cricket square
  - Natural turf bowling green
  - Natural turf croquet lawn



- Natural turf tennis court
- Synthetic turf association football pitch
- Synthetic turf hockey pitch
- Synthetic multi-sports park
- Non-turf cricket pitches
- Unbound mineral multi-sports park
- Synthetic surface tennis court
- Bound mineral tennis court, with or without surface coating
- Unbound mineral tennis court
- Synthetic surfaced bowling green.

- 4.3.8 Also of value is the guidance in a document produced by Sport England for its 'Playing Fields and Community Greenspaces' funding programme, sponsored by the former New Opportunities Fund. This was produced as a result of partnership between the New Opportunities Fund, Sport England, Fields in Trust, Cranfield University, the Sports Turf Research Institute, the Institute of Groundsmanship, the Sport and Play Construction Association and the Football Foundation. The guidance is intended to assist across the board with all community playing fields used at a recreational level. Its purpose is to help with the measurement and evaluation of ground cover, broad leafed weeds, sward height, thatch depth, hardness, water infiltration rate, evenness, slope, pH value and root zone layer. A summary work sheet is provided in Appendix F.
- 4.3.9 Finally, reference can also be made to the recommendations of the Governing Bodies of Sport, and trade and professional bodies, in particular SAPCA and the IoG.

#### **Playing Pitches – Observational Assessments**

- 4.3.10 As previously mentioned, non-technical visual pitch quality assessments can be undertaken though they should be used with caution. One tool that has been developed is the Electronic Toolkit available from Sport England. It is intended to cover pitches, equipment and ancillary facilities.
- 4.3.11 The Football Association is also currently piloting a 'traffic light code' assessment for natural and artificial grass pitches in England. This gives consideration to type of user, signs of wear, fencing, floodlighting, cleanliness and levels of maintenance.
- 4.3.12 User surveys are also a helpful way of assessing public opinion about the quality of provision and service that is being provided to local sports pitch users and they also form an essential element of any playing pitch review or strategy.

#### **Other Outdoor Sports**

- 4.3.13 The Fields in Trust publication 'Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' also provides design and performance quality assessment information relating to tennis, bowls and croquet.

#### **Sport – Accessibility**

##### **Access to Outdoor Sports Facilities – Sport England Accessibility Indicators**

- 4.3.14 Using the principles of Active Design and Active Travel, local outdoor sports facilities should be located where they will be accessible on foot, by bicycle or by public transport. Distance thresholds, which identify the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision, are therefore a useful measure of accessibility. Time is, however, more important to users than distance in many instances and so travel by motorised private transport is still, and will remain, an important measure.
- 4.3.15 The Government and its agencies have also been looking at performance indicators through what was known as Comprehensive Performance Assessment, which was the performance management framework used by the Audit Commission and Central Government to measure local authority performance and drive improvement in the sector. Sport England has developed the following performance indicator for this work, though it has yet to be accepted by the Audit Commission:



*Percentage of the population that are within 20 minutes travel time (Urban areas – by walk; Rural areas – by car) of a range of three different sports facility types of which one has achieved a quality assured standard*

- 4.3.16 Deficiencies in accessibility can be determined using a Geographical Information System (GIS) and a circular catchment area can be drawn around a particular type of outdoor sports facility, with a radius of the relevant distance threshold.
- 4.3.17 Playing fields feature as one of the six facilities defined for the purpose of 4.3.14 above, which also include leisure centres, swimming pools, golf courses, fitness facilities and artificial pitches. This indicator has strong potential to illustrate physical activity choices but it is not sympathetic to the particular promotion and provision of local pitch facilities, particular junior and mini facilities which may fall below the Government determined size threshold of 0.4 hectares, as used for statutory consultation purposes in the planning system. Furthermore, the sport sector has yet to agree a universally recognised quality assurance standard for assessing pitch provision in this context.

#### **Local Assessments and Accessibility Standards**

- 4.3.18 Local assessments of need will seek to establish the effective catchment of a particular type of outdoor sports facility. This can be determined by asking a random sample of typical users of the facility to provide information on how far they have travelled, and their mode of transport. For outdoor sports this can be difficult because competitive matches will involve 'away' teams whose players will not be typical users. An alternative method is to record home postcodes and plot these on a geographical Information system. It will then be possible to calculate the straight line distance each user has travelled. The determination of such local standards can therefore be an expensive, time-consuming and somewhat inaccurate picture of present use if it is to be used as a basis for potential future use. It is highly reliant on patterns of use determined by existing local provision rather than choice from the widest spectrum. It should be used with caution.

#### **Accessibility Benchmark Standards for the Pitch Sports**

- 4.3.19 Against this background, it can also be helpful to use accessibility benchmark standards, provided by organisations such as Fields in Trust or the National Governing Bodies of Sport. In 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001 version), the NPFA considered it important that local playing fields are available within 1.2 kilometres (three-quarters of a mile) of all dwellings in major housing areas to provide opportunities for outdoor sports. In addition it was considered reasonable for a travelling time of approximately 20 minutes by motor transport to synthetic pitches or athletics tracks, and a 10 – 15 minute walk to more local facilities.
- 4.3.20 According to Sport England research, synthetic turf pitches have a catchment of around 20 minutes travel time. The Football Association estimates that the prime catchment area for full-size Third Generation pitches is a radius of around 5 miles. If this is the case, it is clear that in order to be viable this type of pitch needs to be located within an urban area.
- 4.3.21 The Football Association also has a 'standard' of one small-sided court/pitch per 10,000 population.

#### **Hierarchies of Pitch Provision**

- 4.3.22 Facilities of different scales are likely to have a range of distance thresholds. Large facilities will be relevant to users from a wider area than small ones, for example a multi sport hub will attract users from a wider area than a local playing pitch. One way of reflecting the range of possible distance thresholds for facilities of different sizes and quality is to use a hierarchy of provision. Hierarchies can be defined by their size, effective catchment and range of facilities.
- 4.3.23 The aim should be to develop and maintain a hierarchy of playing pitches to satisfy the different aspirations of users. To this end, some National Governing Bodies of Sport (Football Association, Rugby Football Union, England and Wales Cricket Board and the English Hockey Association) have adopted a hierarchical approach to facilities provision in their national facilities strategies.

- 4.3.24 A typical hierarchy for pitch sports could start at the neighbourhood level and might include kick-about areas, five-a-side pitches and amenity spaces for casual use, which would encourage initial participation. These informal facilities play an important part in the local hierarchy of provision and their provision should not be considered in isolation from formal facilities. To some extent there is an overlap with play provision, although this type of space will be primarily used for sports activities.
- 4.3.25 Local league level pitches provide opportunities for regular competitive play, where the pitches should be well-drained with good quality playing surfaces and changing rooms. Higher league pitches provide facilities for those teams that have reached a relatively high standard of play and are playing regular league matches where facilities would need to be of a standard to meet their specific league requirements. At the top of the hierarchy are clubs in regional and national leagues at an amateur, semi-professional and professional level where facility requirements might include spectator facilities, floodlighting and so on.

### Provision in Rural Areas

- 4.3.26 The low levels of population and the distance between settlements generally mean that it is not possible for every settlement to have its own playing pitch. Fields in Trust does, however, strongly recommend that every rural settlement should have its own area of open space, which should provide for the specific (and changing) sport, recreation and play needs of its local community. It will also be the case that provision of identified specialist outdoor sports facilities may be provided within one rural settlement with a view to also serving the sporting needs of neighbouring communities.

### Accessibility and Other Outdoor Sports

#### Athletics

- 4.3.27 The UK Athletics Strategy for the United Kingdom, 2002 to 2006, identified the need for the following facilities for training and competition:
- **8 lane tracks:** Each English county, London Borough, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Region and large Metropolitan area should have an 8 lane synthetic track with suitable covered spectator provision and floodlighting
  - **6 lane tracks:** There should be one 6 lane synthetic track with floodlighting per 250,000 people living within 30 minutes drive time (45 minutes in rural areas) of the proposed location
  - **Training facilities:** These are typically small-scale synthetic surfaces, perhaps a small scale running track with field event provision and floodlighting. They should be predominantly, but not exclusively, located on dual use school sites. These facilities might be situated in areas where population does not justify the provision of a full track or where communications are difficult.

#### Tennis

- 4.3.28 The Lawn Tennis Association focuses on the network of clubs serving communities and providing the facilities to support the Community Tennis Programme. To meet the needs of players of a higher standard, an area network of Centres of Excellence providing clay courts for all year round training and competitions is seen as a priority. No tennis specific accessibility benchmark standards are published at present though advice should be sought from the Governing Body.

#### Bowls

- 4.3.29 Bowls has a regional focus. Flat green bowls is concentrated in the southern counties of England: Federation bowls in the north east and eastern counties; and, Crown Green in the north with a focus in the north west. The sport is mainly focused on local levels of provision. The outdoor codes hold county and regional events at clubs that meet certain criteria. Principally this relates to the quality of the playing surface and the capacity of the facility to accommodate the larger numbers of people attending competitions and events. In the case of outdoor greens this is mainly concerned with the size and quality of the pavilion. A pool of recognised regional/county centres for each code has been developed. No bowls specific accessibility benchmark standards are published at present though advice should be sought from the Governing Body.



## 4.4 The Summary of the Proposed Benchmark Standards for Play

### 4.4.1 Quantity – All Playing Space

**Table 4c – Children’s Playing Space Quantity Benchmark Standard**

Children’s Playing Space	Benchmark Standard (Hectares per ‘000)
Designated Playing Space, including equipped playing space	0.25
Informal Playing Space	0.55
Total Children’s Playing Space	0.80

Refer to Table 4d for definitions of different types of playing space

### 4.4.2 Quality Benchmark for Children’s Playing Space

Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards using the Children’s Play Council Quality Assessment Tool. This would not set an absolute measure, but a reasonable aspiration and benchmarks against which to measure the quality of any existing children’s play space. Another tool, recommended by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) is Fields in Trust’s own ‘Play Value Assessment for Playgrounds’, a copy which is provided as Appendix F. This publication will be considered for revision by Fields in Trust during the next 12 months.

### 4.4.3 Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Children’s Playing Space

**Table 4d – Children’s Playing Space Accessibility Benchmark Standard**

Type of Space	Distance Criteria (metres)	
	Walking Distance	Straight Line Distance
Local areas for play or ‘door-step’ spaces – for play and informal recreation (LAPs)	100	60
Local equipped, or local landscaped, areas for play – for play and informal recreation (LEAPs)	400	240
Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation, and provision for young people (NEAPs); this also covers what is referred to in the London supplementary Planning Guidance as youth space	1000	600

## 4.5 More Detailed Consideration of Fields in Trust's Recommendations for Playing Space

### The Relevance of Benchmark Standards for Playing Space

- 4.5.1 The Benchmark Standards for children and young people's play and informal recreation have been developed in accordance with central government planning guidance throughout the four nations of the United Kingdom, to address the issues of quantity, quality and accessibility. The objective of the Benchmark Standards is to ensure that play and informal recreation provision meets the needs of the existing population and needs arising from new development. The advantage of using these Benchmark Standards is that they set a defined baseline against which the current state and the success, or failure, of policies and plans can be measured. The Benchmark Standard can be used in conjunction with a local assessment of need. The quantitative benchmark standard is based on results from a survey of local authorities and this can be used to compare local authority performance against a national Benchmark. The Benchmark Standard enables local authorities, and others, to assess sufficiency or deficiencies in terms of quantity, quality or accessibility. This provides a basis for prioritising future action to address local needs.
- 4.5.2 Fields in Trust has developed Benchmark Standards for outdoor playing space for children and young people. As for sport, the Rural and Urban Area Classification, devised in 2005, was used as the basis for classifying local authorities. The survey data has been used together with the former rationale and recommendations given in the 1986 and the 2001 editions of 'The Six Acre Standard', particular in the context of quantitative recommendations and Benchmark Standards for designated equipped playing space and informal playing space. Again, the Benchmark Standards are based on median averages.
- 4.5.3 Specifically, attention is drawn to the London Benchmark Standard used in the Supplementary Planning Guidance published by the Greater London Authority which addresses similar provision in the capital. The benchmark standards provided in that documentation indicate a minimum of 10 square metres per child and this lower level of recommendation reflects the greater population density and lack of available open space and playing space available in much of the capital, particularly inner London. This may be particularly useful for all or parts of the local authority areas of our major towns and cities. It should be noted, however, that the Benchmark Standard developed for London is based on forecast child population, the objective being to provide a more accurate basis for assessing children's needs. The Fields in Trust Benchmark Standards, however, continues to use total populations forecasts, recognising the context of children's playing space being a contributor to overall open space provision for the whole community, and the multifunctionality of many open spaces, whether occurring naturally or by way of intentional design, or a mix of the two. Both approaches have their strengths.

Youth space is defined in the London SPG as places where young people aged 12 and over can meet and take part in informal sports-based activities (including 'extreme sports' such as skateboarding and skating) and other informal recreation. (Note that the age range is indicative.)

### Size of provision

- 4.5.4 It is relevant to state that one of the key messages to emerge from the consultation events undertaken for the Children's Play Review, as commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport under the leadership of the Rt Hon Frank Dobson MP, was that there is a preference for small and medium sized provision rather than large, thereby allowing for greatest access and providing an inclusive approach to provision at the local level.

### Provision in Rural Areas

- 4.5.5 This is dealt with later in this chapter in the context of auditing existing provision. Overall spatial requirements for both children and young people need specific consideration in rural areas in the context of quantity and accessibility: these factors impact on the nature of facilities, and therefore their quality.



## Detailed Consideration of Fields in Trust's Quality Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Playing Space

- 4.5.6 A quality Benchmark Standard for provision for children and young people should be derived from the analysis of quality undertaken as part of the audit of provision as recommended in PPG17. It is important that the assessment of the quality of provision takes place in the context of the location of the play setting and 'play value'.
- 4.5.7 The Green Flag Award, organised through the Civic Trust, and sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government, began as an award for parks in 1996 and has now been expanded to cover green spaces generally, in England and Wales. Together with its Green Pennant Award it actively seeks to promote quality provision in the public and voluntary sector. A further related award is the Green Heritage Award. The award is based on criteria which judges each site in the context of a welcoming place; health, safety and security; state of cleanliness and maintenance; sustainability; conservation and heritage; community involvement; marketing and management. The criteria are, therefore, generic by nature, and while they are helpful in that context, they are considered insufficiently sector based to form the basis of quality assessment for outdoor play, or indeed outdoor sports, provision. Such provision should be assessed against sector-developed and sector-specific methodologies and tools.
- 4.5.8 Until recently, there has been much reliance upon documentation and tools which provide a basis for assessment of the quality of provision on the basis of a play value assessment. Fields in Trust's own 'Play Value Assessment for Playgrounds' is provided in Appendix F. This methodology was designed to score the quality of intended or established provision. Its application relies upon experienced judgement of the quality of provision. It is not a technically scientific methodology and it is not intended to be used on the basis of a pass or fail test. However it does produce a score that can be used to compare the quality of playgrounds designed to similar ends.
- 4.5.9 Provided the play value scores are determined on a consistent basis, they can assist in the assessment of:
- The different merits of comparable sites to enable improved decision-making and resource allocation when developing a programme of improvement of existing areas
  - Provision in relation to other providers
  - Different proposals made to specifications for new provision by designers and/or manufacturers as part of a tendering process.
- 4.5.10 This methodology has been referred to by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), for example in paragraph 8 of its briefing note 07/06 to, inter alia, Chief Executives of Local Authorities in Wales, in January 2007. Fields in Trust is considering its revision.
- 4.5.11 Play England is producing A Quality Assessment Tool for the determination of quality benchmark standards by local authorities, or indeed other providers. The tool has been piloted in 6 local authorities in England and will be available in the imminent future. As with Fields in Trust's 'Play Value Assessment' an absolute measure would not be set but benchmarks can be established to make reasonable, judgemental measurements about the quality of children's play space.
- 4.5.12 The Quality Assessment Tool aims to assess the quality of play provision for children. Although children do play in numerous spaces and places, parks and designated play areas can significantly enhance children's capacity to play out freely and increase the quality of their play experiences. The assessment tool is more broadly based than Fields in Trust's Play Value Assessment – it focuses on three major aspects of children's outdoor play: the location, the play value and care and maintenance.
- 4.5.13 The Play England guide assesses three different types of play spaces and facilities:
- Type A: doorstep space and facilities (DAPs) – in broad terms similar to Fields in Trust's Local Areas for Play (LAPs)
  - Type B: local space and facilities (LAPs) – in broad terms similar to Fields in Trust's Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs)
  - Type C: neighbourhood space and facility (NAPs) – in broad terms similar to Fields in Trust's Neighbourhood equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).

Care should be taken to ensure that definitions and abbreviations are clearly stated.



4.5.14 Each type of facility is considered in the context of space and equipment provided, and the age groups of the intended primary users. Natural and equipped sites can be examined in the context of play value. Unsupervised and supervised settings can both be assessed using this tool. Location is considered the single most important factor in how well children use both designated play areas and open spaces more generally. The play value assessment is based on consideration of the different, innovative and challenging ways in which children can experience sensations when using equipment or the natural environment, such as rocking, swinging and sliding. It gives consideration to the breadth and depth of potential experience, and also recognises the importance of more passive or contemplative play. Finally, all types require that children can play in areas free from foreseeable hazards and therefore the aim is also to assess the quality and maintenance of play spaces and play areas.

**Detailed Consideration of Fields in Trust’s Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Playing Space**

4.5.15 Accessibility Benchmark Standards are the distance thresholds used to set the catchment area for each type of space. Provision for children and young people should be located where they will be accessible on foot or by bicycle. The ‘effective catchment’ of a play space may be defined as the distance travelled by 75% of users. The age of the children for whom the space is designed will largely determine the effective catchment. A play area intended for young children will have a different walking catchment from a space intended for older children because of the different distances that parents allow children of different ages to ‘range’ unaccompanied from their home. A range of distance thresholds related to play spaces of different scales or qualities is recommended.

**Table 4e – Distance thresholds for catchment areas**

Type of Space	Distance Criteria (metres)	
	Walking Distance	Straight Line Distance
Local areas for play or ‘door-step’ spaces – for play and informal recreation (LAPs)	100	60
Local equipped, or local landscaped, areas for play – for play and informal recreation (LEAPs)	400	240
Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people (NEAPs)	1000	600

Note: the London SPG gives maximum walking/travelling distances as below:

- Under 5s 100m
- 5-11 year olds 400m
- children aged 12+ 800m

The age ranges are indicative.

4.5.16 Distance thresholds can be used in association with a Geographical Information System (GIS) to identify the number of children within a distance threshold of play space as well as the number located outside the catchment of a particular category of play space. It can also be used to compare possible locations for new provision to determine which will be the most effective.

4.5.17 The most straightforward way to map approximate catchment areas is to use simple straight line distances to plot circles with a radius of the appropriate distance threshold. Account should be taken of any barriers to access such as busy roads and the catchment boundary ‘trimmed’ accordingly. It will then be possible to identify areas without ready access to play spaces.



- 4.5.18 In new developments, this methodology can ensure that the provision of spaces and opportunities provided upon them is design led and determined after due consideration of distance, travel times, catchment areas and location. The days of reliance on SLOAP ('Space Left Over After Planning') should be long gone.
- 4.5.19 Play England is in the process of developing play indicators.

## 4.6 Recommended Steps in the Application of Benchmark Standards for Children's Play

4.6.1 Benchmark standards can be used to establish:

- the quantitative requirement for play provision
- accessibility to play provision
- the quality of play provision.

A series of steps is proposed in the application of the benchmark standards in assessing the needs of the existing population and the needs arising from new development.

### Undertaking an Audit of Existing Play Provision

#### The scope of the audit

- 4.6.2 The aim of the audit is to establish the level and distribution of existing provision. Whilst it is recognised that children and young people play and hang out at a variety of spaces, the Benchmark Standards are concerned with two types of space. The first element of the SPACE standard is designated spaces including equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks, multi-use games areas and other facilities for children and young people. The second element is the amenity and other green spaces that afford opportunities for casual and informal play.
- 4.6.3 It is necessary to determine the category of space that is being assessed during a site visit. For equipped play spaces, a judgement will need to be made about the function of the space and the age range of the children or young people that it is intended to be used by.

#### Quantity – designated equipped play spaces and landscaped areas for play

- 4.6.4 A sensible basis for provision standards is the 'useful area' of the play space. Undertaking the audit will require site visits to all equipped play spaces and it is reasonably straightforward to plot and measure the size of the designated play space.

#### Quantity – casual and informal spaces for play

- 4.6.5 Determining which spaces are used for casual and informal play and which should be included in the audit is a less straightforward matter. The Fields in Trust Benchmark Standard is primarily concerned with those areas of amenity green space in housing areas that are available for and used by children for play. A pragmatic approach to assessing the playability of this type of space is required. Information about the amount and location of amenity green space may well have been undertaken for the local authority area's Play Strategy and/or Open Space Strategy, if it has been produced. If not, use can be made of existing records such as grounds maintenance data to identify the relevant spaces in housing areas. Again site visits, combined with local knowledge will enable an assessment to be made. Certain areas will not be used by children including grass verges close to busy roads, SLOAP land that is considered not to be safe, green spaces that are next to living room windows or areas with 'No Ball Games' signs.

#### Quality

- 4.6.6 The Play England Quality Assessment Tool, or equivalent, can be used to assess the quality of both designated play spaces, whether equipped or not, and casual and informal spaces for play.

## Accessibility

- 4.6.7 Once the spaces are mapped, catchment areas can be drawn using the distance thresholds for each different type of play space. These will need to take account of the main barriers to access.
- 4.6.8 The Play England 'Play Indicators Project' is developing an indicator concerned with access to a variety of facilities and spaces which is to be based on the percentage of children and young people aged birth to 16 having access to at least 3 different types of space or facility, of which at least one is a dedicated place for play and informal recreation, within easy walking or cycling distance. Definitions of the terms used will be provided in the published documents.

## Identifying Deficiencies

### Deficiencies in Quantity

- 4.6.9 The Benchmark Standard can be applied to the population for each neighbourhood for each different category of equipped play space to identify areas of quantitative deficiency (or surplus). Using the Benchmark Standard provides a basis for assessing the adequacy of existing provision in the area compared to the median score achieved in other local authority areas. The Benchmark Standard can be used to assess the adequacy of each category of equipped play space as well as the adequacy of provision for casual and informal play. The overall children's playing space Benchmark Standard can then be applied to obtain an overview of the current level of provision.

### Deficiencies in Quality

- 4.6.10 Having developed a Benchmark Standard for quality, it will be possible to grade the scores for each category of equipped play space and informal space. This could be a simple high or low score depending on whether the score is above or below the median. Determining the quartile scores could be used to provide a finer grading of quality scores. Quality deficiencies can be identified by colour coding each space and mapping the scores. This will identify spatially those spaces in need of improvement.
- 4.6.11 This process could be refined to map just the location scores. Spaces that score poorly against the location criteria are unlikely to ever provide a good quality experience for children and young people even if they score highly in other respects. For these spaces, relocation is likely to be the only sensible way forward.

### Deficiencies in Accessibility

- 4.6.12 The easiest way to define deficiencies in accessibility is to undertake a separate analysis for each category of space using the GIS. A different layer should be used for each different category of space in the hierarchy. Circular catchment areas defined by the relevant distance threshold are drawn around each existing space in turn. These will need to be adjusted to take account of barriers, or 'severance factors'. Also, a space that functions at the highest level of the hierarchy will also function at each of the lower levels. This will provide a visual assessment of areas that are not well served by the existing provision.
- 4.6.13 For each category of space the analysis will show those spaces that are located within the distance threshold of at least one space and those areas that are located outside the distance threshold of all existing spaces.

### Identifying local needs

- 4.6.14 The mapping process identifies the areas where there are deficiencies and where priority will need to be given for additional provision unless it is possible to improve the accessibility of existing spaces. Spaces which do not meet the Benchmark Quality Standard, will need improvement. Spaces that are in the wrong place will need to be considered for relocation.



## The Approach in Rural Areas

- 4.6.15 A parish plan tackles important issues that will influence the future of the community. This should always include the provision of outdoor sports and children's play provision. The plan is led by the town or parish council, who should take account of the views of the whole community. The final plan should include an action plan for the area.
- 4.6.16 Parish plans can influence the way local services are delivered. They are important tools which can feed into other plans and strategies including local development frameworks, seeking to ensure that the needs of individual towns and villages and their surrounding countryside are fully considered. The parish plan for an area could be included in the local authority's local development framework. It could become an area action plan (part of the statutory plan) or a supplementary planning document.
- 4.6.17 Most village communities have long-standing landowners, many of whom are farmers, who could make a valuable contribution to provision in rural areas. Given the very low returns from agriculture at present, there are opportunities for farmers who own land adjacent to villages to consider the sale or lease of a site dedicating it as outdoor playing space. This is an initiative currently being pursued by at least one district council in an attempt to establish informal recreation fields, initially with little or no equipment, next to villages that have no play areas for children. The more philanthropic of country land owners have been known to gift land and facilities for community organisations on many occasions and this practice will, in circumstances agreeable to the landowner, continue in future. Appropriate approaches, with guarantees of long term facility protection like those used by Fields in Trust, strongly based on land, contract or charity law (see Chapter 7 on Safeguarding Facilities for the Future) should be made when appropriate.
- 4.6.18 Application of the children's playing space Benchmark Standard in small villages requires careful consideration. Even larger communities that have a linear layout or have been split into separate areas, for example through the construction of a new bypass, may experience problems. The need for appropriate children's play areas is acknowledged. However, the community's ability to provide the land and then equip and maintain the facility is often considered to be beyond its financial ability. Where there is a small population of say 150 people, including 25 to 30 children of all ages, provision needs to be appropriately adjusted in order that all of the children's needs can be met.
- 4.6.19 Detail surrounding LAPs, LEAPs, NEAPs and local landscaped areas for play are provided in Chapter 6 on Design Detail.
- 4.6.20 For rural areas, the following recommendations should be considered:
- 1000 people or more: there should be full provision of LAPs, LEAPs, local landscaped areas for play and NEAPS
  - 250 to 1000 people: there should be provision of LAPs and LEAPs or local landscaped areas for play, with priority afforded to the LEAPs as equipped areas
  - 100 to 250 people: there should be the provision of a LEAP, for existing housing areas, a local landscaped area for play or a casual play area and, for new developments, LAPs. These should be located as close as possible to the heart of the settlement. However, it is recognised that within existing communities the only available land may be orientated towards one end of the settlement
  - Less than 100 people: there should be provision of a LEAP for existing housing areas and LAPs for play in any new developments. These should be located as close as possible to the centre. However, it is recognised that within existing communities the only available land may be orientated towards one end of the settlement.
- 4.6.21 Many village schools have sufficient grounds to provide safe play opportunities and are often so central to village life that they will permit access outside normal school hours. Where they do not have any play equipment, there may be potential for a joint initiative with the village community and the parish council.

## Reading and References

'Rural and Urban Classification 2004, as amended 2005' National Statistics (2005)

'The Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' Peter Dury, NPFA, Fields in Trust (2004)

'The Football Development Strategy 2001-2006' The Football Association

'Grass Pitches for Football – facilities data Sheet 7' and other data sheets, the Football Foundation (2004)

Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA) Technical Guidance Leaflets

Institute of Groundsmanship (IoG) Data Sheets

Sport England Design Guidance Notes

'Supplementary Planning Guidance – Proving for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation' The Greater London Authority (2008)

'Planning for Play' Play England (2006)

'Getting Serious About Play – A Review of Children's Play' Department for Culture, Media and Sport' (2004)

[www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nrudp.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nrudp.asp)

[www.sportengland.org/facilities\\_guidance.htm](http://www.sportengland.org/facilities_guidance.htm)

[www.iog.org/pitchproblems-datasheets.asp](http://www.iog.org/pitchproblems-datasheets.asp)

[www.playengland.org.uk/downloads/pdf/planning\\_for\\_play.pdf](http://www.playengland.org.uk/downloads/pdf/planning_for_play.pdf)

[www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/spg-children-recreation.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/spg-children-recreation.jsp)

[www.sportengland.org/kitbag\\_local\\_step1\\_assessing\\_pitch\\_provision.htm](http://www.sportengland.org/kitbag_local_step1_assessing_pitch_provision.htm)

[www.apse.org.uk/membership/pdfs/briefings/07-06%20Measure-framework.pdf](http://www.apse.org.uk/membership/pdfs/briefings/07-06%20Measure-framework.pdf)





## Websites

Fields in Trust

[www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org)

Sport England

[www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

Sports Council for Northern Ireland

[www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

Sportscotland

[www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)

Sports Council for Wales

[www.sports-council-wales-org.uk](http://www.sports-council-wales-org.uk)

Institute of Groundmanship

[www.iog.org](http://www.iog.org)

Institute of Sport, Parks and Leisure

[www.ispal.org.uk](http://www.ispal.org.uk)

Institute of Sport and Recreation management

[www.isrm.co.uk](http://www.isrm.co.uk)

Sport and Play Construction Association

[www.org.uk](http://www.org.uk)

Football Association

[www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com)

Football Foundation

[www.footballfoundation.org.uk](http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk)

Central Council for Physical Recreation

[www.ccpr.org.uk](http://www.ccpr.org.uk)

Federation of Sports and Play Associations

[www.sportsandplay.com](http://www.sportsandplay.com)

Details of other governing bodies can be obtained from the National Sports Councils or the Central Council for Physical Recreation on

Play England

[www.playengland.org](http://www.playengland.org)

Active Places

[www.activeplaces.com](http://www.activeplaces.com)

Children's Play Council

[www.ncb.org/cpc](http://www.ncb.org/cpc)

Playboard Northern Ireland

[www.playboard.org](http://www.playboard.org)

Play Scotland

[www.playscotland.org](http://www.playscotland.org)

Play Wales

[www.playwales/.org.uk](http://www.playwales/.org.uk)

Association of Play Industries

[www.api-play.org](http://www.api-play.org)

Register of Playground Inspectors International

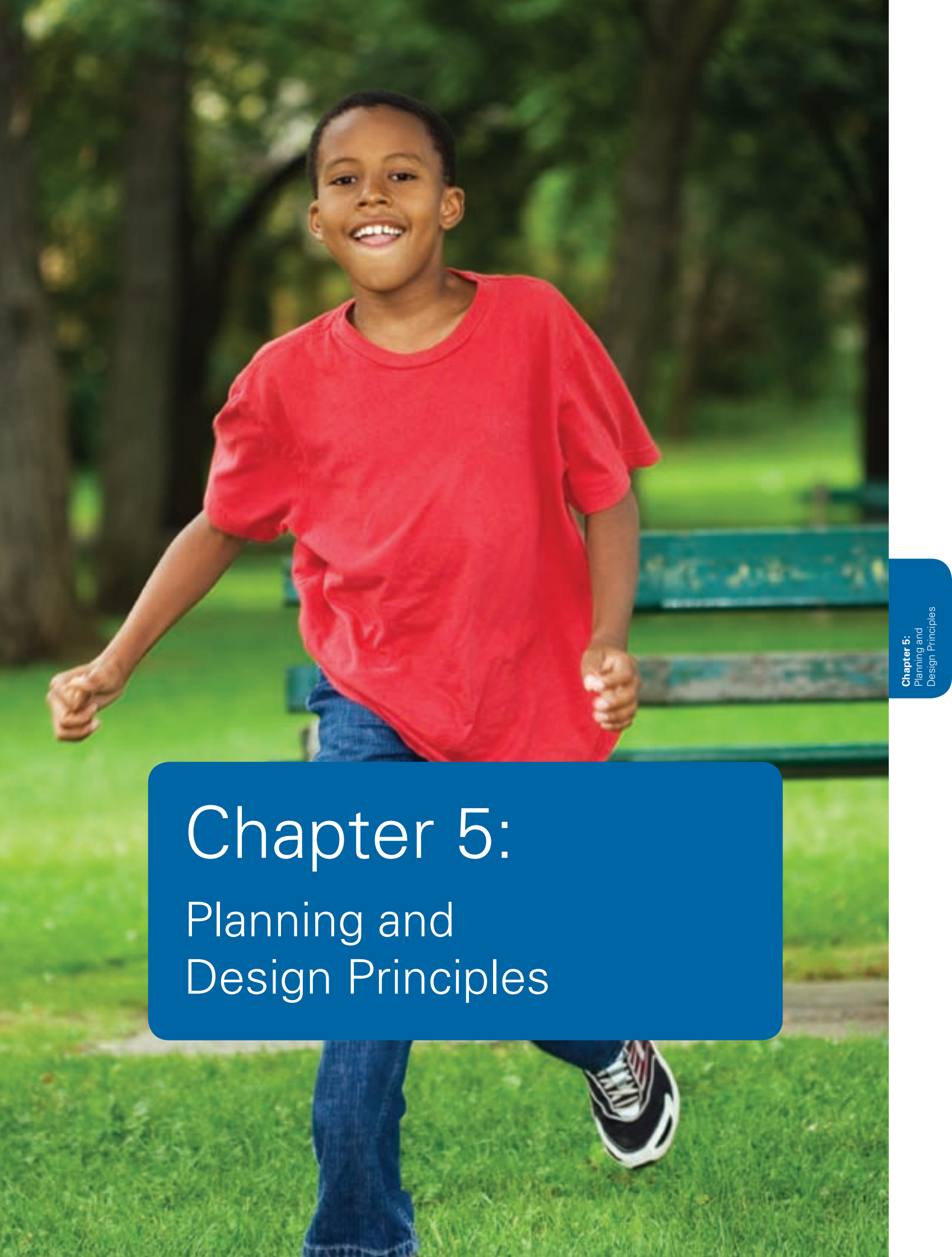
[www.rpii.org](http://www.rpii.org)

RoSPA Play Safety

[www.rospa.com/playsafety](http://www.rospa.com/playsafety)

Playlink

[www.playlink.org.uk](http://www.playlink.org.uk)



# Chapter 5:

## Planning and Design Principles

# Chapter 5: Planning and Design Principles

## 5.1 Principles and Concepts for Planning for Local Open Space and Outdoor Facilities for Sport and Play

### Key principles in planning for outdoor sport and play

- 5.1.1 The nature, quantity, quality and accessibility of open space of all forms, including outdoor facilities for sport and play, at a local level, are described by the Government in 'Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17'. The following is based very much upon that document.
- 5.1.2 The key principles in providing for outdoor sport and play are:
- Local needs varying from place to place according to different socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of local communities and those working, studying and visiting the local environment
  - Good quality planning, creative urban and landscape design, effective management based on an inter-disciplinary approach and, where appropriate, inter-agency partnership arrangements
  - Improving and enhancing the accessibility and quality of existing provision as well as providing additional facilities to enhance the network
  - The value of open spaces for sport and play – which in turn are dependent upon both the extent to which they meet local needs and the wider benefits they generate for people – wildlife, biodiversity and the wider environment.

### Provision in rural areas

- 5.1.3 These key principles apply to both urban and rural areas, though the following differences are to be noted:
- Those living in rural areas cannot always expect to have the same level of access to the range of different types of open spaces and sports facilities normally available in more densely populated urban areas: Fields in Trust however considers the child's need to play to be universal regardless of location
  - Therefore, residents of rural areas must expect to have to travel further than most urban residents to some forms of sports provision: again, the different position of children and their need for play opportunities in their villages and other settlements, near to home, is emphasised
  - Nonetheless, residents of many quite small villages can reasonably expect to have core facilities provided within a village green or recreation ground, together with ancillary provision as appropriate
  - Such facilities are preferably provided within each 'village community', although in certain circumstances provision may well have to be located on the fringe of the settlement
  - It is desirable to differentiate between provision standards for urban areas, compared with those for rural areas
  - Access to informal recreation areas, such as country parks and nature reserves, may be easier and less time-consuming for those in rural areas. However, these facilities should not be considered substitutes for local areas for sport and play.

### Key attributes for outdoor sport and play provision

- 5.1.4 The following attributes are considered essential for all open spaces for sport, play and recreation facilities, namely accessibility, quality, multi-functionality, primary purpose and quantity:
- Accessibility – location, location, location is the name of the game and therefore convenient, inclusive and safe accessibility to outdoor facilities, particularly for children and the less mobile, is of paramount importance
  - Quality – this depends on both the needs, expectations and experiences of users; and the design, management and maintenance of the facilities

- Conflicting uses – many open spaces accommodate more than one sport or recreation activity. Most grass pitches, for example, can be used for other purposes such as children’s play, kite flying, exercising dogs or jogging as well as sport. These uses need managing positively to avoid conflicts such as persuading dog walkers to use the agreed perimeters of playing fields. Different types of users need to be understanding of the needs of others, the nature of the space and its potential for flexible use
- Multi-functionality – beyond the diversity of recreational activity, individual and networks of green space perform important environmental functions, such as moderating surface water run-off, air pollution and wind speeds, as well as providing wildlife habitats to aid biodiversity. Such spaces, when attractive and well-maintained, also have beneficial effects on the local economy, raising the asset value of property and encouraging inward investment
- Primary purpose – not withstanding the above, different types of facilities will have a primary purpose which is accorded priority at certain times (e.g. sports pitches when matches are being played) or indeed at all times (e.g. children’s playgrounds and bowling greens)
- Quantity – is often the traditional measure of provision. Some argue these days that accessibility and quality are more important but in extremis this can present dangers. For example, a play policy based solely or in large part on destination playgrounds would not meet children’s needs for local play provision they can access independently. As is stated in PPG17 and equivalent guidance on planning for open space elsewhere in the UK, standards of provision should cover quantity, quality and accessibility equally.

5.1.5 The Companion Guide helpfully looks at how management and maintenance link the five attributes:

- Accessibility and quantity relate to the location and use of land. They are delivered in large part through the planning system and sustained by good management and maintenance. Accessibility is additionally maintained by other local authority strategies and initiatives such as those relating to sustainable transport and community safety
- Quantity, multi-functionality and primary purpose are delivered in the first instance through good design, and then sustained by good management and maintenance. The planning system can assist by generating resources through conditions or planning agreements.

## 5.2 Key Factors in Designing for Outdoor Sport and Play

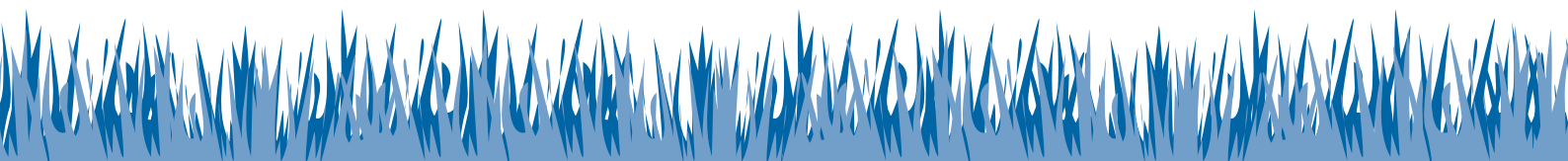
5.2.1 There are three contexts in which design for outdoor sport and play is to be considered.

- High quality, inclusive design in the layout of new developments, including masterplanning and the principles of Active Design (refer to paragraphs 5.3.5 to 5.3.8)
- The design and adaptation of existing settlements in order that they may better provide for new facilities and opportunities, particularly for young people, and encourage healthier lifestyles through active travel i.e. walking and cycling
- The design of particular facilities fit for purpose for sport and play which contribute significantly to the enjoyment by users.

5.2.2 In the context of the wider built environment, the Government sets out overarching advice in ‘By Design’ through the overlapping and mutually reinforcing objectives of urban design. That document is relevant to all aspects of the built environment, including the design of buildings and spaces, landscapes and transport systems. It also states, importantly, that it has implications for planning and development at every scale; villages and cities, local street level and neighbourhood level.

5.2.3 Factors for consideration in design are:

- Character: the promotion of character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture
- Continuity and enclosure: a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished; the promotion of continuity of street frontages and enclosure of space by development which clearly defines public and private areas
- Quality of the public realm: a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas; the promotion of spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including children, the disabled and the elderly





- **Ease of movement:** a place that is easy to get to and move through; the promotion of accessibility and local permeability by making places connect with each other which are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport
- **Legibility:** a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand: the promotion of legibility through development that provides recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around
- **Adaptability:** a place that can change easily; the promotion of adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions; this is especially important for children's play provision
- **Diversity:** a place with variety and choice: the promotion of diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

5.2.4 In the context of specific facilities for outdoor sport and play, the following principles apply:

- Users' potential experience and enjoyment should be at the forefront of design considerations at all times
- Facilities for outdoor sport and play should be an equal and integral part of the design process from the outset, particularly considering the need for children to be able to access places independently as they grow and develop
- The community, including children and young people in particular, should be involved at the earliest possible stage
- Facilities should be as accessible as possible to as many potential users as possible
- Facilities should be easy to access by pedestrians and cyclists and that access should be separate from major vehicle movements
- Facilities should be attractive and welcoming and sited in open locations, easily observable by non-users, and designed with regard to the principles of crime prevention
- Facilities should be sited on land suitable (in terms of location and topography) for the intended use(s)
- Facilities should be designed with their primary purpose paramount, but with a view to as much multi-functionality as is possible without compromising the primary purpose
- Play and recreation facilities for children and young people should provide as much risk and challenge as is appropriate, without putting users in danger of serious harm
- Measures should be taken, such as providing appropriate buffer zones and ensuring that facilities do not enable users to overlook neighbouring properties, to ensure that the possibility of conflict local residents and those at play is minimized
- Design should take account of industry standards, with an informed view taken to risk assessment and management where standards either do not apply or are considered inappropriate
- Design should incorporate appropriate best practice and the possibility of appropriate innovation
- Ease of maintenance and quality management should be considered and account taken of intended life-span, environmental and operational sustainability and repair and replacement requirements; overall, give full consideration to value-for-money.

## 5.3 Designing for Outdoor Sport and Play in New Settlements

### Master Planning

- 5.3.1 A master plan is a plan for a large area, such as a town centre or large-scale new residential development. It sets out the development framework for infrastructure, buildings and the public realm and presents how the plotted area might look in the future. The master plan is developed within the local, regional and national policy context. It provides a long-term vision of future development within the context of agreed planning and design objectives. The master plan will be equally as concerned with the quantity, quality and accessibility of spaces and facilities for outdoor, sport, play and recreation – both formal and informal – as it will be with other aspects of development. The master plan itself is a flexible document that develops over time.
- 5.3.2 Each master plan will have its own defined principles and objectives depending on the nature of the development. All should be considered in the context of impact upon, and facilities and opportunities for sport, play and recreation.



5.3.3 They will generally include:

- Sustainability
- Access strategy and permeability, with a focus on green travel
- Settlement layout
- Open spaces and landscape strategy
- Overarching design principles
- Ecology objectives
- Relationship of surrounding environment.

5.3.4 Specifically in the context of outdoor sport, play and recreation, master plans will:

- Explore how the streets and open spaces are to be connected
- Indicate proposed relationships between buildings and public and private spaces. The specific relationship with buildings for indoor sport, play and recreation will be important
- Set out the location of future activities and uses
- Identify the network of movement patterns for pedestrians, cyclists and motorised vehicles, public and private, with emphasis and priority afforded to active or green travel
- Relate the physical form to social, economic and cultural context and stakeholder interests.

A useful tool for the assessment and evaluation of master plans is 'Active Design' and this is outlined below.

### Active Design

5.3.5 Active Design is an initiative sponsored by Sport England to promote new settlements and environments that offer and encourage communities to be naturally active as part of their daily life. It can be applied equally to brownfield sites and areas of urban expansion. Elements of the Active Design guidance can also be applied to the development of smaller schemes. The guidance serves as a tool for both the design and evaluation of master plans.

5.3.6 In promoting physical activity and active travel (walking, cycling and some types of leisure activity that can act as modes of transport such as skateboarding and rollerblading, and including children at play in the outdoors while moving between places), Active Design integrates three converging agendas:

- The design agenda: the promotion of high quality, inclusive design of buildings and public spaces
- The health agenda: physical activity is fundamental to the overall health and well-being of the nation and central to arresting increasing trends in obesity
- The transport agenda: the promotion of active travel modes reflects government transport policy seeking to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly movement.

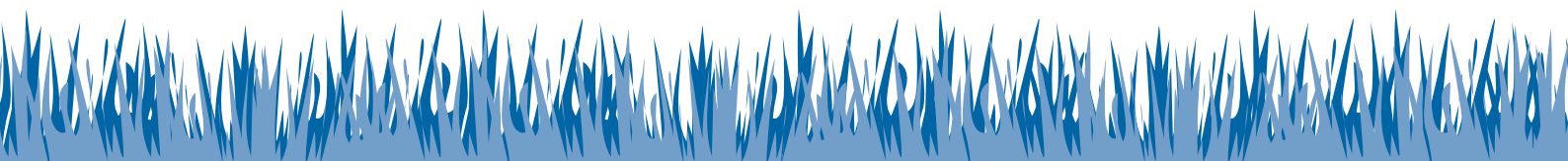
The fourth agenda that can now be added is the sport and play agenda; that is the recognition that sport and play are important in their own right, in terms of fun, enjoyment, quality of life and personal development. Announcements at the end of 2007 by the secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families confirmed this.

5.3.7 There are three principle objectives ('the three As') underpinning Active Design:

- Improving accessibility: providing easy, safe and convenient access to a choice of opportunities for participating in sport, play and physical activity and active travel for the whole community
- Enhancing amenity: promoting environmental quality in the design and layout of new sports, play and recreational facilities, their links and relationships to other buildings and the wider public realm
- Increasing awareness: raising the prominence and legibility of sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for physical activity through the design and layout of development.

5.3.8 The three As are applied to three activity settings:

- Everyday activity destinations: e.g. homes, schools, shops, and workplaces
- Informal activity and recreation: e.g. play areas, parks and gardens
- Formal sports and leisure activities: e.g. sports pitches and tennis courts.



The Active Design guidance functions by asking a range of questions, which are provided in a matrix appended to the 'Active Design' publication.

## 5.4 Designing for Outdoor Sport and Play in Existing Settlements

5.4.1 The design and incorporation of open space for sport, play and recreation is a challenging but in some ways relatively easy matter, provided the necessary space is available. However, the majority of the population lives in established housing areas, often built at times when little consideration was given to leisure-time needs, particularly those of children and young people. In such areas, the following impacts can occur:

- Children and young people playing in places that are unsuitable or dangerous, such as roads or car parks
- Adults regarding children and young people as a nuisance when they are merely meeting and socialising in places such as shop frontages and street corners
- Children and young people are denied access to places which offer them good play facilities, such as school playgrounds and playing fields
- A lack of local places for sport and play resulting in little alternative but intensive use facilities, such as indoor sports centres or artificial turf pitches; these are extremely important but the downside is that informal use is too often prohibited, the facilities may be unaffordable to the young and the unwaged, and the location may be beyond what is reasonable in walking or active travel terms.

5.4.2 There are two key areas for action:

- Opening up existing facilities to, and building new facilities for, the community at large, in particular school, club and private premises, including playing fields and grounds
- Adapting the outdoor environment so that it is safer for pedestrians and cyclists and capable of contributing safer places for children and young people to play. This is considered further below.

### Manual for Streets

5.4.3 The most recent Government Policy relating to the use of streets is given in 'Manual for Streets'. Launched in March 2007, and superseding Design Bulletin 32 and its companion document 'Places, Streets and Movement', both of which are now withdrawn, Manual for Streets is a joint initiative between the Department of Transport and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

5.4.4 Manual for Streets provides guidance for practitioners involved in the planning, design, provision and approval of new residential streets, and modifications to existing ones. It aims to improve the quality of life through good design which creates more people-orientated streets. It is directed to bringing about a transformation in the quality of new and existing streets. Streets are to be created as high quality places for all people, regardless of age or ability. There is a clear hierarchy of users – pedestrians first, then cyclists, public transport and finally motor vehicles.

5.4.5 A clear distinction is drawn between streets and roads. Roads are essential highways whose main function is to accommodate the movement of traffic. On the other hand, streets are part of the public realm with a place function quite different to roads. Creating a sense of place is fundamental to the achievement of a richer environment and more fulfilling public spaces. It derives in large part from the strong relationship between the street and buildings and public spaces that frame it, and the activities that go on there.

5.4.6 Place is therefore no longer subservient to movement. Both are to be considered in combination, with their relative importance dependent on the street's function in the network.

5.4.7 The design of streets will have a significant impact on people's ability to walk or cycle along all-purpose streets rather than having to use paths that are segregated. There is significant opportunity for creating a more active, healthier and more stimulating street environment, particularly for children and young people.

## Home Zones

- 5.4.8 Home Zones were pioneered in England around the millennium as one particular way of making the environment safer for all, particularly children and young people. It needs to be recognised that a Home Zone is not a play area but a concept for living, allowing greater and safer opportunities for play specifically to be provided in existing built environments. But Home Zones do permit the encroachment of vehicles and are therefore not dedicated areas for children at play. Where Home Zones are incorporated into new developments, designated and dedicated facilities for children's play are still required.
- 5.4.9 By way of definition, a Home Zone has been described by Biddulph as '*A residential street in which the living environment clearly predominates over any provision for traffic. It is an environment where the design of spaces between homes provides space for motor vehicles, but where the wider needs of residents are fully accommodated. This is achieved by adopting approaches to street design, landscaping and highway engineering that control how vehicles move without restricting the number of vehicle movements.*'

## Design and Home Zones

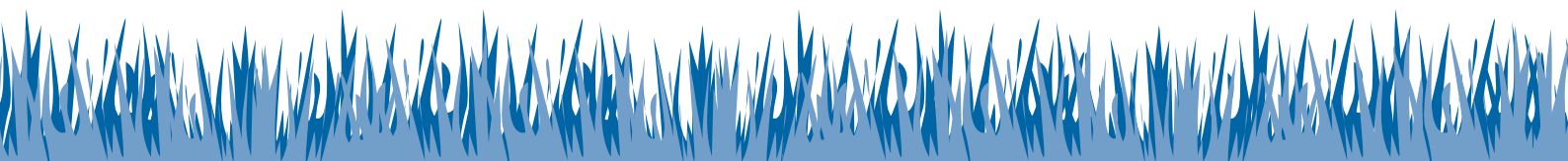
- 5.4.10 While there is no specific requirement for a Home Zone to include either designated areas for play or the provision of equipment, if its design allows the opportunity to do so, then Fields in Trust recommends that the following criteria should be included:
- Provision mainly for younger children in the reception and early primary school age range
  - Location in a position agreed following consultation with key stakeholders
  - Location where children at play can be seen clearly by cyclists and motorists and not hidden by planting, parked cars or other obstacles
  - A site selected which is well drained with an appropriate surface beneath and around any fixed play equipment in accordance with current standards
  - A site which includes an activity zone that permits incidental play around the equipment or features, the boundaries of which can be recognised by a change in the surface treatment (e.g. the type, colour or texture of material, or level), planting, street furniture or means of enclosure. The size and shape of the activity zone will be determined by the chosen play equipment or features and the character of the particular street
  - A site which includes play equipment or features of a type that have been selected only after full consultation with the occupiers of the nearest properties.
- 5.4.11 Fields in Trust's detailed recommendations on Home Zones are given in Appendix H.

## Traffic Calming Measures

- 5.4.12 Traffic calming measures, such as those below, can also be introduced to change the road environment, particularly for the benefit of younger and less mobile pedestrians.
- Signs indicating that pedestrians have priority over vehicles and that children are playing
  - Hard and soft landscaping to change the emphasis of the highway in favour of pedestrians
  - Bottlenecks, chicanes, speed bumps and tables to check the speed of vehicles
  - Occasional obstacles, such as planters, to narrow the driving space and to force vehicles to take indirect, and slower, routes
  - The use of coloured or different types of paving materials to help separate playing areas from vehicular access.

## Designing in Risk and Challenge

- 5.4.13 When designing play facilities in existing or new settlements, attention needs to be given to the balance between risk and challenge. The summary statement of 'Managing Risk in Play Provision' (2002) is: 'Children need and want to take risks when they play. Play provision aims to respond to these needs and wishes by offering children stimulating, challenging environments for exploring and developing their abilities. In doing this, play provision aims to manage the level of risk so that children are not exposed to unacceptable risks of death or serious injury.' It is clear that design has a huge impact on all aspects of the child's experience and enjoyment.



## 5.5 Specific Design Considerations

### Design Codes

- 5.5.1 A design code is a set of illustrated design guidance rules and requirements providing guidance on the physical development of a site or area. The content of the code, both written and graphic, is both detailed and precise, and built upon a site specific design vision, such as a master plan. Design codes are commonly used as a means of providing certainty over the appearance and character of a scheme, at an outline application stage. It is necessary to guard against design codes being overly prescriptive, which in turn can impact upon value-for-money. But used effectively, they can be valuable tools that help local authorities and developers deliver high quality and inclusive design. Any design code should be subject to prior consultation with identifiable stakeholders.

### Landscape design

- 5.5.2 The design and management of the external environment is a fundamental part of every development. It needs consideration at the outset. It will set the scene and create a lasting impression on those who live in, travel through or visit the development. The landscape input will vary with the nature of every development but will include:
- Landscape assessment: an assessment of the characteristics of a site and the impact of development upon it in physical, visual and policy terms. Such assessments are particularly useful on sensitive sites, such as those on the edge of a settlement, or within a designated landscape
  - Landscape strategy: This sets out the strategic approach to planning, design and green space standards and should deal with the approach to the whole range and typology of open spaces, including outdoor sites for sport and play areas
  - Landscape design: detailed landscape design will deal with both soft works and external works
  - Landscape management: the design process should include specifying the subsequent management and maintenance requirements, and the resources needed to sustain the design in use.

### Flooding

- 5.5.3 A flood risk assessment is necessary. It will help determine the location of different buildings and spaces within a development. In the context of ancillary buildings for outdoor sport such an assessment may determine where it is appropriate to place such buildings.
- 5.5.4 There is, on occasion, a tendency to place outdoor facilities for sport, play and recreation on areas subject to flooding and flood damage. Such areas provide an excellent opportunity for enhancing open space generally but they should not normally be used for siting play or formal sports facilities. If planning authorities and developers remain inclined to provide such facilities in these circumstances, then, normal quality and accessibility standards should apply. In the vast majority of cases it will not be possible to meet such standards and therefore such practice is not advisable.
- 5.5.5 Caution should also be taken in regard to the impact of flooding on the fitness for purpose of sports grounds, including pitches. The experience of Worcestershire County Cricket Club in the summer of 2007 illustrates the importance of this.

### Crime Prevention

- 5.5.6 Specific consideration needs to be given to crime prevention and public safety in relation to design and access. The Government publication 'Safer Places' identifies seven attributes of sustainability that are of particular relevance to crime prevention. It is stressed that these are not a set of rules to be applied to all situations but prompts to considerations relating to crime prevention and promoting community safety through the planning system. The attributes relate to access and movement; structure; surveillance; ownership; physical protection; activity; and management and maintenance. It is, however, important that this guidance is not used inappropriately in ways that might impinge on children's play opportunities and freedom to meet with friends.

## Reading and References

'Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17' Department of the Deputy Prime minister (2002)

'By Design –Urban Design in the Planning System' Department for Environment, Transport and Regions/CABE (2000)

'By Design – Better Places to Live: Companion Guide to PPG3' Department for Environment, Transport and Regions/CABE (2001)

'Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities, Peter Dury, National Playing Fields Association' (2004)

'Decent Parks? Decent Behaviour?' CABE Space (2005)

'Active Design' Sport England (2007)

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[http://www.sportengland.org/planning\\_active\\_design](http://www.sportengland.org/planning_active_design)

'Home Zones: A Planning and Design Handbook' Mike Biddulph, the Policy Press and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2001)

'Home Zone Design Guidelines' Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers (2002)

'Manual for Streets' Department for Transport (2007)  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/pdfmanforstreets.pdf>

'Safer Places' Department for Communities and Local Government (2004)

'Managing Risk in Play Provision' Play Safety Forum Statement published by the national children's Bureau (2002)

Requirements for Flood Risk assessments are set out in the Appendix to PPS 25 available on [www.communities.gov.uk?id+1162059](http://www.communities.gov.uk?id+1162059)

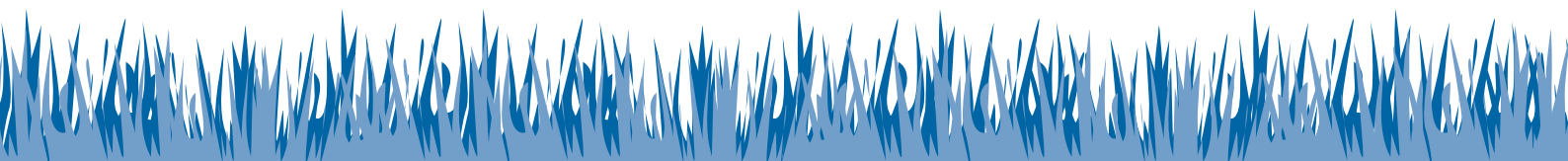
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/?lang=\\_e](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/?lang=_e)

Sport England 'Design Guidance Newsletter'  
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## Websites

Department for Communities and Local Government  
CABE and CABE Space  
Home Zones  
Manual for Streets  
Sport England  
The Landscape Institute

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)  
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[www.homezones.org.uk](http://www.homezones.org.uk)  
[www.manualforstreets.org.uk](http://www.manualforstreets.org.uk)  
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# Chapter 6:

## The Design of Outdoor Play and Sport Facilities

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## Outdoor Play and Recreation Facilities for Children and Young People

### 6.1 Designated Play Areas

#### LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs – Introduction

6.1.1 Fields in Trust introduced the concept of a hierarchy of unsupervised, designated play facilities in the 1992 version of the 'The Six Acre Standard'. Three new categories of play provision were introduced:

- The local area for play (LAP)
- The local equipped area for play (LEAP)
- The neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP).

The concept and recommendations, reinforced in the 2001 version, called for the provision of different types of play areas catering for a range of age groups in a manner appropriate to need. Most frequent and, therefore closest to home, were small areas for younger children. Less frequent and further away were areas for older children.

6.1.2 The concept of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs has been considered and or adopted – and sometimes adapted – by approximately 70% of planning authorities. It is now embedded in the lexicon of recreational planning.

6.1.3 This is not to say that the model does not have its detractors. Some critics feel that the hierarchy has led to somewhat bland and formulaic provision, that it is too prescriptive and that it gives too much weight to the importance of equipment to the detriment of design and landscape. Even the Companion Guide to PPG17 jumped on this bandwagon – it asserts that the concept results in play being allocated to the more unbuildable parts of housing sites; that the needs of older children are ignored; that it hands over design to playground manufacturers which may have vested interests in terms of sales of their own products and that elsewhere in Europe more natural play environments are created using timber and other natural materials.

6.1.4 Whatever the merits of this criticism, Fields in Trust is confident that its recommendations have proved useful, resulted in greater investment in play facilities and benefitted the enjoyment and experience of children and young people at play. In defence of its approach, Fields in Trust also emphasises that:

- The 2001 edition summary clearly states that designated play areas should be provided for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment designed to improve focused opportunities for outdoor play. The words intentionally allow for choices to be made about facilities and materials – a natural environment is in no way criticised. There is reference to 'young people' as well as 'children'
- The provision of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs is design-led. The definition of walking times and distances is made to fit the particular nature of any given development. The developer and the planning authority have an obligation to provide for play accordingly. Any relegation of play provision to the more 'unbuildable parts of housing sites' represents a failure by them to the detriment of children and community life. The concept of SLOAP (Space Left Over After Planning) was around long before the NPFA introduced the concept of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs
- The suggestion that LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs are the cause of bland and formulaic provision appears a convenient excuse for those actually responsible. The owners and managers of play areas are responsible for specifying what is needed. If specifiers allow manufacturers to install their own equipment or do not require an imaginative design then they are failing the young people in their community. It is relevant to note the view of the Association of Play Industries which is that poor briefs and specifications do not allow the industry to use the design skill it possesses.

## LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs – The Hierarchy

- 6.1.5 It has long been recognised that outdoor opportunities for play and activity are essential for the healthy development of children. Children are also significant users of the outdoor environment – particularly close to home. The provision of designated places to play is intended to provide attractive and challenging facilities when they cannot play outside their homes because traffic has priority. Fields in Trust recommends a hierarchy of provision based on walking time. Fields in Trust suggests indicative age ranges but these are not intended to be prescriptive. Play area owners and managers need to possess common sense as well as professional skills and ensure flexibility in both design and management. Different children will seek to play in different ways and age restrictions are almost always unenforceable anyway.

## LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs – General Design Principles

- 6.1.6 The selection of sites for children’s play environments must be an integral part of the design process for all new housing developments. The provision of environments on the basis of walking times and distance requires such a design-led approach. The pattern and landscape of streets, paths, open spaces, the gradient of footpaths, the size of steps, the height of handrails and other factors must all be considered from a child’s perspective. Care should also be taken to avoid potential problem locations such as the ‘wrong’ end of a pedestrian bridge or in another clearly-defined housing site nearby. Along with these facilities, thought must also be given to children’s opportunity to play in local streets and green spaces.
- 6.1.7 Locating a play area close to a road may have benefits in terms of surveillance and community safety: in such cases the adjacent road should have traffic management measures. Consideration should also generally be given to traffic management measures that will facilitate play close to home. It is important to ensure that the play area and desire lines to it are unobstructed by fences, walls and shrubs so that any driver can clearly see children on the move within safe stopping distances.
- 6.1.8 Children will be particularly interested in going to NEAPs in their neighbourhood. Routes linking NEAPs therefore need auditing from a safety point of view, especially where a route crosses a busy road, railway or waterway. If such a crossing occurs, then it will need special consideration in terms of design.
- 6.1.9 As a matter of general practice, children’s play areas should be:
- Appropriate to the needs of the local community
  - Accessible for every child within the appropriate walking time for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs
  - Accessible without having to cross main roads, railways or waterways
  - Sited in open, welcoming locations
  - Separated from areas of major vehicle movements and accessible directly from pedestrian routes
  - Sited on land of natural topography or on land capable of being landscaped for the type of play experiences intended
  - Designed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
  - Designed so that any high climbing structures are as far as possible from nearby dwellings and any potential visual intrusion is minimised
  - Integrated, as far as possible, with other open spaces and areas of amenity planting to provide separation from nearby dwellings
  - Visible from nearby dwellings or well used pedestrian routes
  - Accessible by footpaths with a firm surface
  - Surfaced in a manner fitting to the intensity of use
  - Provided with seating for accompanying adults, carers and siblings
  - Designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment and other features providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, play with natural materials such as sand and water, ball games, wheeled areas or other activities

- Designed, manufactured, installed and maintained in accordance with European Standards EN1176 and EN1177 in respect of any play equipment provided; if any equipment is non-compliant to those standards then it should be audited and approved on a risk assessment basis by a competent third party
  - All equipped play areas should be subject to an independent post-installation inspection; details of certificated inspectors can be obtained from the Register of Playground Inspectors International (RPII)
  - Provided with impact absorbing surfacing beneath and around all such equipment as appropriate
  - Designed with appropriate physical features on the perimeter to enable recognition as a play area.
- 6.1.10 The Play England 'Quality Assessment Tool' provides further helpful advice and recommendations. This tool takes a different approach to provision (based on Doorstep, Local and Neighbourhood Areas for Play but though the words used are different there are many common features).

### LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs – Disabled Children

- 6.1.11 In 2004, Fields in Trust commissioned Rob Wheway and Alison John to undertake a study of access to and use of unsupervised playgrounds by disabled children and to make recommendations to providers in the context of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 6.1.12 The main finding was that disabled children have a desire to use their closest playgrounds, just like other children. A key ingredient to that use is the attitudes of others to the disabled children and their carers, which needs to be friendly and welcoming.
- 6.1.13 While larger-scale destination playgrounds for disabled children with changing and toilet facilities and car parking were very much valued, their use tended to be for one-off visits, rather than for everyday play which needed to be more local.
- 6.1.14 Other key factors in provision and design were accessibility and adaptation of facilities. Specific recommendations are given in the publication 'Can Play, Will Play'.

### LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs – Design and Cost

- 6.1.15 Discussions with playground manufacturers and suppliers and their industry body – the Association of Playground Industries – revealed that the industry itself is concerned about the low standard of play space design. A picture emerged of designers and manufacturers being obliged to comply with 'over-engineered' specifications rarely offering the opportunity to develop more imaginative schemes. A breakdown of the annual sales of play equipment and related provision indicates the following:
- Only 33% of the revenue generated by sales relates to play equipment, sports equipment and skateboarding equipment
  - 21% of sales relate to surfacing (16% on wet pour alone)
  - 28% is spent on footpaths, landscaping and fencing.

The following observations are made:

- £1 in £3 spent on equipment of all kinds represents poor value for money
- Cheaper, but no less effective, surfacing should be explored
- Investment in high quality landscaping is welcome and needs increasing, particularly if the relatively sorry state of many existing play areas is considered
- Expenditure on and the purpose of fencing should be questioned. What is the purpose of fencing – to lock children in or to keep dogs out? Perimeter definition is clearly important and fencing will play its part but fencing comes at considerable cost. There are also local authorities who have decided that fencing is not always an essential requirement. This has proved acceptable to politicians and the public alike.

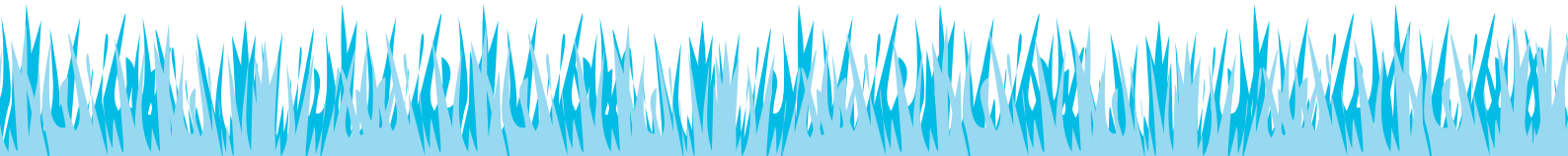


## 6.2 Characteristics of Designated Play Areas

### The Local Area for Play (LAP) or Doorstep Play Space

- 6.2.1 The LAP is a small area of open space specifically designated and primarily laid out for very young children to play close to where they live i.e. within 1 minute walking time. The LAP is a doorstep play area by any other name. LAPs are designed to allow for ease of informal observation and supervision and primarily function to encourage informal play and social interaction. The LAP requires no play equipment as such, relying more on demonstrative features indicating that play is positively encouraged.
- 6.2.2 In general terms, the following characteristics apply to a LAP:
- It is intended primarily for children up to the age of 6, though it will be used by older children at different times of the day or evening
  - It is within 1 minute walking time of the child's home
  - It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
  - It occupies a well-drained, reasonably flat site surfaced with grass or a hard surface
  - The recommended minimum activity zone is 100 sq m
  - A buffer zone of 5 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the forward-most part of the nearest dwelling that faces the LAP. Gable end or other exposed walls can be protected from use for ball games by, for example, providing a dense strip of planting of 1 metre minimum depth. The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
  - It may contain demonstrative features that allow young children to identify and claim the space as theirs
  - Depending on location it may have a 600mm guard rail, low fence or planting to indicate the perimeter. Similarly, depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the LAP
  - There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome
  - The activity zone of the local area for play counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards.

### The Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)

- 6.2.3 The LEAP is an area of open space specifically designated and laid out with features including equipment for children who are beginning to go out and play independently close to where they live, usually within 5 minutes walking time. Experience has indicated that to provide equipped LEAPs within 5 minutes walk of all houses in a new development can on occasion be impractical and difficult to achieve. An alternative to the LEAP is therefore to provide a Local Landscaped Area for Play which is dealt with in the following section.
- 6.2.4 Play features including equipment are an integral part of the LEAP and the attractiveness of such spaces, though it is also important that the space can be used for physical activity and games. LEAPs can be the place for boisterous activity and therefore it is important to give careful consideration to siting. In summary, if a LEAP is properly sited, equipped, overseen and maintained it is able to meet the needs of children without being a source of nuisance to other residents.
- 6.2.5 The main characteristics of a LEAP are:
- It is intended primarily for children who are beginning to go out and play independently
  - It is within 5 minutes walking time of the child's home
  - It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
  - It occupies a well drained, reasonably flat site surfaced with grass or a hard surface, together with impact absorbing surfaces beneath and around play equipment or structures as appropriate
  - The recommended minimum activity zone is 400 sq m
  - A buffer zone of 10 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling. A minimum of 20 metres should normally be provided between the activity zone and the habitable room façade of the nearest dwelling. Where these minimum distances apply, careful consideration needs to be given to:
- 



1. The design of any means of enclosure, planting scheme and/or other physical features on the boundary of the residential property
2. The siting of features including equipment within the activity zone, to preclude opportunities for overlooking nearby gardens or dwellings, potential loss of privacy and creation of nuisance.

For high density developments – particularly on brownfield sites – the buffer zone may have to be reduced in order to provide play facilities for the children. Design is again of key importance:

- The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- It is designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, and play with natural materials such as sand and water, or other activities. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local consultation and decision though provision for a minimum number of six play experiences is recommended
- There is adequate space within the area of the LEAP to allow children to be generally active and play 'chase' type games
- The question of enclosure is one for the manager but the boundaries should be recognisable by landscaping. Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the LEAP is enclosed there should be two, outward-opening, self-closing gates on opposite sides of the LEAP. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the LEAP
- Seating for accompanying adults and siblings should be provided, together with one or more litter bins
- There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome. The name and telephone number of the facility operator should be provided with an invitation to report any incident or damage to the LEAP or the play equipment. The location of the nearest telephone should also be indicated
- The activity zone of the LEAP counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards.

- 6.2.6 There may be occasions when it is appropriate to design the LAP and the LEAP adjacent to each other. In these circumstances the buffer zone between the two should be reduced or removed, but the buffer zone around the LAP part of the provision should be that which is appropriate for a LEAP.

### The Local Landscaped Area for Play

- 6.2.7 As previously mentioned, this is alternative provision to the LEAP. It can, for example, be considered in the light of the following circumstances:
- Where a developer and the planning authority decide that they would prefer to consult with local residents – including children – once a new estate has been populated. In such circumstances, the developer may enter into an obligation setting aside funds for possible equipment and other features for an agreed period of time
  - Where there is significant doubt about the practicality of providing more than one LEAP, in which case the Local Landscaped Area for Play can be provided
  - If there is provision for only one LEAP, then the equipped play area should be provided i.e. the landscaped option is to be disregarded in these circumstances.

- 6.2.8 The characteristics of the Local Landscaped Area for Play are:

- It is intended, in the context of play, for use by children and young people alike
- It is within 5 minutes walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well drained, imaginatively landscaped site suitable and used for play
- The area may have little or no equipment but is imaginatively designed and contoured, using as far as is possible natural materials such as logs or boulders which create an attractive setting for play. Planting should be varied to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- The recommended minimum area is 900 square metres
- It is designed to provide a suitable mix of areas for physical activity and areas for relatively calm relaxation and social interaction

- The question of enclosure is one for the manager but the boundaries should be recognisable by landscaping. Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the site is enclosed there should be two, outward-opening, self-closing gates on opposite sides of the site. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the site
- Seating is desirable
- The site should be recognisably available for use by children, though the local landscaped area for play is an open space for shared use and enjoyment by all sections of the community
- The area of the Local Landscaped Area for Play counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards.

6.2.9 The landscape characteristics of such sites should, wherever possible, be incorporated into the LEAP.

### The Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

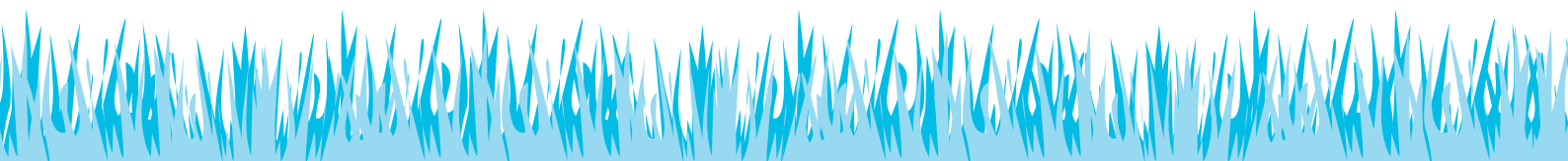
6.2.10 The NEAP is an area of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children but with play opportunities for younger children as well. Located within 15 minutes walk from home, the NEAP is sufficiently large to enable provision for play opportunities that can not be provided within a LAP or LEAP.

6.2.11 Play equipment is a particularly appropriate form of provision for younger children. As children grow older, towards the latter stages of primary school age, they are looking for different challenges and stimuli. They engage more in wheeled activities and informal ball games, sometimes taken up as formal sport. As they move towards their teenage years, young people increasingly seek out opportunities to meet friends away from home, looking for places to meet socially.

6.2.12 The NEAP can provide a greater variety of opportunity for both active and passive play. It can provide play equipment, and a hard surface area for ball games, or wheeled activities such as roller skating or cycling. It may provide other facilities such as a ramp for skateboarding, a rebound wall, and a shelter for meeting and socialising. The facilities are linked in the one site because children of different ages and abilities like to take part in a range of activities, as do their siblings. Careful consideration should be given to the location and interaction of the different facilities provided both on site and in relation to the local environment. Consultation is a key ingredient of successful design and community acceptance.

6.2.13 The main characteristics of a NEAP are:

- It is intended primarily for use by older children of relative independence, who have the freedom to range further from home
- It is within 15 minutes' walking time of the child's home
- It is best positioned beside a pedestrian route that is well used
- It occupies a well drained site, with both grass and hard surfaced areas, together with impact absorbing surfaces beneath and around play equipment or structures as appropriate
- The recommended minimum activity zone is 1000 sq m, comprising an area for play equipment and structures, and a hard surfaced area of at least 465 sq m (the minimum needed to play 5-a-side football)
- A buffer zone of 30 metres minimum depth normally separates the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling. A greater distance may be needed where purpose-built skateboarding facilities are required. Where these minimum distances apply, careful consideration needs to be given to:
  1. The design of any means of enclosure, planting scheme and/or other physical features on the boundary of the residential property
  2. The siting of equipment and features within the activity zone, to preclude opportunities for overlooking nearby gardens and dwellings and potential loss of privacy and creation of nuisance



- The buffer zone includes varied planting to provide a mix of scent, colour and texture
- It is designed to provide a stimulating and challenging play experience that may include equipment and other features providing opportunities for balancing, rocking, climbing, overhead activity, sliding, swinging, jumping, crawling, rotating, imaginative play, social play, play with natural materials such as sand and water, ball games, wheeled areas or other activities. The number and nature of equipment and structures is a matter for local consultation and decision, though provision for a minimum number of nine play experiences is recommended
- There is adequate space within the area of the NEAP to allow for children to be generally active and play 'chase' type games
- The question of enclosure is one for the manager but the boundaries should be recognisable by landscaping. Perimeter fences are generally considered inappropriate though some fencing may be necessary if the site adjoins one or more roads. If the NEAP is enclosed there should be two, outward-opening, self-closing gates on opposite sides of the NEAP. If fencing is used, a height of 1 metre is suggested. Depending on location, there may need to be a barrier limiting the speed of a child entering or leaving the NEAP
- Seating for accompanying adults and siblings should be provided, together with one or more litter bins
- There should be a sign indicating that the area is for children's play and that dogs are not welcome. The name and telephone number of the facility operator should be provided with an invitation to report any incident or damage to the NEAP and the play equipment. The location of the nearest telephone should also be indicated
- Convenient and secure parking facilities for bicycles should be provided
- The activity zone of the NEAP counts towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards.

### Combined LEAPs and NEAPs

- 6.2.14 Where the distances and walking times of LEAPs and NEAPs overlap, there may be opportunities to provide combined facilities. The provision of LEAPs and NEAPs in the same locality has a number of advantages including the following:
- The ability to provide for a greater age range of children and increase 'family involvement'
  - Opportunities to make savings on land-take – the basis of this is that savings are marginal for activity zones but may be significant for buffer zones
  - Opportunities to make savings on the capital costs of equipment and consequential savings on maintenance, inspection and replacement costs.

### The 'Destination' Playground

- 6.2.15 The 'destination' playground is a play space within a key site, such as a park. It is aimed at attracting family and similar groups for longer visits. It tends to be larger than neighbourhood sites, have car parking facilities, a greater variety of fixed equipment, and access to facilities such as cafes and public toilets. Disabled children should be made to feel welcome, with suitable access arrangements in place and adaptations being made to equipment where appropriate.
- 6.2.16 A 'destination' playground is an important family facility and it will be highly valued. However, most children will be accompanied by an adult and their activities are limited to those occasions when the adult is able to take them. Many users may require public or private transport so clearly users are not all free to come and go. Access, as for local and neighbourhood provision, should be free of charge.
- 6.2.17 A 'destination' playground can provide a very stimulating experience but however excellent and enjoyable that experience is it should not become a replacement for the opportunity to play within walking distance from the home, in play areas or elsewhere. Too great a reliance on such provision, however popular, may tempt authorities to ignore the need for a generous distribution of smaller local spaces in the urban matrix. It is therefore no substitute for local provision. Local and neighbourhood playgrounds must not be subject to a closure programme in order to justify investment in destination provision, however attractive this may seem operationally and financially in terms of capital investment, management and maintenance.

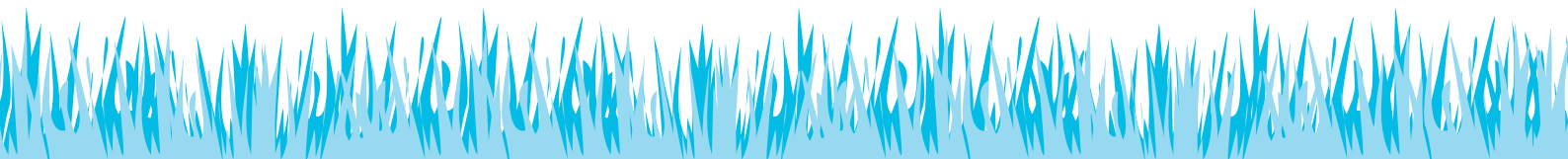
- 6.2.18 The 'destination' playground should appeal to children and young people of all ages and will normally be located within 20 minutes drive time. However, provision varies significantly from authority to authority and 20 minute accessibility will not always be possible, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, although the activity areas of destination provision count towards the quantitative element of these recommendations and local standards, no across-the-board accessibility recommendation is made at this time.

### **6.3 Other Outdoor Play and Recreational Facilities for Children and Young People**

- 6.3.1 As children and young people become more independent, they will look for more challenging experiences, different forms of activity based provision and opportunities and environments for meeting with each other. Popular facilities include meeting areas and youth shelters within local open space, floodlit multi-games areas, skateboard parks and BMX tracks.
- 6.3.2 It is important that potential user groups are established before searching for a suitable site for these facilities. Young people know what they want and what facilities are likely to work best. They should be consulted throughout the design process on layout, design and/or surfaces. Local residents also need to be consulted to establish understanding and harmony with potential users. Consultation will remain an important tool throughout the lifetime of any facility, particularly in relation to decisions on refurbishment or replacement.

#### **Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)**

- 6.3.3 Guidance for the design, specification and construction, dimensions and layouts of MUGAs has been produced by Sport England and the Sports and Play Construction Association. Useful information can also be obtained from the Football Association and the Football Foundation. EN15312 'Free access multi-sports equipment requirements, including safety and test methods' also provides a good benchmark for this type of equipment and a tool for suppliers to have products independently certified should this be desired or required.
- 6.3.4 Key questions at the outset when considering a MUGA concern:
- The predominant sporting use
  - The degree of intensity of use
  - The sports performance and playability characteristics
  - The intended lifespan.
- 6.3.5 It is important to recognise that MUGAs serving as play facilities for children are used both formally and informally – often with an emphasis on the latter. They should be marked out for a range of activities, robustly made with ease of maintenance in mind and be free to use. All of the above will have a bearing on the type of facility to be provided and the surface to be used.
- 6.3.6 The site selected should avoid steep gradients and slopes, unstable ground and very exposed terrain. Location in a natural amphitheatre, on a flat surface within a sheltered area would be ideal, though difficult to find. Alternatively, viewing terracing and banking can be used to provide shelter. Trees should be well clear of a MUGA to avoid root damage and the effects of sap and leaf fall. A location near to car parks and support facilities can be helpful and good good access for people with disabilities is essential. Access for emergency vehicles is vitally important and amenity lighting on approach pathways is helpful.
- 6.3.7 Floodlighting is recommended to maximise the potential use of the MUGA but it may need to be tempered to an acceptable level in dense urban areas. Technical advice should always be sought from specialist contractors for any floodlighting scheme.
- 6.3.8 The dimensions of a MUGA can, and will, vary with intended activity and space available but a typical MUGA might measure 25 metres by 40 metres. It is important that disruption of neighbours is kept to a minimum and a distance of 30 metres from dwellings is recommended. The MUGA should generally be sited in a north – south playing orientation.



- 6.3.9 The surface should be a single material, porous, engineered structure that will drain easily to prevent surface flooding. If bitumen macadam is used it should be of a carefully graded open textured type. Robust fencing providing excellent visibility and durability, such as weld mesh or bar fencing, is recommended. Two gates, each a minimum of 1.2 metres wide, should be provided to reduce the potential for bullying problems and all gates should open outwards from the court.
- 6.3.10 MUGAs are best designed with 'slots' instead of gates. This allows for access without payment and helps the possibility of quick and easy escape.

### Skate Parks

- 6.3.11 Skate park facilities are usually best sited in central and visible locations in relation to the neighbouring area. Co-location is generally positive and successful skate parks are often located next to or on existing sports complexes, in public parks or adjacent to schools. By situating facilities in accessible and visible locations, anti-social behaviour is minimised. This in turn can lead to increased use of, and respect for, the facility by users and the general public alike. Locating unsupervised skate parks in hidden away locations generally results in misuse and vandalism of the equipment, often committed by non-users, and is to be avoided.
- 6.3.12 The design of any skate park will consider diverse elements with variations in size, gradient and height. The end result should be a challenging and exciting skating environment for all abilities from beginner to champion. Elements that can be designed include transitions, ramps, grind rails, blocks, walls, stairs and open space for free-style board and BMX works. Consideration must be carefully given to the buffer zone to nearest dwellings, and this may need to be greater than the 30 metres recommended for a NEAP. Topography, orientation, sound-deadening and materials used in design all have a bearing on sound reduction.
- 6.3.13 Signage with contact details for facility problems and correct usage should be clearly displayed.
- 6.3.14 EN14794 'Facilities for users of roller sports equipment – safety requirements and test methods' should be referred to. The RoSPA website provides helpful information on skateboarding, including guidance on location.

### BMX Tracks

- 6.3.15 BMX tracks can take up a considerable amount of space and may involve large amounts of earthmoving, drainage works and some civil engineering. A small track might cover an area of approximately 30 metres by 14 metres; larger tracks can be 60 metres by 40 metres. The typical BMX track has a hard, smooth surface. The track design will include obstacles constructed at strategic points to add excitement and an extra skill factor. There are also features such as chicanes, rumble strips, jumps, weaving posts and banked turns (berms). Consultation with users should be undertaken to find out what type of BMX facility they want. This should include careful consideration of jump and turn locations to meet the needs and ambitions of the anticipated user group.
- 6.3.16 When considering the location of a track, potential noise levels and any loss of visual amenity should be taken into account. It is therefore preferable for the track to be located at a distance from residential properties. Landscape screening can also be used to mitigate any potential adverse impact. A minimum distance of 30 metres from neighbouring property is recommended.

### Youth Shelters

- 6.3.17 Youth shelters began as a response by Thames Valley Police to public concerns about community safety in the context of young people needing somewhere of their own to meet, as opposed to hanging out on street corners and outside shops. Youth shelters provide part of the solution. They represent an unstructured environment where young people can meet in relative safety, in the absence of adults and talk about whatever they choose without unwanted interruption from others, and without the possibility of causing unnecessary offence. They are places for sitting and talking.



- 6.3.18 Ideally located with sports facilities such as a MUGA or other play and recreation provision such as a LEAP nearby, the shelter provides a covered place to sit and talk. A roof provides shelter from the weather; and the side may be open all round or partially screened. However, the need for shelter has to be balanced against the need for all round visibility, 'natural policing' and the safety of users.
- 6.3.19 Lighting can provide an increased level of safety and increase the use of shelters, while making them and those using them more visible, but light pollution can be an issue for local residents, especially in rural areas. Automatic lighting systems can ensure turn on and off at the right times and are less prone to vandalism.
- 6.3.20 As with all types of youth space, it is essential to involve potential user groups before looking for a suitable site. Local residents also need to be consulted to avoid and reduce potential friction with users. A shelter should not be provided if young people do not want it or local residents will not at least tolerate it.

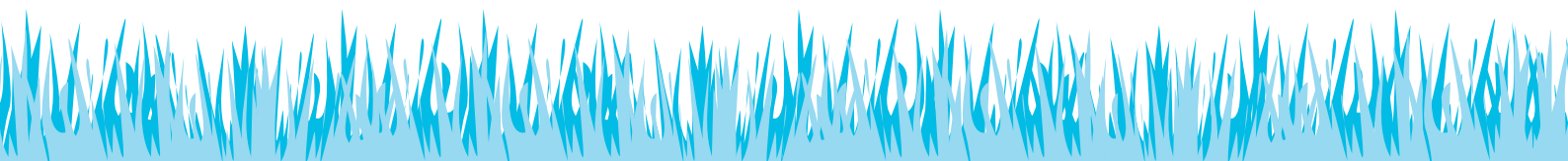
## 6.4 Outdoor Sport Facilities

### Introduction

- 6.4.1 Research by the University of Oxford into participation in sport identified that levels of physical activity depend in part on access to quality leisure provision. This is particularly important for outdoor sport where pitch quality is dependent upon a complex mesh of structural factors including the effectiveness of drainage, the density and vigour of grass cover, the condition of goalmouths, the adequacy of safety margins, and the gradient and evenness of the pitch. These factors will affect the number of games that can be played on a pitch over a given period, and hence the overall pitch capacity and its playability. Drainage and soil type will, in particular, greatly influence the extent to which matches may be cancelled, or abandoned, during inclement weather. Even when structural factors contribute to good pitch quality, failings in management and maintenance can result in poor quality user experience. Typically many complaints arise from matters such as poor line markings, failure to remove dog mess, glass, stones and litter and lack of repair to surface damage. But the quality of provision is not limited to pitches themselves. The range and quality of ancillary facilities, such as changing accommodation, floodlighting, spectator facilities, car parking, accommodation for maintenance equipment and machinery, and social provision and practice facilities are also important in determining whether the facility meets user expectations and whether it will be well used. Changing facilities suitable for use by both genders and children as well as adults are also needed.
- 6.4.2 There are a number of key factors to be taken into consideration when designing outdoor sports provision. The significance of individual factors will depend on whether works to be undertaken relate to the improvement of an existing facility or the provision of an entirely new facility.

### The Environment and the Sports Facilities

- 6.4.3 The design of outdoor sports facilities should include consideration of the surroundings in which facilities are to be sited. A good quality environment will take into account the needs of sporting participants and the influence of the landscape setting within which the facilities are to be sited. The landscape should enhance the experience of the user and make the environment more attractive for spectators, passers-by and others not directly involved with the sport taking place. It is important, however, for the needs of users to be at the priority – concerns for the environment and habitat generally should be considered but never over-ride the design needs of the sports involved.
- 6.4.4 The first priority is the user and the user's first priority is the quality of the playing surface. Consultations should take place with users and potential users as appropriate. The following factors will need consideration:
- The purpose of the provision – is it for match play and if so at what level of performance?
  - What quality is therefore wanted?
  - What about training, practice, teaching or coaching?
  - What age groups will use the facilities?



## Site Suitability

6.4.5 Determining whether a site is suitable for the intended purpose will depend on:

- Location: there should be ready and convenient access to outdoor sports facilities in places where the greatest number of people can conveniently access them by a range of transport modes, with the emphasis on active travel
- Adjoining land uses: the effect of surrounding properties can have a major influence on the design and layout of facilities. Facilities should be sited so that they minimise any potential nuisance. Consideration should also be given to the effect of structures on the micro-climate of the site
- General physical characteristics: the prevailing climatic conditions such as exposure to wind and levels of rainfall will influence the layout and security of facilities
- Ground conditions: the condition of the land and its composition, any known or potential historical contamination, soil profile, site levels and features
- Stability: whether the site is prone to subsidence and if it is capable of supporting the proposed buildings and associated facilities
- Drainage: the availability of suitable drainage outlets
- Soil type and condition: whether it is sand or clay, its fertility and whether suitable material or topsoil will have to be imported
- Availability of services: consideration must be given to the location of existing electricity, gas, water, sewerage, storm water and communication supplies and the convenience and cost of new supply.

## 6.5 Outdoor Sports Facilities – Pitches

### Natural Turf Pitches

6.5.1 There are key requirements that need to be considered if a good quality playing surface is to be achieved and maintained. Inadequate drainage and irrigation systems in particular will have a detrimental impact on the quality of the playing surface.

6.5.2 The design of a natural turf pitch will depend on a number of factors including:

- The sport or sports being catered for, which determines the selection of the root zone
- The variety of grass that is best suited to the proposed uses
- The type of drainage system
- The need for an irrigation system
- The site and existing soil conditions.

6.5.3 Although competitive play will be the primary use for the majority of pitches, consideration also needs to be given to future wear and tear caused by other users. Account should be taken of the predicted extent to which they have to accommodate training activity. Where there is no separate space for training, it is likely that this activity will take place on the pitch used for home matches thereby increasing the amount of wear and tear on the pitch. Local authority pitches are also used for other forms of public recreation and are therefore susceptible to damage from a variety of sources including informal use for play. Inevitably, the areas most prone to additional wear are the goalmouths.

6.5.4 Further detail can be found in 'The Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' published by NPFA, Fields in Trust (2004).

## Drainage of Natural Turf Pitches

- 6.5.5 Drainage plays a major role in the quality of a surface and is an essential requirement for natural turf, and some artificial turf surfaces. The purpose of a drainage scheme is to remove excess water from the surface and lower the water table. The need for drainage will depend on the type of facility involved and the level of activity the surface must sustain. The type of drainage system used will depend on the nature of the ground conditions including the general underlying geology of the site; the nature of the underlying subsoil; the quality and depth of the topsoil and the site's natural drainage capacity. The history of the site will also be a factor particularly if it has been used for landfill. Without drainage the surface may hold water during wet weather conditions. Current predictions for climate change suggest increased precipitation during the winter months.
- 6.5.6 All pitches need drainage geared to the capacity requirements. The drainage installations can take the form of pipe drainage, pipe and slit drainage or suspended water table drainage. Further information can be obtained from Fields in Trust, Sport England or the Sports and Play Construction Association, among others.

## Irrigation

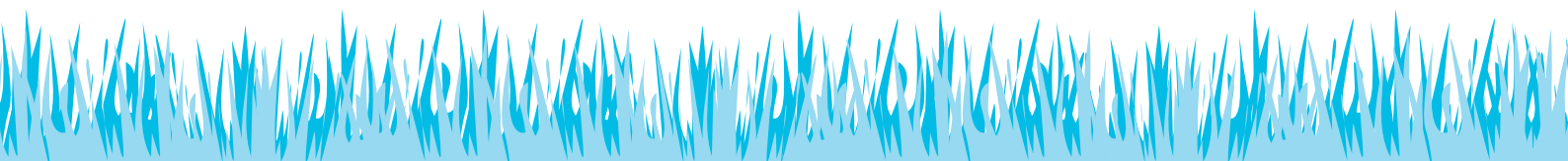
- 6.5.7 The impact of predicted climate change suggests that the provision of a good irrigation scheme will be a critical factor if natural turf pitches are to be maintained to a satisfactory standard in the future.
- 6.5.8 Well-drained pitches will require intensive irrigation to prevent drying out during periods of dry weather and to enable rapid grass establishment. In the absence of irrigation, soils (especially sandy soils) can become unstable during dry conditions because they do not retain sufficient moisture to hold particles together. This makes it difficult for a satisfactory grass sward to be established and retained. The result is an uneven surface. The ideal irrigation system is built into the construction. Automatic pop-up systems can operate during the night to reduce wastage by evaporation.

## Gradients

- 6.5.9 A slope that is too steep can be extremely tiring for players, particularly if it is in the direction of play rather than across the pitch. The problem is best avoided when the site is being selected at the outset. Where a more suitable site cannot be found, re-grading or terracing to make the slope more acceptable may be the way forward, unless prohibited by cost. Although minor alterations to gradients can be carried out after the establishment of pitches, this is likely to be more expensive and put the facility out of use for one or two seasons. The best solution may be for the club to find a better pitch elsewhere. Conversely, if the slope is too slight, or does not exist at all, it will not encourage surface water to run-off. This can result in poor surface water drainage, particularly on clay or silty soils. The playing surface should generally be no steeper than 1:80-100 along the line of play and 1:40-50 across the line of play.

## Artificial Turf Pitches

- 6.5.10 Artificial turf pitches provide a synthetic alternative to natural grass for pitch sports. The basic distinction between types of surface is between filled and non-filled artificial turf systems. There are four general types of surface:
- Sand filled pitches – these are multi-purpose facilities which can cater for a variety of sports including football, hockey, basketball, netball, volleyball and tennis
  - Sand dressed pitches – these can be used for a range of sports but are, for example, more suitable for hockey than football
  - Water-based pitches – these are used almost entirely for hockey and the ball speed is regulated by watering the surface
  - Third generation surfaces – these are primarily used for outdoor training pitches for football and rugby and also for outdoor five-a-side pitches.



- 6.5.11 The main advantage of artificial turf pitches is that they can withstand levels of play which natural grass surfaces could not match but they are expensive to install. Surfaces are not truly multi-purpose: different sports require different playing characteristics and their respective governing bodies stipulate precise requirements. Choosing a priority sport may mean that certain playing characteristics are not compatible with other sports e.g. third generation surfaces are not suitable for hockey. Artificial turf surfaces require a substantial degree of maintenance and specialist equipment and the life expectancy of modern surfaces is uncertain.
- 6.5.12 Artificial surfaces are particularly suited for intensive use in urban areas and should always be built with floodlighting.

### Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs)

- 6.5.13 Multi-use games areas for informal use for children and young people's play and recreation were considered in paragraphs 6.3.2 to 6.3.8. They are also used more formally for organised sport and games and for training purposes. They can be the size of a single tennis court or significantly larger and be able to accommodate such sports as tennis, netball, football and hockey. Among advice available is that from Fields in Trust, Sport England, the Sport and Play Construction Association, the Football Association and the Association of Play Industries.

## 6.6 Other Outdoor Sports

### Tennis

- 6.6.1 The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) encourages the development of uniform surfaces at clubs to extend the opportunities for participation. The LTA provides technical advice to promote the development of high quality tennis facilities. In addition the Sport and Play Construction Association has produced a Code of Practice for the Construction and Maintenance of Tennis Courts. The following are the most commonly available types of surface: porous macadam, acrylic, artificial grass and clay.

### Bowls

- 6.6.2 There are three different codes for playing outdoor bowls and each has different facility requirements. Flat green bowls is played on a flat green which is surrounded by a small ditch to catch bowls which leave the green, and a bank upon which markers indicate the corners and centrelines of each rink. Federation Bowls is also played on flat greens but with more flexible requirements with regard to size and the height of the bank. A crown green is a usually a square green which is slightly higher in the middle than at the edges and play is conducted all over the lawn in any direction.
- 6.6.3 Advice can be obtained on design from the bowls governing bodies, Fields in Trust, Sport England and the Sport and Play Construction Association.

### Athletics

- 6.6.4 The quality of the design, engineering and site operations is critical to the performance and lifespan of an athletics track. The International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) produces detailed guidance setting out information for all track and field events in its Track and Field Facilities Manual. The Sports and Play Construction Association has produced a code of Practice for the 'Construction and Maintenance of Athletics Tracks with Synthetic Surfaces'. The IAAF publication tends to deal with facilities for high level competition which, naturally carry a premium cost. Guidance has also been produced by Sport England.

## 6.7 Ancillary Provision

### Changing Accommodation

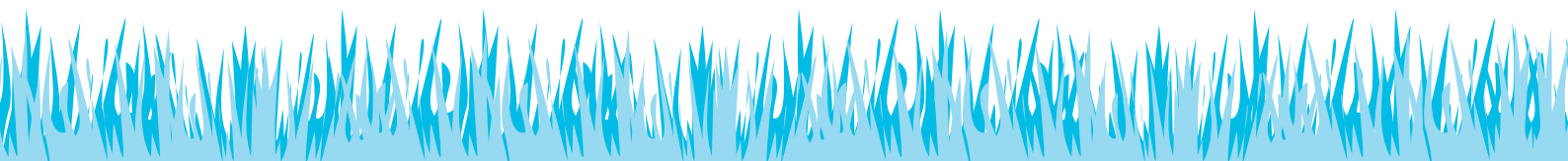
- 6.7.1 Good-quality secure changing accommodation is needed for most levels of play. Changing accommodation to a reasonable specification is usually a governing body requirement for most sports, and the level of specification increases with higher standards of play.
- 6.7.2 The quality of changing accommodation around the country is often unsatisfactory. The lack of female changing accommodation is a constraint on the further development of women's pitch sports and the accommodation requirements of children and young people also require specific consideration.
- 6.7.3 Key points for good quality changing accommodation are:
- Individual team changing rooms are preferred
  - Layouts must provide flexibility for different proportions of male/female use
  - The changing accommodation should be big enough to accommodate the largest number of players likely to use the room, including substitutes
  - Different sports have different space requirements for players, substitutes and their equipment – e.g. although the minimum area per person is 1 sq m, cricket requires 1.2 sq m minimum
  - Changing area sizes for artificial turf pitches must have the capacity to cater for high-intensity use
  - Making rooms larger can enable them to accommodate two junior teams
  - An entrance lobby is desirable
  - Separation of changing and wet and muddy areas from any social or indoor sports accommodation
  - Flexibility to respond to different levels of male/female use, and use by juniors of both genders, on the basis of separation from adults
  - Access for disabled users.

### Floodlighting

- 6.7.4 Floodlighting enables people to play throughout the day and early evening, all year-round. It should be provided with artificial turf pitches in order to maximise the use.
- 6.7.5 The floodlighting of natural grass pitches is usually limited to where there is a need for a specific training area for which there is no floodlit alternative. It also allows greater use of a pitch for both training and competition, on winter midweek evenings for example. Provision of floodlighting can therefore help to spread demand over the week.
- 6.7.6 Consideration needs to be given to the impact that any floodlighting is going to have on the local environment. Light spillage and pollution into surrounding areas is inevitable and this needs to be taken into account in the planning, installation and commissioning of lighting. Good quality provision will minimise the impact of floodlighting on surrounding residential areas. This can be achieved through good design to control the amount of spill. Generally, the greater the height and numbers of columns the easier it is to control the spill. This will, however, have a greater impact on visual amenity in daylight hours. Operating hours may need to be varied to suit local circumstances and specialist advice should always be sought.

### Car parking

- 6.7.7 Consideration should be given to dedicated, off-street car parking for both players and spectators. It is desirable for almost all facilities, and essential for many, due to the requirements of leagues and relevant governing bodies. Minibus and coach parking may also be required.
- 6.7.8 Paragraphs 3.8.9 to 3.8.13 stressed the need to give full consideration to sustainability issues relating to travel to and from facilities. Active travel and car sharing are therefore desirable, where at all possible. Travel plans for sports organisations and facilities are an essential part of future planning. An example is given in Appendix H.



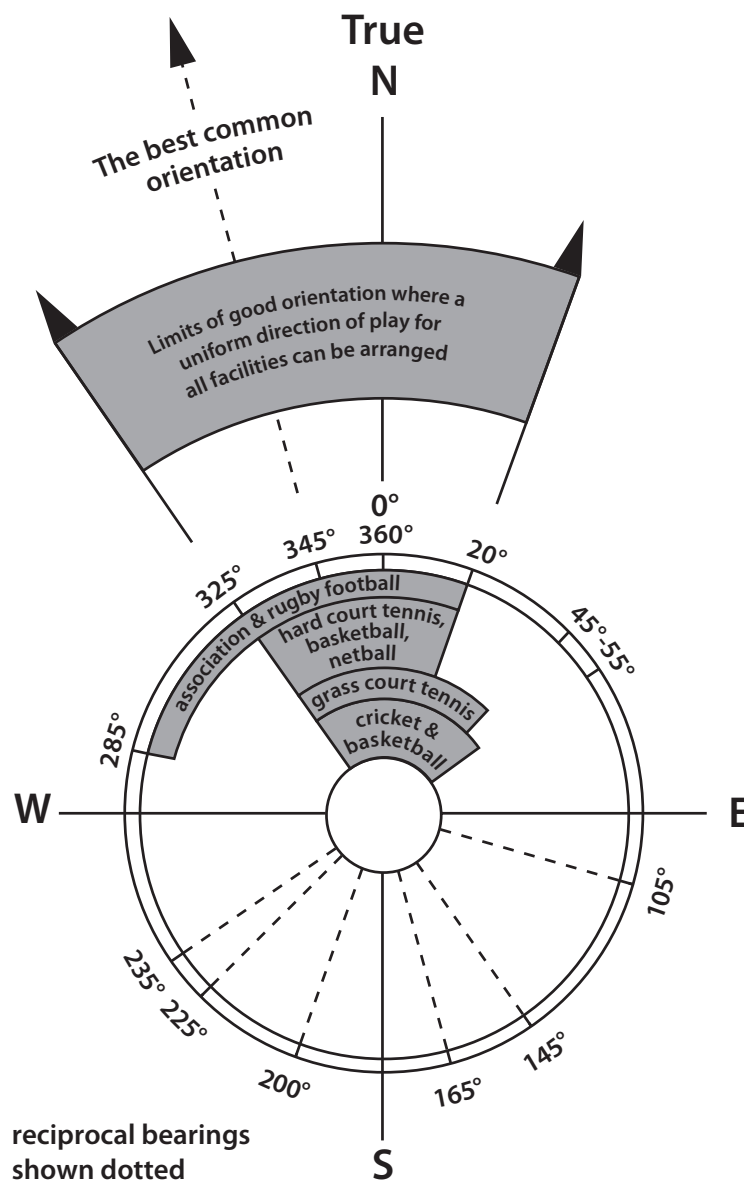


## 6.8 Other Technical Considerations

### Orientation

- 6.8.1 Grounds that are incorrectly laid out, especially those of an east-west orientation, place significant restrictions on pitch and court use. In some cases, this may result in inefficient use of the total land area. Good planning and selection can reduce the potential disadvantages and hazards caused by the low afternoon or early morning sun on the players. Wherever it is possible the pitch should be orientated (end to end) in accordance with the orientation diagram reproduced below. Hockey pitches may be sited in any direction because in this game the ball seldom rises sufficiently for the sun to be a nuisance. However, hockey is now played to a very large extent on artificial turf pitches and the frequency of other sporting activities will have a bearing on orientation. Pavilions should avoid the SW to NW aspect (225°-315°).

#### The Fields in Trust Orientation diagram and notes



## Space requirements for the more popular outdoor sports and games

6.8.2 The table below sets out the space requirements for the more popular outdoor sports and games. The figures allow for safety margins and the movement of pitches from season to season. They do not include the additional area required for the run of the ball which, in the case of soccer may require 55% more space. In cricket, a 'six' may often travel beyond the boundary by a further 50%. This area is normally taken into account by the careful siting of adjacent pitches, boundary fencing, or appropriate arrangements during play to remove the possibility of accidents. Unless stated otherwise, the areas given are those for senior use. The information is provided only as a guide. Further guidance on the dimensions of each type of facility can be found in many other publications, including those of the Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA), Sport England and the Governing Bodies of Sport. Table 6 below gives the spatial requirements for the more popular outdoor sports and games.

Table 6: The space requirements for the more popular outdoor sports and games:

Type of Facility	Area in hectares	Area in Acres
Athletics (overall rectangular site area)		
6 lane track	1.9	4.7
8 lane track	2.0	5.0
Tennis courts for recreational use		
1 court	0.06	0.17
2 adjacent courts	0.12	0.30
3 adjacent courts	0.18	0.44
for each further adjacent court	0.05	0.12
Association football	0.82 – 0.90	2.0 – 2.22
Mini Soccer:		
For 2 pitches	0.70	1.65
Hockey	0.62	1.51
Mini and seven-a-side Hockey:		
For 2 pitches	0.50	1.24
Netball	0.05 – 0.07	0.13 – 0.16
Rugby Union	1.26	3.1
Basketball	0.06	0.15
Lacrosse	0.65	1.60
Bowling greens: flat and crown	0.14	0.35
Cricket		
1 square with a boundary of 46m	1.50	3.70
1 square plus 2 senior soccer pitches	2.05	5.07
1 square plus hockey/senior soccer	2.01	4.98

6.8.3 The margins around pitches are also extremely important in enabling maintenance operations to be carried out. These margins should be drained in an identical manner to the pitch so that they drain rapidly. Links between all pitches should also be adequately drained to allow movement of maintenance machinery.

## 6.9 The Importance of Shared Use and Indoor Facilities

### Introduction

- 6.9.1 Land is a precious commodity and in many of our towns and cities sufficient land may not always be available for outdoor sport, recreation and play. Modern manufacturing has helped develop facilities capable of sustaining far more substantial use than grass. This does not mean that more traditional surfaces and facilities are redundant – rather, it is simply horses for courses and complementary facilities. Similarly, indoor facilities for sport and play, often supervised, provide excellent opportunities for participation but again they should form part of an overall provision strategy, and not be regarded as a substitute for outdoor facilities. Additionally, shared use of facilities, including dual use, is of the highest importance.

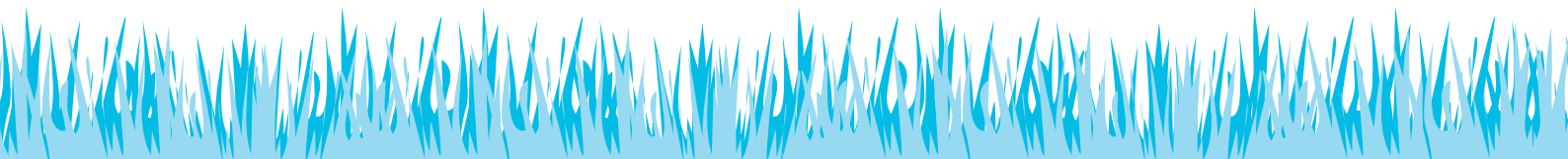
### The Dual Use of School Playing Fields

- 6.9.2 Building Schools for the Future is a Central Government initiative to rebuild or renew every secondary school in England over a 10-15 year period with an overall level of investment anticipated at £45 billion. The Government aims include the community use of school sites, including sports facilities.
- 6.9.3 Like the former Department for Education and Science, in its 1991 publication entitled 'A Sporting Double: School and Community', Fields in Trust uses the term dual use to cover all situations in which the community is granted authorised access to school facilities for outdoor sport and recreation irrespective of the detailed financial arrangements or original intentions which guided the planning and provision of the facilities.
- 6.9.4 School playing space should be in dual use. Provided that community safety and school security issues, including insurance, can be satisfied such space should be made available to the local community out of school hours and during holiday periods. Hard surfaced or synthetic pitches and courts have the ability to sustain intensive use and may usefully provide opportunities for community use, perhaps limited only by the school's programme of activities and access to changing facilities. Where the school has an excess of natural grass pitches above the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 for both existing and projected pupil numbers, such land should be made available to meet the needs of the wider community. Where this use is secured by written agreement it may contribute towards meeting the Fields in Trust Benchmark Standard. School play areas and playgrounds should also be made available to the public.
- 6.9.5 It must be recognised that the ability of natural grass pitches to sustain additional community use outside school hours will depend on a number of factors, including weather conditions, the drainage characteristics of the site, the age of participants and the types and frequencies of sports being played. Again, where authorised community use is secured by written agreement, these pitches may be counted towards meeting the standard. To avoid difficulties for the school and a potential decline in the quality of facilities, there must be a clear understanding of any necessary physical alterations to the premises and proper management of the dual use. In the interests of good neighbourliness, it is always advantageous for those involved in securing dual use to consult with the local community, particularly the residents of immediately adjoining properties. The proper design and management of dual use can help to realise the full potential of facilities without harm to the school or residential privacy and amenity.
- 6.9.6 School playing fields not officially designated as being in dual use may be under-used. This has prompted some local authorities to declare the land surplus to educational requirements, when measured against the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999. The authorities then view this 'surplus' land as a saleable asset even though the local community may have insufficient playing space compared with the Fields in Trust Benchmark Standard or the approved local standards. However, the Regulations refer to a minimum standard of provision and should not be used by authorities as justification for the disposal of playing space. The role of Sport England as a statutory consultee is of particular significance here, though it is undermined by their own and Government's exception policies as referred to in paragraphs 2.9.6 to 2.9.8.

- 6.9.7 Equally, playing spaces and pitches in the public sector should be shared with local schools that are themselves deficient. The availability of space for formal and informal recreation should be shared universally to make maximum use of scarce resources.
- 6.9.8 A local authority that is deficient in outdoor playing space according to the Fields in Trust Benchmark Standards or the approved local standards, and which can identify school pitches in its area not in dual use, should try to persuade the education authority to allow a joint appraisal of those pitches for possible wider community use. Similarly, when education authorities are assessing their school fields against pupil roles, they should always make checks to ensure that local standards are being met for the community before they declare any land surplus. This will save them the potential expense (often foreseeable and therefore avoidable) of unsuccessful planning applications.
- 6.9.9 A number of education authorities have positive policies for the dual use of some or all of their outdoor facilities. This contributes valuable playing space to the community pool. Unfortunately the practical problems associated with the implementation of dual use may count against permanent policies. The effectiveness of a dual use policy may rely on the efficient adaptation of existing facilities, for example changing rooms, which were designed originally for school use only.

### Shared and Dual Use Arrangements for Children's Play Areas

- 6.9.10 Many groups besides local authorities provide opportunities for children's play. Often these facilities are used for relatively limited periods of time, leaving spare capacity for different purposes, or by other groups of children. The shared use of such facilities can contribute towards the minimum Standard of provision, if the right of use is secured and guaranteed for a reasonable period. A shared approach has particular value in built-up areas, where there may be no suitable sites, and in small communities with few resources. Again, design needs to be appropriate for shared use and social and security issues properly considered, particularly natural surveillance.
- 6.9.11 Opportunities for shared use can be found, for example, at public houses, private sports clubs, play groups, hospitals, garden centres, caravan sites, and commercial fun parks. However, use of commercial premises may give rise to difficulties over access unless children are part of a purchasing group. Personal safety and the security of premises, together with associated levels of cover provided by insurance policies, may also preclude the full use of such facilities, although these are management issues capable of resolution by goodwill and determination in many circumstances.
- 6.9.12 Owners of possible shared use facilities may have to be persuaded of the benefit of making them available for local children. A commercial organisation is likely to want to satisfy itself that any additional overheads will be covered. It may be cautious about long-term commitments that restrict future commercial or operational changes. Additionally, special arrangements may have to be made about any play equipment and impact absorbing surfaces installed at public expense, if only a short-term agreement is possible. Nevertheless there can be considerable benefit for a commercial partner in terms of increased local goodwill and potential custom. Alternatively, use of a play area may be offered to the community as part of a section 106 agreement related to a planning application (see paragraph 5.24).
- 6.9.13 Shared use arrangements have the following advantages:
- shared capital, equipment and running costs
  - potential commercial spin-offs
  - reduction in vandalism and anti-social behaviour
  - improved local image.
- Disadvantages include:
- loss of autonomy
  - increased wear and tear on equipment.



- 6.9.14 Many schools have good quality, properly maintained play equipment, with effective impact absorbing surfaces, available during evenings, weekend and holiday periods when children need them most. However, some children may need to be encouraged to get over any reluctance to re-enter school premises in their free time. Some hospitals with playgrounds or extensive grounds can provide opportunities, especially for joint schemes for children with disabilities and can benefit from an increased range of equipment.
- 6.9.15 Whether for outdoor sport or children's play, dual use agreements will need to be wide-ranging and cover a wide range of issues. These may include the objectives of the scheme; the area involved; the initial design, including physical alterations to existing facilities necessary to accommodate dual use (eg security measures); applications for statutory approvals and grant aid; ownership of the land and equipment; the rights and duties of the partners to the agreement; the structure and constitution of the management committee and accounting procedures; apportionment of initial and future capital costs; apportionment of revenue costs; costs of insurance and general administration; a schedule of routine inspection, maintenance and security; replacement and repair costs; apportionment of time between user groups; any limitations on use and users; the period of agreement; conditions relating to the modification or termination of the agreement; conditions for limiting the use for special events and other contingencies; provision for making any ex-gratia payments; procedures for agreeing future improvements; and the disposal of assets on terminating the agreement.

## Reading and References

'Planning for Play' Play England (2006)

'Child's Play: Facilitating Play on Housing estates' R Whewey and A Millward, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Chartered Institute of Housing (1977)

'Can Play, Will Play' Rob Whewey and Alison John, Fields in Trust (2004) and the accompanying Action Guide

'Developing Accessible Play Space: A Good Practice Guide' Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003)

'Cycle Sports Facilities – Design Guide' Sport England and British Cycling (2003)

'The Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' by Peter Dury, National Playing Fields Association (2004)

'Understanding Participation in Sport – A Systematic Review' Sport England, 2005; a study by the University of Oxford, the British Heart Foundation and the Health Promotion Group

'Pitch Properties and Performance' W A Adams, S W Baker, R J Young and D M James, The England and Wales Cricket Board (2004)

'Natural Turf for Sport' Design Guidance Note, Sport England, 2000

'Climate Change Scenarios for the United Kingdom' Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2002)

Football Foundation Data Sheet 7, covering design and construction considerations and performance standards. See web site below for further guidance.

SAPCA Technical Guidance Leaflets 1 on site choice and installation of a synthetic surface and 2 on ground conditions.

'Active Design Objective 1 – Improving Accessibility'; 'Active Design' Sport England (2007)

'Artificial Grass Pitches for Rugby and Association Football: Performance Standards and design Guides for Community Use Pitches and Training Areas' Rugby Football Union (2007)

'Design and Specification of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)' Sport England and the Sports and Play Construction Association (2006)



'Guide to Indoor and Outdoor Areas for Small-Sided Football, Mini Soccer and Futsal' The Football Association (2005)

A Guide to the Design, Specification and Construction of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) including Multi Sport Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs) Parts 1, 2 and 3, Sport England and SAPCA (2003)

#### **Sports and Play Construction Association Codes of Practice**

- 'Construction and Maintenance of Synthetic Turf Pitches' (2005)
- 'Construction and Maintenance of Athletics Tracks with Synthetic Surfaces' (2005)
- 'Maintenance of Synthetic Sports Surfaces' (2004)
- 'Maintenance of fencing Systems for Sports Facilities' (2006)
- 'Construction and maintenance of Tennis Courts' (2007)

#### **Forthcoming SAPCA Codes of Practice in 2008**

- 'Construction and maintenance of Wet Pour Play Surfacing'
- 'Design, Installation and Maintenance of Lighting for Outdoor Sports Surfaces'

#### **European Standards available from the British Standards Institution**

- EN1176 'Playground equipment' (1997, with additional recommendations in 1998 and 1999)
- EN1177 'Impact absorbing surfacing – safety requirements and test measures' (1998)
- EN14974 'facilities for users of roller sports equipment – safety requirements and test measures' (2007)
- EN15312 'Free Access and multi-sport equipment requirements, including safety and test methods' (2007)

'Guide to Indoor and Outdoor Areas for Small-Sided Football, Mini-Soccer and Futsal' The Football Association (2005)

'National Tennis Strategy 1998-2002' Lawn Tennis Association

'Athletics Facilities – Planning and Delivery, 2007-2012' UK Athletics 2006

'Track and Field Facilities Manual' International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) (2003)

'Floodlighting of Outdoor Sports Facilities' Fields in Trust (2000)

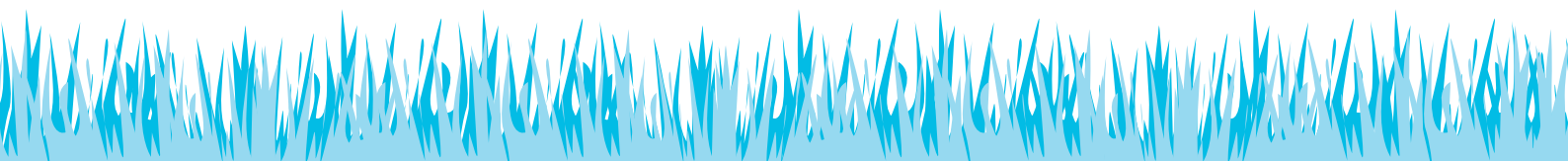
'Pavilions and Clubhouses' Design Guidance Note, Sport England, (1999)

'Building Bulletin 98: Briefing Framework for Secondary School Projects' The Stationery Office

'Building Bulletin 99: Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects' The Stationery Office

Thames Valley Police [www.thamesvalley.police.uk/reduction/designoutcrime/shelters.htm](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/reduction/designoutcrime/shelters.htm)

Sport England 'Active Design' [www.sportengland.org/planning\\_active\\_design.htm](http://www.sportengland.org/planning_active_design.htm)



## Websites

Fields in Trust	<a href="http://www.fieldsintrust.org">www.fieldsintrust.org</a>
Association of Play Industries	<a href="http://www.api-play.org">www.api-play.org</a>
British Standards	<a href="http://www.standardsdirect.org">www.standardsdirect.org</a>
Central Council of Physical Recreation	<a href="http://www.ccpr.org.uk">www.ccpr.org.uk</a>

(Other Governing Body websites can be accessed from the Sports Council websites or that of the Central Council for Physical Recreation)

English and Wales Cricket Board	<a href="http://www.ecb.co.uk">www.ecb.co.uk</a>
Football Association	<a href="http://www.thefa.com">www.thefa.com</a>
Football Foundation	<a href="http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk">www.footballfoundation.org.uk</a>
RoSPA Play Safety	<a href="http://www.rospa.com/playsafety">www.rospa.com/playsafety</a>
Rugby Football Union	<a href="http://www.rfu.com">www.rfu.com</a>
Sports and Play Construction Association	<a href="http://www.sapca.org.uk">www.sapca.org.uk</a>
Sport England	<a href="http://www.sportengland.org">www.sportengland.org</a>
Sports Turf Research Institute	<a href="http://www.stri.co.uk">www.stri.co.uk</a>

# Chapter 7:

## Safeguarding Facilities for the Future



# Chapter 7: Safeguarding Facilities for the Future

## 7.1 The Contribution and Limitations of the Planning System

- 7.1.1 This document has highlighted the positive role that the planning system plays in ensuring the provision of high quality facilities for outdoor sport and play, located in the right places, at a local level, near to where people live. This is done through a variety of means including the adoption of standards for quality, quantity and accessibility; Supplementary Planning Documents and Section 106 agreements; the publication of National Planning Policy Guidance and Statements; and the role of the national Sports Councils as statutory consultees.
- 7.1.2 The planning system, however, is not sufficient in itself to provide best practice in safeguarding facilities. Her Majesty's Government in England recognised this in relation to school playing fields when it introduced further protection through Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act. This had the added advantage, for example, of providing criteria against which the re-application of proceeds of sale had to be used, a requirement which can not be dealt with under planning law. Many take comfort from the designation of land as Green Belt but green belt boundaries can be redrawn and playing fields have been lost in urban areas to developments such as schools, in order to preserve the green belt. The William Ellis Playing Field in Harrow, Greater London is one such unfortunate example. In London, Metropolitan Open Land is a very helpful designation but again boundaries can be redrawn, resulting in for example the designation of over 5 acres of the former ILEA Playing field at Barn Elms in Richmond being re-designated as white land.
- 7.1.3 Fields in Trust has used other means of protection since it was formed in 1925. It has deployed charity, contract and land law. By deploying such wider aspects of law FIT has been, and remains, able to address issues relating to specified use of sites for sport and play, limitations on buildings other than those for ancillary purposes, public accessibility, the negotiation of improved facilities in the relatively rare event of disposal for built development and the re-application of proceeds. By such means Fields in Trust safeguards the long-term future of over 1150 sites, covering over 8,000 acres, throughout the United Kingdom.

## 7.2 The Benefits of Protection by Fields in Trust

- 7.2.1 Fields in Trust works with local managers, such as local authorities, sports clubs, play associations and charity trustees to ensure that facilities are properly safeguarded. Our methods add extra layers of scrutiny and security, but on a flexible and responsive basis. The benefits of Fields in Trust's means of protection are:
- Safeguarding land, facilities and opportunities for sport and play for current and future users
  - Ensuring that such use remains the priority now and in the future
  - Safeguarding public access, including access by specifically agreed sports clubs or other voluntary organisations
  - Providing reassurance about the long-term viability and sustainability of facilities to other potential grant providers or investors, and protecting those investments
  - In the event of disposal, ensuring that better quality facilities are provided as replacement still serving the same catchment population; and ensuring that all the proceeds of any disposal, or as much of the proceeds that can be negotiated in the circumstances of the particular disposal, are applied to the new facilities, and that any surplus remaining is invested for future maintenance and replacement works
  - Working with an organisation with over 80 years experience of this specialist work
  - Benefitting from Fields in Trust's close working relationship with the Charity Commission and the Commission's approval of Fields in Trust's model deeds.

## 7.3 The Importance of Sustainability

7.3.1 Safeguarding the future of land and facilities as outdoor playing space, lends itself readily to being part of the sustainability agenda, from an operational perspective. The long-term security provides an attractive setting for financial supporters: any investment will be protected even if a land exchange takes place at some time in the future. Fields in Trust, as an organisation working with the County Playing Fields Associations and others, provides access to first rate advice and information on matters such as fields' management and maintenance, planning and charity legislation, and fund-raising, thereby helping local communities to develop, use and celebrate quality facilities.

7.3.2 There are a number of options that are considered appropriate for facility protection. The protection can be charitable or non-charitable, in perpetuity or for a defined period of years, and for a user specified in the context of the nature of the facilities and local needs. The options for land protection are:

- Deeds of protection
- Custodian Trustee Freehold protection
- King George's Fields
- Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status.

7.3.3 The flexibility allows for the best choice to be made to suit local circumstances, the nature of the organisation managing the facilities, the nature of tenure (freehold or leasehold) and the type of facility ( eg sports ground, general open space or play area). Fields in Trust is always willing to offer advice and an active involvement in facility protection and information is given on the Fields in Trust website [www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org)

## 7.4 Methods of Protection

### Deeds of Protection – Deeds of Covenant

7.4.1 Historically, Fields in Trust procured Deeds of Covenant as consideration for financial assistance offered to owners and managers of outdoor facilities. Sometimes the deeds established the sites as charitable trusts - this was particularly the intention when funding was made available for or towards acquisition. Though the detailed wording varied from one deed to another, the key elements of each deed required that:

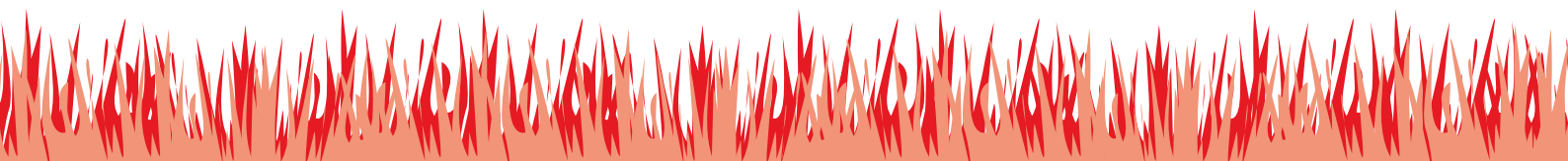
- The defined use of the land and facilities was for preservation for recreation
- The beneficiary was to be the public at large
- No disposal was to take place without the written consent of Fields in Trust (then the NPFA)
- In the case of local authorities, no appropriation to other uses was to take place without the written consent of Fields in Trust.

Fields in Trust has now moved away from procuring Deeds of Covenant in favour of procuring Deeds of Dedication, described below.

### Deeds of Protection – Deeds of Dedication

7.4.2 Fields in Trust's Deeds of Dedication are legal instruments which guarantee that the terms of the deed must be followed by another party owning outdoor land for sport or play. These deeds have been designed for local authorities, sports clubs or other organisations who want to protect a site they own, or are about to own. Again, these are contracts freely entered into by the parties concerned and cautions are registerable at the Land Registry. There are two deeds, both of which safeguard facilities. One of them, however, creates a charitable trust thereby creating protection in perpetuity. This has been approved by the Charity Commission.

7.4.3 The deeds can be dedicated to a particular person (e.g. a well known deceased local person formerly involved in sport or play) or to a particular event (e.g. the 2012 London Olympics). They state the purpose for which the site can be used (e.g. sport and open space), make statements about accessibility (typically, but not in all cases, the public at large) and prevent buildings which are not ancillary and disposal for non-recreational purposes without the written consent of Fields in Trust.





## Custodian Trustee/Freehold Protection

- 7.4.4 When most people think of charities they think of think of charitable organisations such as Fields in Trust, the Scouts or the Village Hall Committee. What is often not understood is that playing fields, or other forms of outdoor recreational facilities for public benefit, can be registered as charities in their own right. The owners or managers of these facilities, whether local authorities or voluntary bodies, are charity trustees accountable to the Charity Commission as the regulating body. Such sites are protected for all time, often referred to as 'in perpetuity'. However, part or all of any one site may still be disposed of providing betterment for the purposes of the charity (the so called charity trusts) can be evidenced. This must follow the requirements of the Charities Acts 1993 and 2006. Alternatively, Fields in Trust can offer protection without the need for a local charity to be set up. This is where a local authority or voluntary body donates a field to Fields in Trust then leases it back to ensure its protection without changing management or operation.
- 7.4.5 Establishing facilities on charitable trust for public benefit, whether through Deeds of Dedication (Fields in Trust's preference) or custodial trustee/freehold protection, has the following benefits:
- Protection for all time, in perpetuity, rather than on a time limited basis
  - Recreational use and public access requirements are guaranteed because of charitable status
  - 80% mandatory and 20% discretionary rate relief are available
  - Direct tax concessions are available, such as exemption from Income Tax and Capital Gains Tax
  - Increased opportunities for people and organisations to contribute time, expertise and good will
  - Access to appropriate charitable trust funds
  - Reassurance to would-be investors in terms of reputation and integrity following the charity Commission's approval of charitable status
  - Land rights and land gifts more negotiable at lower, or on occasions, no cost
  - Advice, information and guidance from the Charity Commission
  - The charity's affairs are transparent.

## The King George's Fields

- 7.4.6 Following the death of King George V in 1936, it was decided that his memorial should be the provision of playing fields throughout the United Kingdom. These would comprise a living memorial, intended to be kept for all time, for the benefit of the public at large, in urban and rural areas alike. On 3 November 1936 the King George's Fields Foundation was established and a national appeal resulted in a sum of £557,436 being collected. The memorial scheme initially funded 471 playing fields across the country. The National Playing Fields Association and Fields in Trust have played a key role in promoting these fields since their creation and, since 1965, have been responsible for legally ensuring their protection. Many of the King George's Fields are registered as charities in their own right, despite a recent decision by the Charity Commission to de-register a substantial number in the ownership of local authorities, because of doubt over the soundness of the registration and enabling powers available at the time. (The exact number is not yet known because the process is ongoing.) Further information about the King George's Fields generally and the position of the Charity Commissioners is referenced below.
- 7.4.7 The funds available to the King George's Fields Foundation have long since been distributed towards acquisition and lay-out costs. Hence, no entirely new KGFs are now established. However, it is the case that with changing populations and competing land use priorities, Fields in Trust will agree a re-location in part or whole, from time to time. This will only occur when Fields in Trust is persuaded that betterment for the same community in terms of outdoor facilities for sport and play will occur. (See Fields in Trust's policy on disposals of recreational land, section 7.5). Any facilities newly dedicated will be protected under the terms of the original Foundation and in all new cases charitable registration, consistent with today's law, is a requirement.

## Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) Status

7.4.8 Sports Clubs can apply to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs for CASC status. This enables sports clubs to enjoy many benefits similar to those afforded to registered charities but without the administrative responsibilities placed upon charities by the Charity Commission as the regulatory body. The benefits include:

- 80% mandatory business rate relief; local authorities can offer up to 100% relief to clubs at their discretion
- Ability to raise funds from individuals under Gift Aid
- Exemption from Corporation Tax on profits derived from trading activities if their trading income is under £30,000 per annum
- Profits derived from property income are also exempt if gross property income is under £20,000 per annum
- CASCs whose income does not exceed these thresholds are no longer required to complete an annual Corporation Tax return.

7.4.9 For a sports club to register as a CASC, it must:

- Be a club participating and providing facilities for a sport recognised by the national Sports Council
- Have an open membership system, i.e. a system open to all sections of the community
- Have the promotion of participation in amateur sport as a core purpose
- Be non-profit making and re-invest any surplus proceeds back into the sports club
- Stipulate that in the event of the club being wound up, any remaining assets be distributed to either the sports governing body for use in community sport, another CASC or a charity.

7.4.10 These criteria should be included in the club's constitution. **Example constitutional** clauses, agreed with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, are available for reference and adoption, or adaptation, along with other useful information on the CASC information website.. The assets of any CASC, such as a playing field or sports ground, therefore belong to the club, not its members in an individual capacity. Hence, if a club dissolves, its facilities cannot be sold for individual gain. Fields in Trust can enter into arrangements ensuring the future use of such assets in promoting community sports.

## 7.5 Fields in Trust's Policy on Disposals of Recreational Land

7.5.1 Wherever Fields in Trust has a legal interest in recreational land by way of legal arrangements such as deeds, its prior, written consent is required if land is to be disposed of. This consent is necessary irrespective of any other legal requirements such as planning permission for change of use.

7.5.2 Fields in Trust is responsive to local change and flexible in its dealings with others provided betterment for local communities in terms of outdoor sport and play can be demonstrated. Where facilities are protected by Fields in Trust, land exchanges may be agreed. Normally, Fields in Trust requires the following criteria to be met:

- The quantity of land to be newly protected must equal that being released. This equivalent size criterion normally applies to the replacement land being land newly brought into recreational use. In certain circumstances, land already in recreational use might be acceptable for exchange but it would need to be substantially greater in size than the land being released. This satisfies two of Fields in Trust's objectives, namely (a) the protection of the overall recreational land bank and/or (b) the increase in the amount of recreational land which Fields in Trust itself protects for community use
- The quality of the land and facilities to be acquired should be better than those being released
- The replacement facilities should serve the same community as those being released  
The definition of the catchment area 'of the same community' may vary with the specific circumstances of each transaction and the type of facilities provided
- Fields in Trust will normally require that all proceeds of a sale are reinvested in facilities and/or services for outdoor sport, play or recreation. Replacement land, facilities and balancing finance can satisfy this requirement in terms of total financial value

- Where land is owned by a charity, or is itself registered as a charity, the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 must be followed. Disposal must be in the best interests of the charity. An independent valuation by a qualified valuer or surveyor is required and guidance is available in CC28 'Disposing of Charity Land' available from the Charity Commission
- A new deed protecting the replacement site must be entered into by both parties  
Replacement sites will be protected by charity trusts being established if appropriate
- Conditions may be set relating to the onward use of the land to be disposed of.

## 7.6 Case Studies

### Exchanges

#### 7.6.1 Holt, Norfolk

Holt is a market town, with a population of just over 3,500. Fields in Trust protects its main outdoor sports facilities. Just over 15 years ago, Fields in Trust disposed of the old playing field site. 3 acres were sold for housing and replaced with 13 acres of adjacent agricultural land which were redeveloped for new and improved facilities for football, cricket, bowls and tennis, together with ancillary car parking, floodlighting and pavilion facilities. An endowment of some £150,000 has been invested to help cover running costs.

#### 7.6.2 King George's Field, Stenhousemuir

After prolonged negotiation, Fields in Trust agreed to allow Falkirk Council to dispose of some 3 acres of this 10 acre playing field to assist with town centre regeneration. Having obtained professional valuation advice, the following benefits were secured.

- 30 acres (4 sites) of existing recreational land brought under protection
- £500,000 plus investment in new and improved facilities at the King George's Field (KGF) and elsewhere in Stenhousemuir, including pitch drainage, a new pavilion, security fencing, MUGA and play areas.

### Protection

#### 7.6.3 Filwood, Bristol

Bristol City Council sold a 20 acre former school playing field to Fields in Trust for £1 and handed over a £700,000 endowment for new sports facilities, predominantly football, in this disadvantaged part of the city. The Football Foundation also came in with a grant of some £300,000 to help finance the capital costs and a three year development programme.

#### 7.6.4 Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire

Wheathampstead Parish Council own 6 recreation grounds within their parish. Alerted to Fields in Trust's Deed of Dedication scheme, they have opted for charitable protection for 3 sites, covering some 40 acres. A further 3 are to follow.

#### 7.6.5 Kibworth, Leicestershire

When Fields in Trust made grant aid available for facilities for Kibworth Cricket Club in 1953, it took advantage of a covenant protecting the site for sport for the residents of Kibworth and thereabouts for a period of 60 years. As the new Millennium approached, the club had the opportunity of disposing of its ground for development and replacing it locally for a much expanded membership with bigger and better facilities. FIT supported this plan and released the covenant 9 years early on the condition that if the Club was ever to wind up, net assets would be transferred to FIT for reinvestment in new facilities for cricket and other outdoor sports in the Kibworth area.

## 7.7 Town and Village Green Registration

7.7.1 Town and village green registration is a further method of securing long-term protection for recreational land and facilities. While Fields in Trust tends to favour protection through charity and appropriate deeds, many communities have secured success for protection using this legislation. Further advice can be obtained from the Open Spaces Society.

7.7.2 Refer also to section 2.7.

## Reading and References

'Guidance on long term recreational land protection' Sport England and the National Playing Fields Association (2002)

CC28 'Disposing of Charity Land' The Charity Commission (2007)

'School Standards and Framework Act 1998' – Section 77, The Stationery Office Limited

'The Protection of School Playing Fields and Land for Academies'  
Department for Education and Skills (2007)

'The King George's Fields Foundation, Final Report' – now out of print

'Dedication as a King George's Fields by Local authorities of Land they already hold as part of their Corporate Property' The Charity Commission (2006)

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/schoolslandandproperty/schoolplayingfield/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/resourcesfinanceandbuilding/schoolslandandproperty/schoolplayingfield/)

[www.fieldsintrust.org/what\\_we\\_do/history/kinggeorgevfields.php](http://www.fieldsintrust.org/what_we_do/history/kinggeorgevfields.php)

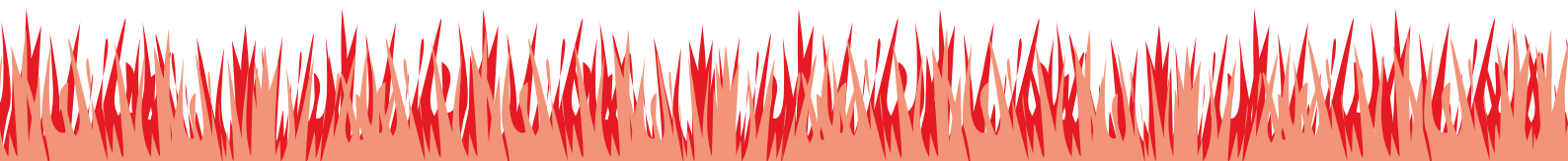
[www.charitycommission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/kgfieldpaper.asp](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/kgfieldpaper.asp)

## Websites

Fields in Trust  
Community Amateur Sports Clubs  
Department for Environment, Food and  
Agriculture (for Town and Village Green information)  
Open Spaces Society  
Planning Sanity  
Teachernet (for schools' information)

[www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org)  
[www.cascinfo.co.uk](http://www.cascinfo.co.uk)

[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)  
[www.oss.org.uk](http://www.oss.org.uk)  
[www.planningsanity.co.uk](http://www.planningsanity.co.uk)  
[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)







# Appendices



# Appendix A

## The Historical Development of the 'The Six Acre Standard'

- A1 In 1925 the National Playing Fields Association was founded to help ensure that every man, woman and child in Great Britain and Northern Ireland would have the opportunity of participating in outdoor recreational activity within a reasonable distance of home during their leisure hours. The Association urged all local authorities to adopt a minimum standard of provision of 5 acres of public open space for every 1000 people, of which at least 4 acres was to be set aside for team games, tennis, and bowls. In 1934 this standard was increased to 7 acres in order to include private playing space and school playing fields.
- A2 In 1938 the 1 acre of open space, originally included for parks and public gardens, was dropped so that the standard became one of 6 acres applying to playing space only. The 6 acres allowed for the inclusion of up to 2 acres of privately owned land that was permanently preserved to provide recreation for schools and sports clubs. The balance, between 4 and 6 acres, was to be permanently preserved public fields.
- A3 In 1955, after a nationwide survey of urban playing facilities, it was concluded that privately owned playing fields, available to the residents of a district, could remain in the standard, but that school playing fields should be excluded unless reciprocal arrangements were in force ensuring a satisfactory measure of dual use. As before, the land was to be permanently preserved for the purpose, preferably in public ownership.
- A4 In 1971, following a survey of selected towns, the Association reaffirmed that the 6 acres per 1000 people recommendation remained valid. However, there was a general feeling that, because experience had shown wide variation in requirements from town to town, it would be misleading to continue to give the recommendation the rigidity of a minimum standard. Instead, it was decided that a more flexible approach could be encouraged by treating the recommendation as a general target for the guidance of local authorities in the preparation and implementation of their development plans. Other changes to the 1955 standard were to:
- Include playgrounds and casual playspace for children, athletics facilities, pitch and putt courses and facilities provided by commercial bodies
  - Include privately used grounds whether or not available to local residents, and
  - Exclude school and other educational playing fields.
- A5 In 1974, as a result of requests for more specific guidance on the practical application of the target, notes were published giving a suggested breakdown of the 6 acre figure.
- A6 The 1986 recommendations were similar to those of 1971 and 1974 except that education playing fields and changing accommodation specifically designed for joint use were included.
- A7 In 1989 the status of the recommendations reverted to being a minimum standard, but continued to serve as a target where, for justifiable reasons, it was not possible to allocate sufficient land for playing space in existing conurbations.
- A8 In 1992, while the minimum standard for outdoor playing space remained unaltered, three new categories of play provision were introduced to meet the needs of children of different age groups:
- a local area for play (LAP)
  - a local equipped area for play (LEAP), and
  - a neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP).
- A9 Greater emphasis was also placed on quality and accessibility.
- A10 The 2002 version placed the recommendations in the clear context of national legislation, policy and practice. It also developed the themes of quality and accessibility further and provided more detailed guidance about design and other technical aspects.

# Appendix B

## Local Development Frameworks

- B1 Each LDF comprises a folder of local development documents. These are prepared by local councils, unitary authorities or national park authorities and they outline the spatial planning strategy for each administrative area.
- B2 Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) – required. This sets out the consultation process that the planning authority must follow with local communities and other stakeholders when preparing documents. It must provide open access to information, actively encourage involvement and give regular and timely feedback on progress. Local organisations have every opportunity to ensure that their views are sought by involvement with the SCI.
- B3 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) – required. Every planning authority must submit an annual report to the Government detailing the progress and effectiveness of their LDF. The AMR assesses:
- Whether policies are achieving objectives?
  - Whether sustainable development is being delivered?
  - If policies had intended consequences and whether the assumptions and objectives behind policies remain relevant?
  - If the targets set in the LDF are being met?
- The AMR includes a range of local and standard (Core Output) indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Any adjustments to the Local Development Scheme which are required are highlighted.
- B4 Local Development Scheme (LDS) – required. This provides a ‘public’ project plan, identifying which documents are to be produced, in what order and when. It acts as a starting point for finding out about the authority’s planning policies, in respect of a particular place or issue, and the status of those policies. It also identifies, with a time-table, what documents are to be produced to make up the LDF over a three year period.
- B5 Local Development Orders (LDOs) and Simplified Planning Zones (SPZs) – optional. An LDO is made to extend permitted development rights for certain forms of development. An SPO is an area where an authority wishes to stimulate development and encourage investment. Planning permission is granted without the need for a formal application or the payment of fees.
- B6 Development Plan Documents (DPDs). A Core Strategy, site specific allocations of land and a Proposals Map are required. Additional optional documents such as Area Action Plans can also be included. The DPDs outline the key development goals of each LDF. DPDs are subject to robust procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with DPDs unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DPDs are also subject to a Sustainability Appraisal to ensure that economic, environmental and social impacts of the plan are conform with sustainable development targets.
- B7 Core Strategy – required. This sets out the general spatial vision and objectives for the delivery in the LDF. It plays a key part in delivering the community strategy, setting out spatial aspects and a long-term spatial vision. It deals strategically with development and the use of land and outlines the strategy for delivering strategic development needs, including open space and leisure.



- B8 Adopted Proposals Map (APM) – required. This illustrates all site-specific policies in all adopted DPDs in map form. It should identify areas for protection such as green belt, Metropolitan Open Land (in London) or open spaces. Separate inset maps may be required, such as the policies for Area Action Plans (AAPs). It must be revised as each DPD is adopted in order to reflect the up-to-date spatial plan for the area.
- B9 Site Specific Allocations – required Allocations of land for specific purposes must be set out in the SSA document, which is updated to take account of changes to other LDDs or implementation on the ground. Allocations are to be made on a robust assessment of sustainability, availability and accessibility for particular uses or mixed uses.
- B10 Area Action Plans (AAPs) – optional An AAP is concerned with a specific location or an area subject to conservation or significant change, such as a major reclamation project or a growth area. The AAP is concerned with implementation, looking at the appropriateness of scale, mix and quality.
- B11 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – optional SPDs expand or add details to planning policies as set out in DPDs, or a saved policy in an existing development plan. They take the form of design guides, area development briefs, a master plan or issue-based documents. Many authorities use SPDs in relation to open space or outdoor playing space. The community must be involved in the preparation of SPDs and a sustainability Appraisal is required.

# Appendix C

## Summary Report of the Survey Work

### Introduction

- C1 The survey work was carried out by Ashley Godfrey Associates in conjunction with Karl Hallam. A questionnaire survey of local planning authorities in the United Kingdom secured an overall response rate of 38.2%. In addition extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These findings were important as part of the consideration and justification for proposed Benchmark Standards.

### Quantitative Survey of Local Authorities

- C2 All planning authorities throughout the United Kingdom were sent a postal questionnaire relating to quantitative aspects of provision and standards for space for outdoor sport and play. In total, 147 English local authorities responded to the survey. 61% of the respondents replied that they had undertaken a playing pitch assessment and 53% of the respondents have undertaken an assessment as directed within PPG17.

### Playing Pitches

- C3 58% of respondent English local authorities were able to provide data about their current provision of playing pitches. The median level of provision was 1.12 hectares per 1000 population compared to 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001) recommendation of 1.2 hectares per 1000 population. 23% of the respondents had developed local standards of provision for playing pitches. The median local standard of provision was 1.21 hectares per 1000 population, which is identical to the recommendation in 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001).
- C4 21% of these respondents had both audited their provision and gone on to develop a local standard. In 20 instances, the standard developed is lower than the current level of provision. This is a cause for concern since it can be used directly as an initial step in legitimizing efforts to develop playing pitches for other purposes, often non-recreational but sometimes for indoor facilities for sport and recreation, at the cost of open space uses.

### Other Outdoor Sports

- C5 29% of English local authorities were able to provided data about their current provision for other outdoor sports. Only half of the local authorities that had audited their playing pitch provision had proceeded to audit their provision for other outdoor sports (apart from pitches), such as including bowling greens, tennis courts and athletic tracks. The median level of provision for all sports including pitches was 1.32 hectares per 1000 population compared to 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001) of 1.6 hectares per 1000 population.
- C6 29% of local authorities have developed local standards of provision for outdoor sport. The median for local standards of provision was 1.68 hectares per 1000 population, which was slightly in excess of 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001). In the case of 8 local authorities, the standard developed was lower than the current level of provision.

### Children's Play

- C7 31% of the English local authorities that responded were able to provide data about their current designated equipped spaces for play. The median level of provision was 0.115 hectares per 1000 population. This compared with the children's playing space standard set out in 'The Six Acre Standard' (1992), which urged that 0.2 – 0.3 hectares per 1,000 (total) population for outdoor equipped playgrounds for children of all ages.
- C8 28% of local authorities had developed a standard. The median local standard of provision was 0.315 hectares per 1000 population, which closely related to 'The Six Acre Standard' (1992) for equipped play provision, being slightly above it.



### Casual Playing Space or Amenity Greenspace

- C9 25% of the total number of respondents were able to provide data about this type of provision. The median level of provision was 0.7 hectares per 1000 population. This could be compared to the children's playing space standard in 'The Six Acre Standard (1992), which indicated that 0.4 – 0.5 hectares per 1,000 population should be provided for casual or informal playspace in housing areas.
- C10 Local standards of provision for casual playing space/amenity greenspace had been established in 29% of local authorities. The median local standard of provision was 0.81 hectares per 1000 population, which was higher than 1992's 'The Six Acre Standard' for outdoor playing space for children. However, bearing in mind the wider definition of this type of space and the differing interpretations made by local authorities about the type of space to be included, the result is comparable to 'The Six Acre Standard' recommendations at that time.

### Findings for Northern Ireland

- C11 Comprehensive data already existed for Northern Ireland, following survey work by PlayBoard of play spaces in the country. By taking an average size for a play space, a median score for equipped play of 0.06 hectares per 1000 population was derived, compared to the median level of provision in England, which was 0.115 hectares per 1000 population.
- C12 The median for playing pitches was 0.48 hectares per 1000 population compared to the median level of provision of 1.12 hectares in England. The median for outdoor sport is 0.505 compared to the median level of provision in England which is 1.32 hectares per 1000 population. These results indicate a substantial difference in provision between the two countries.

### Scotland and Wales

- C13 Responses were received for 9 authorities in both countries but the data was insufficient to justify any further analysis.

### Conclusion

- C14 The survey work illustrated clearly that the previous recommendations of 'The Six Acre Standard' for provision for outdoor space for sport and play in England were, and remain, very relevant in the context of current provision in England. Clearly, there still remains the need for local assessment but the use of the Fields in Trust recommendations as a quantitative Benchmark Standards carry general value. Fields in Trust does, however, recognise that there will be variations both below and above the Fields in Trust Benchmark standards.
- C15 Our major concern is that adopted local standards should not be lower than the current levels of provision unless the most rigorous assessment is undertaken.
- C16 Current levels of provision in Northern Ireland appeared significantly lower, and the data obtained relating to Scotland and Wales was considered insufficient to provide for reliable conclusions. However, it is not unreasonable for the England results to be used as a reference point elsewhere in the United Kingdom if this is considered appropriate by local stakeholders.



# Appendix D

## The Report of Stakeholder Consultation

### Introduction and General Comments

- D1 The stakeholder consultation, carried out by Ashley Godfrey Associates and Karl Hallam, indicated that, on balance, the local authorities and other stakeholders felt that the review of 'The Six Acre Standard' should seek to develop guidance that was more flexible and in line with national planning policy guidance.
- D2 Local authorities were supportive of the proposal to develop benchmarks for comparable local authorities to provide a 'starting point' in the process of establishing local standards. It was felt that a new set of national benchmarks would be one tool in the process of setting locally derived standards. Benchmarks would provide a comparison point for assessing current levels of provision.
- D3 Respondents recognised that 'The Six Acre Standard' was widely used and understood by a variety of public and private bodies and individuals involved in the provision and management of outdoor playing space. It was generally regarded as a reliable yardstick that could be easily applied. Any proposed changes to the standard should be carefully considered as they could dilute, or create confusion to, its simple but fundamental message.
- D4 The review should take account of changes that have taken place since the last 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001) was published, including pressures leading to the reduction in children's ability to range any distance from home.
- D5 Quality standards should be given greater emphasis in the document to encourage higher aspirations of quality and less of a focus on absolute quantity. In particular there should be an aspirational, quality driven approach to setting standards for new residential developments.
- D6 Any new Benchmark Standards should recognise the multi-functionality of many spaces that will appeal to a variety of users and uses.
- D7 There was a need to place emphasis on 'place making' both in a physical and a social sense. This could be achieved by promoting the importance of masterplanning to maximise recreational networks and promote linkages, both internally within developments, and externally with a view to keeping people active.

### Key points for Outdoor Sport

- D8 Specific points raised in relation to outdoor sport were:
- The importance of the design of outdoor playing space if it was to contribute to the quality of life and place
  - It is important to embed Active Lifestyles into the process of developing strategies for outdoor sport and children's play
  - Concern about the loss of playing fields and the implications for pitch sports
  - Participation in mini-soccer has grown by 30% in three years; growth was particularly evident in the younger age groups with pressure now to accommodate 5/6 year olds
  - The need to secure protection for smaller community sports pitches including small sided football, bowls and tennis
  - Privately owned sports and social club sites were no longer being supported as much as previously by their owners and were being lost to development
  - There is concern about the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme where playing fields could be lost and in some cases not replaced or after a period of years with no consideration of how to ensure continued activity in the intervening period
  - Sport Scotland felt that the review should differentiate between provision for informal physical activity and formal sports provision



- The main concern in Northern Ireland was to protect existing open space which has come under significant pressure for development
- Sport England believed that master planning had the potential to create new environments that maximise the opportunities for participation in sports and physical activity
- The importance of the public sector to football where 82% of football activity is played on publicly owned sites and about 94% of all football is played at grassroots level
- The emergence of the concept of hub sites providing multi-sport and multi-activity opportunities
- A feeling that local authorities needed to demonstrate that provision for outdoor sport should be genuinely accessible to communities; participation at basic level was as important, if not more important, than the creation of high quality elite sports hubs.

### Key Points for Children's Play

#### Specific points raised in relation to children's play were:

- Local authorities should be encouraged to prepare Supplementary Planning Documents including play space standards to ensure that standards are enforced in new developments and that they are given appropriate weight and attention in the planning decision making process
- Concern about the attitude of adults complaining about children playing and getting local authorities to remove play equipment
- The need for an approach which avoided the over provision of play space in areas of low child density and allowed for more focused provision in areas of very high child density
- Concern about how Benchmark Standards could be applied to highly urbanised areas where there is not enough available space
- The benchmark standards should be more flexible to accommodate local circumstances
- There should be a reference to the value of involving local children and young people, families and communities in discussion about play provision
- The importance of location of areas for play by, for example, consideration of site lines and pedestrian routes
- The revised recommendations should build on the strengths of 'The Six Acre Standard' and include reference to the need for age appropriate provision
- The needs of rural communities should be addressed
- A concern that the current standards were overly simplistic and prescriptive and were not fully achievable
- The aim should be to encourage local authorities to provide more in terms of quantity, quality and variety
- Concern about the poor standard of briefs for new play provision that were leading to the development of formulaic playgrounds and a landscape of identical play facilities, which offered insufficient variety and play value
- The need for greater transparency in the use of planning contributions to ensure that money was spent appropriately
- The review should include reference to wheeled sports standards for BMX, Rollersports and Skateboarding with the aim of improving the quality of provision
- Children needed places where they could hide, just as they needed places that were challenging; the new recommendations should encourage risk and innovation and give guidance on how this could be achieved
- The importance of master planning in the provision of open space would be particularly important in relation to the Government's Sustainable Communities programme
- Research and consultation with children and young people have shown that children value access to pockets and areas of open space, wasteland and woodland. Access to a more natural environment means that children can enhance their own space to better meet their needs.

## References

'The Six Acre Standard' NPFA, Fields in Trust (1992 and 2001 versions)

# Appendix E

## Worksheet for Assessing the Quality of Grass Pitches

	Element	Limits	Method of Test	Pass/Fail
1	Ground Cover %	>70 for sward height 25 – 30 <80 for sward height 30 – 35	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 6	
2	Broad Leafed Weeds %	< 10	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 6	
3	Sward Height mm	20 – 60 Playing Season 20 – 75 Summer Maintenance	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 3	
4	Thatch depth mm	< 5	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 7	
5	Hardness in g	35 – 200	STR1 method of test using a 0.5 kg Clegg impact hammer from a drop height of 0.55 m	
6	Water infiltration rate mm/hr	5	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 8	
7	Evenness – 2 metre straight edge	<20 mm	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 6	
8	Slope – Direction of play Across play	<1.25% <2.5%	BS 7370 : Part 3 Appendix 5	
9	pH Value	5.5 – 7.5	ISO 10390	
<b>Root-zone Layer</b>				
10	Maximum Diameter	<32 mm	Particle Size Distribution	

Produced by Sport England for its 'Playing Fields and Community Greenspaces' funding programme, sponsored by the former New Opportunities Fund. The document was produced as a result of partnership between the New Opportunities Fund, Sport England, Fields in Trust, Cranfield University, the Sports Turf Research Institute, the Institute of Groundsmanship, the Sports and Play Constructors Association and the Football Foundation.



# Appendix F

## Fields in Trust Advisory Note Play Value Assessment for Playgrounds

### Introduction

- F1 One of the key roles of Fields in Trust was and is to promote improved playground safety throughout the United Kingdom. Fields in Trust recognises the importance of providers and managers following the European Playground Equipment and Surfacing Standards which set many important benchmarks for levels of quality and safety throughout the EU. Fields in Trust was actively involved in the production of European Standards.
- F2 European Standards do not, however, cover all aspects of playground provision and Fields in Trust therefore also recognises the importance of sound risk assessment and management as advocated by the Play Safety Forum in its position statement 'Managing Risk in Play Provision'. Fields in Trust remains an active member of the Play Safety Forum.

### Information

- F3 As a result of its extensive experience in playground design Fields in Trust has developed a method which can be used to assess the play value for children provided by such facilities. The Fields in Trust method can be used to score play value in existing, or proposed, playgrounds. It should be noted that there is no pass or fail – the purpose is to produce a relative score that can be compared with other playgrounds.
- F4 Play value scores can usefully assist an operator to:
- Assess the varied merits of different sites to allow better decision-making, particularly when they are looking to improve play areas
  - Make a useful assessment of provision in relation to other providers
  - Assess areas subject to existing or potential vandalism
  - Assess varying designs by different manufacturers and designers
  - Assess the relative values of tenders, and to compare the play value offered by various tender proposals. Schemes offering similar play value can then be further considered against personal preferences.
- F5 Three distinct aspects of provision are addressed to cover site and equipment features, as well as the enhancement of the play process. It includes a wide range of play, learning, social and developmental opportunities together with elements of safety, supervision and the environmental context. The tool is not exhaustive and may be further developed according to the requirements of the operator. Where an item does not meet the prescribed standard(s) of safety (e.g no impact absorbing surface), the item should still be scored and the number of non-compliant items recorded together with the final play value score.

### Advice on Use

- F6 The first factors to be considered in each playground or tender submission are the playground's overall site features. A score per bullet point category for the overall playground should then be awarded. A maximum target figure is given as guidance towards what might be regarded as a 'balanced' playground. Broad descriptions, as opposed to detailed and prescriptive listings, are provided for each category to allow for local interpretation.
- F7 After the general assessment, the playground's equipment should then be scored item by item. Finally an additional score is awarded, if appropriate, as an assessment of the enhancement of the play process. The score for these three elements are then totalled to produce the playground's overall play value score.

## Site Features

- F8 The scores are for the overall playground except where the maximum scores allow separate marking where there are additional or distinct playground sections such as those for toddlers, and for seating, footpaths, lighting, fencing and pedestrian gates.
- F9 Score one point per item or group of items:

Site Features	Max	Score
Informal supervision	4	
Ground contouring	2	
Planting	1	
Child seating (or 1 per Toddler/Junior/Senior)	1/3	
Adult seating (or 1 per Toddler/Junior/Senior)	1/3	
Internal paths (or 1 per Toddler/Junior/Senior)	1/3	
Lighting (or 1 per Toddler/Junior/Senior)	1/3	
Fencing (or 1 per Toddler/Junior/Senior)	1/3	
Pedestrian self-closing gates (or 1 per Toddler/Junior/Senior)	1/3	
Vehicle maintenance gate	1	
Signs advising on management and dogs	2	
Cycle stands	2	
Litter bins	2	
Shelter	1	
Layout	2	
Visual appeal	2	
<b>Site Features Total for the playground:</b>	<b>25/37</b>	



## Equipment Features

- F10 The maximum scores are for each playground, or if the sections are sufficiently distinct for toddler-, junior- or main-sections. Items that directly link, for example, a series of balance beams, or a series of items that effectively form one activity (such as stepping logs) should be treated as one item. Multi-use or combination equipment such as a play structure containing a slide, fireman's pole, or clatter bridge should be split up and treated as individual items. Features providing an access route such as a ladder or stairs are not counted.
- F11 Score one point per item or group of items:

Equipment Features	Max	Score
Rocking	3	
Gliding	3	
Rotating (single or twin user)	2	
Rotating (multi user)	2	
Sliding (conventional)	3	
Sliding (handgrip)	2	
Swinging (per set)	2	
Swinging (SPSS)	3	
Balancing	1	
Jumping	1	
Climbing	1	
Agility bridges (e.g. clatter or suspension)	1	
Crawling	1	
Viewing platform	1	
Ball play area	2	
Wheeled play area	3	
<b>Equipment Features Total for the playground:</b>	<b>31</b>	

## Enhancement of the Play Process

F12 The maximum scores are for the overall playground. Score 1 point per item or group of items:

Play Co-operation	Max	Score
Sand pit/box	2	
Sand play table/item to assist sand play	3	
Water play	3	
Social play 2		
Educational or learning features	2	
Special needs	2	
Ground graphics	2	
Sounding items	2	
Play challenge	3	
Play Co-operation Total for the playground:	21	
<b>Overall Playground Total</b>	<b>77/89</b>	

Fields in Trust produces a wide range of technical publications which provide guidance on many aspects of play and sports facilities.

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# Appendix G

## Home Zones – Opportunities to Make Provision for Children’s Play

### What is a Home Zone?

- G1 A good definition of a Home Zone is given by Mike Biddulph in ‘Home Zones, A Planning and Design Handbook’, published by The Policy Press and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2001.
- G2 ‘A home zone is a residential street in which the living environment clearly predominates over any provision for traffic. It is an environment where the design of the spaces between homes provides space for motor vehicles, but where the wider needs of residents are also fully accommodated. This is achieved by adopting approaches to street design, landscaping and highway engineering that control how vehicles move without restricting the number of vehicular movements.’
- G3 ‘In a home zone people share what would formerly have been the carriageway and pavements, and, if it is well designed, vehicles can only travel at a maximum speed that is a little faster than walking pace (less than 10mph). This allows other things to be introduced into the street, including, for example, areas for children to play, larger gardens or planting such as street trees, cycle parking and facilities such as seats at which residents can meet.’
- G4 It is emphasised that ‘...the home zone is an open environment in which people genuinely share the space... You might see evidence of children playing, including, for example, some toddlers’ play equipment, although children will not need to be confined to a play area with a sign stating ‘play here’, as the environment should be safe enough for them to play anywhere’.

### Why create them?

- G5 As stated by the Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers (IHIE) in its Home Zone Design Guidelines, published in 2002, ‘The key benefit of a Home Zone is that it turns a residential street into a valued public space and not just a place for movement.’
- G6 More specifically, the Institute recognises that a successful Home Zone will:
- Reduce or remove the dominance of the car
  - Foster a sense of community
  - Encourage a wider range of activity and use of the street by residents
  - Reduce social isolation, particularly amongst older people
  - Increase opportunities for active and creative children’s play
  - Increase natural surveillance, deterring casual crime
  - Reduce traffic speeds significantly – to around 10mph
  - Improve the safety of residential areas, and perhaps more importantly, residents’ perception of safety
  - Enable all members of the community – including children, older people and disabled people – to reclaim their local environment from the car
  - Encourage people to walk and cycle within their local area, and to nearby destinations;
  - Improve the quality of the built environment
  - Help to increase the demand for urban living.
- G7 Thus, as Mike Biddulph states, ‘Home Zones should encourage adults to let their children play outside more as their fear of traffic accidents is reduced. This, in turn, should allow children to be more active and subsequently improve their health.’
- G8 Additionally, Home Zones have the potential to enable higher density developments to be created as the space outside the home becomes more useful and the area given over to vehicular traffic is reduced. Therefore, Home Zones have a positive role to play in achieving The requirements of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing and PPG13: Transport; Scottish Planning Policy 3 (SPP3): Planning for Housing and SSP17: Planning and Transport; and the forthcoming Planning Advice Note (PAN) 76: Residential Streets.

## Where?

- G9 The Home Zone concept can be applied to either streets in new-build schemes or to existing streets where there is an established population.
- G10 Home Zones could be established where there is existing or potential resident support and little or no existing or planned local green space in either private gardens or public areas. They may be popular in existing streets either where there is already a large amount of street activity or where residents perceive that traffic is dangerous and are discouraged from going out. Dutch guidance on Home Zones advises that treated streets should have fewer than 100 vehicles per hour at peak times, and that continuous treatments in a street should be less than 600 metres in length. Streets being considered for treatment should also typically become the destination for traffic within the area with very low levels of through-traffic. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2001).

## Existing Play Space Guidance

- G11 Fields in Trust agrees with the description, purpose and recommended location for Home Zones, as described by others above. It fully supports the development of Home Zones and would like to see them contribute to opportunities for play.
- G12 Fields in Trust defines outdoor playing space as 'space that is safely accessible and available to the general public, and of a suitable size and nature, for sport, active recreation or children's play.' It recommends a benchmark standard of 2.4 hectares (6 acres) of such space be provided for 1000 people, of which 1.6 hectares (4 acres) should be for outdoor sport and 0.8 hectares (2 acres) for children's play. This document deals specifically with the latter.
- G13 Fields in Trust recommends the provision of a hierarchy of children's play areas, which have been designed to meet the needs of different age groups, in locations based upon the length of time that it would take a child to walk to and from them. The hierarchy features:
- A local area for play (LAP)
  - A local equipped area for play (LEAP)
  - A neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP).
- G14 The recommendation is to achieve the children's playing space element of the standard, by providing:
- The LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs in locations based upon walking time
  - The balance as casual playing space within areas of amenity open space.
- G15 The provision of opportunities to play in Home Zones is complementary to, rather than a substitute for, the full hierarchy of play areas recommended by Fields in Trust. Where LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs have been provided within the recommended walking distances, children should be directed to them in an appropriate manner. The directions could take the form of markings on the ground to avoid a proliferation of signs.

## The Use of Home Zones for Play

- G16 Highway engineers have stated that, 'Unstructured and spontaneous street play is creative and does not need particular pieces of play equipment. Children in Home Zones will tend to use the whole length and width of the space and will use any physical features in the street – suitably designed public art for example – as part of their play. Children will also play extensively on bikes and other wheeled toys on the shared surface' (IHIE, 2002). However, Home Zones can be designed with specific provision for play.
- G17 Mike Biddulph pursues this idea, stating that 'The whole environment should offer the potential for play and related activities that do not disturb the peace of other residents. Formal play equipment is not always necessary, but where it is introduced it should be chosen and located in consultation with residents' (Biddulph, 2001).



- G18 Fields in Trust shares his view that great care needs to be taken in the selection and siting of play equipment. Consultation with local residents is vital, particularly where features are proposed to be sited close to people's homes. People need to decide what is right for them in their locality. Designers need to find out what the children like and dislike and how they might use any new facilities. However, such consultation should not be used as a tactic to delay or avoid the full provision of outdoor playing space beyond the Home Zone.
- G19 In new-build schemes, potential buyers of houses need to be made aware of the location of any existing or proposed play features.
- G20 For those Home Zones that have exceptional opportunities to install play equipment, low-key features designed for use by younger children are likely to be considered appropriate (e.g. play panels, spring animals, children's seating, low-level balance items, stepping stones or surface markings such as footprints, hopscotch or local ethnic games). Depending on the choice of item, there may be a need to install an impact absorbing surface to meet safety requirements (EN1176). Such surfacing and/or other changes in the colour and texture of the ground may help to define the extent of the 'designated' play area.
- G21 As with the siting of all play features, special care is required to avoid a loss of privacy for the occupiers of the nearest houses and to reduce the likelihood of noise and disturbance, particularly to households without children. It is also important to understand that the occupiers of housing may change more frequently than the play provision and that the original agreement of a scheme may not be repeated with new residents. In practice, tall pieces of equipment are unlikely to be appropriate.
- G22 There will need to be adequate space around each play feature but the normal requirement for fencing may be relaxed to bollards, other street furniture or planting, while maintaining good visibility for motorists. As Biddulph has noted, 'Formal play areas should be protected from incursion by traffic by using bollards. Other barriers such as fencing around play areas, are not necessary in a home zone as these restrict children's use of the carriageway space. ... The bollards keep the cars out, but they do not keep the children in!' (Biddulph, 2001). However, the use of bollards to define the boundary of the space may need to be supplemented by the provision of some type of deterrent surfacing to help prevent children's egress into the path of moving vehicles. Safety is clearly paramount and, where children and vehicles share the same space, physical features must not obstruct visibility.
- G23 'There are management, insurance and safety implications associated with the provision of play equipment that designers should be aware of. The agency responsible for the street (which could be the local authority or another agency) has a duty of care that extends to any fixed play equipment that has been installed' (IHIE, 2002). Responsibility for the management of such features must be clear and the adopting organisation needs to be involved from the outset. This will enable a formal risk assessment to be carried out at the appropriate time.
- G24 Ball games involving all but the youngest children are unlikely to be appropriate in Home Zones because of:
- Their potential to disturb other residents
  - The risk of damage to buildings and vehicles
  - The danger of children chasing after a ball and into the path of a moving vehicle.
- G25 Therefore, safe routes should be provided, and appropriately sign-posted, to enable children to get to places that are suitable for ball games (e.g. NEAPs) on foot or by bicycle.
- G26 Play provision in Home Zones should be designed not to become a focus for the group activities of older children and young people.

### Design Criteria

- G27 While there is no specific requirement for a Home Zone to include either designated areas for play or the provision of equipment, if its design allows the opportunity to do so, Fields in Trust recommends that the criteria below are met.
- G28 Unlike LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs, Fields in Trust has not given a name to designated areas for play within Home Zones. This is to emphasise the point that such facilities supplement, rather than substitute that recommended hierarchy.



- G29 It is recommended that a Home Zone play area:
1. Caters mainly for children of 4-8 years in age
  2. Is located in a position that has been agreed following consultation with all interested parties
  3. Is positioned where children at play can be seen clearly by cyclists and motorists and not hidden by planting, parked cars or other obstacles
  4. Occupies land that is well drained with an appropriate surface beneath and around any fixed play equipment to accord with EN1176
  5. Has an activity zone that permits incidental play around the equipment or features, the boundaries of which can be recognised by a change in the surface treatment (e.g. the type, colour or texture of material, or level), planting, street furniture or means of enclosure. The size and shape of the activity zone will be determined by the chosen play equipment or features and the character of the particular street
  6. Includes play equipment or features of a type that have been selected only after full consultation with the occupiers of the nearest properties
  7. Has a buffer zone, of 5 metres minimum depth, between the activity zone and the forward-most part of the nearest dwelling that faces the play area. Gable end or other exposed walls should be protected from use for ball games by, for example, providing a strip of dense planting of 1 metre minimum depth. The greater the size of the activity zone and the more attractive the feature to older children, the deeper the buffer zone that will need to be provided.
- G30 The area of the activity zone would be recognised as being a designated area for play and would, therefore, contribute to meeting the children's playing space part of Fields in Trust's Benchmark Standards.
- G31 It is by re-examining the design of streets from which most opportunities will arise. However, attractive and functional public art can provide benefits for children's play too. Artistic designs for surfacing, for example, can help to identify areas that would be used predominantly for play, pedestrian movement or car parking. The involvement of a professional artist, engaging with the community to articulate what is important to local people, has been demonstrated to be successful on many occasions. Therefore, this should be recognised at the start of the process of designing and developing a Home Zone.
- G32 The local police service will normally have an architectural liaison officer who can offer advice on measures to reduce the opportunities for crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime, in order to create safe and secure Home Zones.

### Implementation and Resources

- G33 Within areas of existing development, the provision of Home Zones is most likely to be the result of improvement and regeneration schemes. Within new developments, suitable opportunities for the provision of Home Zones should be sought at the feasibility and concept stage for any scheme. To encourage developers to consider the inclusion of a Home Zone in their proposals, emerging Local Development Documents produced by local planning authorities should set out the need for playing facilities (based upon an assessment carried out in accordance with PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation; and NPPG11: Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space in Scotland), the opportunities for Home Zone provision and a summary of the design criteria. Through the Statement of Community Involvement, required to accompany Local Development Documents, the concept of such provision would have been the subject of community participation and gained its support.
- G34 Local authorities and developers should investigate and take advantage of the many funding opportunities associated with regeneration projects in existing built-up areas. Consideration should be given to future maintenance costs as well as the initial development costs. For new housing developments, Section 106 Agreements (Section 75 Agreements in Scotland) should be used to secure the provision and maintenance of Home Zones and should make clear who will be responsible for future management. Plan 65: Planning and Open Space is also relevant in this context.

## Assessments and Audits

- G35 Outdoor playing space in Home Zones needs to be seen in the context of a broader strategy for play which, in turn, fits within a comprehensive plan for open space.
- G36 The Fields in Trust Benchmark Standards are predominantly concerned with focused opportunities for play, though they do recognise the need for less formal play space. It is difficult to define the boundary of play areas in Home Zones because children will use the entire width and length of the street to play. Where items of play equipment are provided, they are most likely to cater for younger children. Older children are more likely to walk or cycle to LEAPs or NEAPs beyond the Home Zone.
- G37 Where a play area has been provided in a Home Zone and the boundary is evident by a change in surface treatment, planting and/or means of enclosure, Fields in Trust would recognise this as a designated play area. Its activity zone, no matter what size, would contribute to meeting the children's playing space element of the Benchmark Standards, but it would not be a substitute for providing the full hierarchy of play areas. There is currently insufficient evidence of the way in which Home Zones are being used in the United Kingdom to permit other parts of the street being counted towards Fields in Trust recommended levels of provision.
- G38 Home Zones might be deemed to fall within the 'civic spaces' category in the typology of open spaces set out in the Annex to PPG17. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to calculate the proportion that contributed to 'provision for children and teenagers'. However, what must be avoided, given the emphasis in planning policy of making the best use of land in urban areas, is double counting where space has more than one function.

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# Appendix H

## Travel Plan for the Ashes Cricket and Tennis Club at the Stumped and Bowled Cricket Ground, Firstslipton

### Background

- H1 The Ashes Cricket and Tennis Club is to relocate to a new, purpose built ground at the Stumped and Bowled Cricket Ground, adjacent to Leg Glance Road, from its existing ground at No Ball Street which is situated close to the centre of Firstslipton.
- H2 Participants, by virtue of the nature of the sports of cricket and tennis, need changes of clothing and equipment in order to take part in their respective games. As a result it is not always practicable for participants to walk or cycle to their clubs carrying essential equipment and kit, whether the venue is close to a town centre or elsewhere. In addition it is not always practicable to travel by bus or train to the venue with the necessary equipment and kit.
- H3 The purpose of this Travel Plan is to provide a strategy by which members and spectators at the site of the new cricket and tennis clubs may reduce the number of single occupancy car journeys to the Stumped and Bowled Cricket Ground.

### Travel Plan Measures

- H4 The Travel Plan measures are aimed specifically at both players and spectators.
- H5 Owing to the nature of the sports, the only reasonably practicable method for travelling to the club's new ground will be by car.
- H6 In order to reduce the number of single occupancy car journeys that may be made to the new ground, the Club will carry out the following strategy to encourage car sharing.
- H7 The Club will maintain an up to date schedule of its adult members and their contact details. From this schedule the Club will prepare a map of the local area, a list of members' names, their phone numbers and their post codes and place the list on a notice board in a prominent location within the club house, so that members can identify if other members live in a nearby area or close to that member's route to the ground.
- H8 The Club will appoint from within its membership a Travel Plan Co-ordinator who will also be responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the list, amongst other things. The name of the Travel Plan Co-ordinator shall also be displayed on the notice board.
- H9 Any member who offers a lift to another member that results in a return car journey being saved, will notify the Travel Plan Co-ordinator, who will enter the names of the car sharers into a monthly prize draw. The monthly prize will be at the discretion of the Club's Management Committee. Regular spectators who become involved in car sharing will also be included.
- H10 The Club Secretary will advise respective visiting teams' Club Secretaries that the Stumped and Bowled Ground has limited car parking availability on site, and the recommendation to car share where possible as there is no available on-street parking beyond the site.
- H11 At annual intervals the Travel Plan Co-ordinator shall provide a brief report to the Club's Management Committee which will include:
- The numbers of names that are entered into the monthly prize draw
  - The acceptance of visiting teams to car share
  - Any recommendations to increase car-sharing.

### Sustainable Transport Facilities

- H12 The Club will provide covered and secure cycle parking for a minimum of twenty bicycle stands.
- H13 The Club will also provide information about local cycle routes, details of public transport facilities in the area and local taxi firms on the notice board.

