

# **Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17**

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On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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## Summary

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 \(PPG17\)](#).

## Order

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**Note:** The above publication was issued by our former department, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). ODPM became Communities and Local Government **on 5 May 2006** - all references in the text to ODPM now refer to Communities and Local Government.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### Open Space and Sport and Recreation Provision

**1.1** Open space and sport and recreation facilities can make a major contribution to ensuring that villages, towns and cities are places in which people will choose to live. The main role of the planning system is to ensure there are sufficient of them and that they are in the right places. But this is not enough. There is a need also to ensure they are of high quality, attractive to users and well managed and maintained.

**1.2** The Government's policy that the focus for additional housing should be existing towns and cities could make existing open spaces seem attractive as potential development sites. In most instances, however, allowing redevelopment will not be good planning, even if the land in question has been neglected and is in poor condition. Nor will it be enough simply to ensure that if an existing open space or sport and recreation facility is lost to some other land use, it is replaced in broadly the same area. In the absence of a rigorous local assessment, there can be no guarantee that the replacement land is needed or that its new location will serve the public interest.

### Desirable Outcomes

**1.3** This Guide reflects the Government's policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation, as set out in PPG17. The long term outcomes PPG17 aims to deliver are:

- 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

**1.4** PPG17 makes clear that the Government is firmly of the view that achieving these outcomes depends on planning authorities first undertaking local assessments of need and audits of provision. This Companion Guide therefore sets out one way in which they can do so. However, other approaches are also possible and may be equally acceptable. Accordingly, authorities should not feel constrained from developing an alternative approach of their own, provided it is compliant with the policy requirements of PPG17.

### The Content of the Guide

## 1.5 The Guide:

- Seeks to build on examples of existing good planning practice, while also taking account of the recommendations of the Government's Urban Green Spaces Taskforce and the need for local authorities to prepare Community and Cultural Strategies
- Sets out how local authorities can use the planning system to help deliver accessible, high quality and sustainable open spaces and sport and recreation facilities which meet local needs and are valued by local communities
- Relates directly to the Best Value regime and the management and maintenance of publicly-owned open spaces or sport and recreation facilities

## 1.6 In order to do this, it:

- Indicates how councils can establish the wishes of their local communities and apply their provision standards in a way which is equitable to both developers and local communities
- Promotes as consistent an approach as possible across different facility types, at different scales and in urban and rural areas, in order to limit the resources and range of skills needed to undertake assessments
- Provides a framework for determining the need for planning conditions or the negotiation of planning agreements

## Format of the Guide

1.7 Those consulted during the preparation of this Guide emphasised the need for it to promote cross-department working because of its relevance to other areas of local authority work, such as community planning and the Best Value process. Accordingly, it provides a framework within which a range of local authority services - for example, planning, leisure, economic development, education and environment - and local stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors can work closely together. It also encourages them to work with adjoining authorities and relevant national agencies.

## 1.8 The Guide is in four main parts:

- The *Guiding Principles and Concepts* which underpin 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*. If required, by adding further consideration of management and funding issues, the basic process will also be relevant to those authorities which decide to take the advice of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force and prepare a local open space strategy.
- 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

## Resource Implications

**1.9** The need to undertake comprehensive local assessments has obvious resource implications for authorities. However, it is in their own long term interest that they should do so. They will result in better planning policies, facilitate better evidence-based decision-making as part of the development control process, make it easier to negotiate planning obligations and provide essential evidence for use at appeals. They may also identify areas of land which can be sold for development. For Community Strategies and Best Value purposes, they will help identify priorities for the enhancement of existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities or provision of new ones, promote 'joined-up thinking' in planning, design and management and provide a means of monitoring progress. They will also provide important support for funding applications.

**1.10** The *Tools and Techniques* part of this Guide sets out a number of ways in which authorities can ensure that the resource implications of undertaking assessments are manageable.

### Good Practice Example: Doncaster MBC Greenspace Strategy

Doncaster suffered a major economic downturn with the decline of the mining industry and the Council has since concentrated much of its efforts on regeneration. In particular, it has sought to "re-plan" large parts of its area and encourage development. In doing so, it has made good use of planning obligations relating to both greenspace and sports and recreation facilities and has been generating around £750,000 per year from developers' contributions, with implementation entrusted to its Greenspace Team of six people, four of them part-time. In order to ensure the most effective use of resources, however, the Council reduced the team's involvement in implementation for a period and concentrated instead on the preparation of a comprehensive Greenspace Strategy. This has provided a major input to the Council's review of its UDP and a clear framework for planning obligations. The Council estimates that its strategy cost a total of around £80,000, over half of it as staff time. Against this, it is now able to use developers' contributions as "match funding" for external funding applications and estimates that over the next five years it will be able to convert under £4M of developers' contributions into a greenspace and sport-related capital programme of around £20m. Significantly, since the preparation of its Strategy, every funding application has been successful. In addition, the strategy has allowed it to identify a number of sites which can be sold for development, together with the need to re-invest the proceeds in new or better greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities. Overall, the strategy should result in regeneration expenditure of close to £25M.

## Chapter 2 - Principles and Concepts

### The Guiding Principles

2.1 There are four 'guiding principles' for local assessments:

- Local needs are likely to vary considerably from one place to another, even within a single local authority area, according to the different socio-demographic and cultural characteristics of local communities and the number and type of visitors.
- The delivery of a network of high quality, sustainable open spaces and sport and recreation facilities depends not only on good planning, but also on creative urban and landscape design and effective management. In so far as local authority-owned spaces and facilities are concerned, this can be achieved only by multi-disciplinary working across different departments and, in some cases, with neighbouring councils, regional and national agencies.
- In many areas, delivering the objectives set out in PPG17 will depend much more on improving and enhancing the accessibility and quality of existing provision than on new provision. At the same time, where additional open spaces or sport and recreation facilities are required, they should enhance the network.
- The value of open spaces or sport and recreation facilities, irrespective of who owns them, depends primarily on two things: the extent to which they meet clearly identified local needs and the wider benefits they generate for people, wildlife, biodiversity and the wider environment.

### Urban and Rural Differences

2.2 These principles apply equally to urban and rural areas. However:

- Residents in rural areas cannot realistically expect to have the same level of access to the full range of different types of open spaces and sport and recreation facilities normally available in more densely populated urban areas. This means that residents of rural areas usually have to travel further than most urban residents to some forms of provision.
- Nonetheless, residents of many quite small villages expect to have basic facilities, such as a village green or recreation ground and village hall, either within or immediately adjacent to their village. If the quantity of village-level facilities in a rural area is assessed against an 'urban' provision standard, there might appear to be a surplus of provision. However, this does not necessarily mean that it will be acceptable to allow a change to some other land use.
- Some forms of provision are likely to be found almost exclusively in rural areas - and others almost exclusively in urban ones. There are only a few country parks within urban areas, for example, while a number of recreational activities - such as most water sports, climbing, potholing and orienteering - depend mainly on access to land or areas of water in the countryside. They also tend to attract users from a wide area, partly because they cannot be replicated everywhere.

**2.3** This means that some local authorities may require both urban and rural provision standards - and then to define clearly where each of them will apply. In other areas, the transition from urban to rural environments may not be so great that different standards are needed.

## The Key Attributes of Open Space and Sport and Recreation Provision

**2.4** Five key attributes of all open spaces or sport and recreation facilities - accessibility, quality, multi-functionality, primary purpose and quantity - underpin these guiding principles:

- **Accessibility** normally comes first in importance for the simple reason that if a particular open space or facility is inaccessible it will be irrelevant to those who may want to use it. At the same time, however, inaccessible open spaces can nonetheless contribute to the appearance, environmental quality and amenity of an area and contribute to biodiversity.
- **Quality** depends on two things: the needs and expectations of users, on the one hand, and design, management and maintenance on the other - in other words fitness for purpose. In this context, 'users' means people of all ages, all social or ethnic groups and abilities or disabilities, and also wildlife. Ensuring that something is fit for purpose requires clarity as to what that purpose is.
- Many open spaces, however, are in practice **multi-functional**. Most grass pitches, for example, are probably used for purposes such as children's play, kite flying, exercising dogs (in spite of the potential problem of fouling) or jogging as well as sport. This can create problems when analysing an audit of provision and determining whether local needs are satisfied.
- The best way to avoid this problem is to adopt the concept of '**primary purpose**' so that each open space, or sport and recreation facility, is counted only once in an audit of provision. 'Primary' infers that there is at least one secondary purpose; this both reflects the multi-functional nature of many open spaces and brings clarity and consistency to planning, design and management policies. It therefore helps to promote fitness for purpose.
- **Quantity** is the final key attribute. It is usually measured in terms of the amount of provision (for example, area, the number of pitches or allotments or pieces of play equipment). However, this can be over-simplistic for pitches and some other outdoor sports facilities. For example, a pitch can accommodate only one match starting at 1400 hours on a Saturday afternoon. However, the capacity, or maximum number of matches per week, of any given pitch varies with its specification. Many undrained grass pitches, for example, can accommodate under 2 hours of adult user per week; pipe drained pitches around 2-3 hours; pipe and slit-drained around 3-6 hours; and suspended water table pitches around 4-6 hours (see endnote 1). Artificial turf pitches, on the other hand, can in theory be used 24 hours a day, but in practice tend to accommodate 30-40 hours of use per week (see endnote 2). This means that it is sometimes possible to address an identified quantitative deficiency in provision by improving the specification, or quality, of existing facilities.

**2.5** Management and maintenance link these five attributes of open space and sport and recreation provision:

- **Accessibility** and **quantity** are delivered and protected primarily by the planning system, because they relate to the location and use of land, but sustained by good management and maintenance. Accessibility is also maintained by other local authority strategies and initiatives, such as those relating to sustainable transport and community safety.
- **Quality, multi-functionality** and **primary purpose** are delivered initially through good design, but also sustained and protected by good management and maintenance. The planning system can sometimes assist by generating resources through conditions or planning agreements.

## Typologies of Provision

### *Open Spaces*

**2.6** The concept of primary purpose leads directly to the need for a typology of provision rather than the out-dated definition of open space in planning legislation (see endnote 3). PPG17 indicates that authorities should use the typology of open spaces proposed by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (UGSTF), or a variation of it. It is summarised in the table below and provides a clear framework for 'joined-up thinking' in relation to planning, design and management. Further details are also given in Annex A.

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

2.7 This typology relates to both publicly accessible and private spaces. In some areas, it may be necessary to adopt some additional definitions; London authorities, for example, can continue to classify strategically important open space as Metropolitan Open Land. It deliberately excludes 'SLOAP' (space left over after planning) and other incidental areas of land, such as road verges, which are not intended for a specific use. Each of the different types of open space in the typology may also include areas of running or static water such as ponds, fountains, rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs. Water can make a major contribution to the quality and nature of a greenspace or civic space and be an important component of the urban drainage system or vitally important for recreation and biodiversity conservation.

### Indoor Sport and Recreation Facilities

2.8 At the minimum, assessments for urban areas can cover only schools (whose indoor sports facilities, at least, should normally be available for community use) and those facilities which require a sizeable site, are likely to attract a large number of users or will generate significant environmental impacts. Smaller facilities, such as village halls and community centres, will also be important in residential neighbourhoods and rural areas. Assessing the need for them will be essential in order to help promote sustainable communities. Other relatively small facilities are less important as their land requirements are limited and they tend to be associated with larger facilities.

**2.9** It is for this reason that PPG17 indicates that the minimum range of 'core' facilities for which planning authorities should undertake local assessments is:

- Those facilities which require large, bulky buildings and are intended to generate high levels of use; this group includes swimming pools, indoor sports halls and leisure centres, indoor bowls centres, indoor tennis centres and ice rinks
- Community centres (in urban areas) and village halls (in rural areas)

**2.10** Local authorities can of course extend this typology if they see a need for policies or provision standards for other types of provision to reflect particular local interests or circumstances.

### **Endnotes**

1. Sport England (2000), *Design Guidance Note: Natural Turf for Sport*, London: Sport England.
2. Kit Campbell Associates, Edinburgh, with System Three Scotland (1993), *Synthetic Grass Pitch Use in Scotland* (Research Digest 33), Edinburgh: Scottish Sports Council.
3. Open space is defined 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.

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## **Chapter 3 - Undertaking Local Assessments**

### **The Need for Local Assessments**

**3.1** The main purpose of undertaking a local assessment is to plan positively, creatively and effectively to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality greenspaces, civic spaces and sport and recreation facilities to meet the needs of local communities and visitors. PPG17 also sets out clear policy guidance for authorities when considering planning applications which involve the redevelopment of an existing open space or facility. Diagram 1 summarises the approach to development control set out in PPG17 for such applications and makes clear that authorities will be able to follow its policy requirements only if they have undertaken a comprehensive local assessment.

Diagram 1 is available below as a download.

**3.2** Where a local authority has not undertaken its own assessment, paragraph 10 of PPG17 allows an applicant for planning permission to 'seek to demonstrate through an independent assessment' that a particular site or area of land is surplus to requirements. In the interests of transparency and good practice, it will be desirable for any developer wishing to undertake such an assessment to agree the proposed methodology in advance with the relevant planning authority. It should keep the authority and the local community fully informed as the assessment proceeds. This should help both to avoid criticism and comply with the requirement in PPG17 that developers consult the local community and are able to demonstrate that their proposals are widely supported.

### **Summary of the Proposed Methodology**

**3.3** PPG17 suggests a logical methodology based on identifying needs, setting standards, identifying deficiencies and developing a strategy and related policies. This Guide reflects PPG17 by using the approach summarised in diagram 2 below. Although presented as an essentially linear process, it is obviously possible for the assessment of local needs and the audit of provision to proceed in parallel if required. The main reason this Guide suggests that the audit should follow the assessment of needs is so that the quality assessment element of the audit can relate to a 'vision' identified through community consultations.

Diagram 2 is available below as a download.

### **The Use of National Standards**

**3.4** In their comments on the consultation draft revision of PPG17, and in the course of 'road testing' this guide, a number of local authorities indicated they would welcome benchmark standards with which they could compare the results of their local assessments. At the same time, they endorsed the policy requirement that they set their own, locally determined provision standards.

**3.5** The need for most forms of open space and sport and recreation facilities is largely related to population and this should make it possible to derive broad benchmarks which authorities

may find useful. However, the number of people is only one of many factors affecting the amount of provision needed in an area. Other relevant factors include:

- The age and social structure of the local population, together with its distribution and the density of development
- The proportion of natural to artificial turf pitches
- The extent to which authorities and their partners are promoting sports development and community events and activities in parks and other greenspaces
- The extent to which sports facilities on school sites are open for community use
- The amount of private greenspace
- Local traditions - for example, cricket is particularly popular in Yorkshire

**3.6** Paragraph 6 of PPG17 is therefore unambiguous: 'The Government believes that open space standards are best set locally'. Where authorities seek benchmarks with which to compare their locally-derived standards they should seek the assistance of national agencies, such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and Sport England. These agencies are all able to provide advice and access to research findings which councils may find useful.

## Chapter 4 - Step 1: Identifying Local Needs

### *Key Actions*

- Initiate a local assessment which will be PPG17-compliant (paragraphs 4.1-4.4)
- Identify the land use implications of existing national, regional and local policies and strategies for open space or sport and recreation (paragraphs 4.5-4.9)
- Review the impact and effectiveness of existing planning policies and related provision standards (paragraphs 4.10-4.11)
- Consult local communities and prepare an open space vision (paragraphs 4.12-4.27)

### *Useful Tools*

- Sport England Facilities Planning Model (paragraphs 10.9-10.10)
- Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy (paragraphs 10.12-10.15)
- Quality of Life Capital (paragraphs 10.29-10.30)
- Public Consultation Techniques (paragraphs 10.37-10.38)
- Published Research (paragraphs 10.39-10.41)

## Initiating a Local Assessment

**4.1** The first step in initiating a local assessment is to plan it; the more open and transparent the process the better. For many if not most assessments it will therefore be useful to have a steering group. The members of the steering group will depend on local circumstances, but should normally include at least representatives of:

- Relevant local authority departments, including planning, leisure services (and grounds maintenance if not part of leisure services) and education
- Local sport and recreation interests
- Local children's play interests and young people generally
- Local amenity interests and 'Friends' groups
- Local disabled interests
- Local ethnic minority communities (if appropriate)

**4.2** It may also be desirable to include representatives of local housing associations; local cycling interests; and possibly local developers, if they are willing to be involved.

## Planning the Assessment

**4.3** The process of undertaking an assessment should normally link to the preparation of a development plan (or its successor) and possibly one or more local strategies. Linking an

assessment to other work of the local authority is obviously sensible as this will make the most effective use of resources; it may also dictate the timetable.

**4.4** There may well be a temptation to jump straight into local consultations, and some members of the steering group may believe they already know what is needed in the area. However, no assessment should have to start entirely from scratch; instead, it will necessarily have to fit into a wider context and the local authority, and its partners, should have considerable experience and knowledge in relation to matters such as the nature of local development pressures. Accordingly, before initiating local consultations, it will normally be sensible to review existing national, regional and local plans and strategies and the implementation and effectiveness of existing planning policies and provision standards. Whilst there is no point in perpetuating flawed policy approaches, continuity and consistency are clearly desirable.

## Identifying the Implications of Existing Strategies

### *National And Regional Policies And Strategies*

**4.5** The first years of the twenty-first century have seen major changes to UK thinking about open space and sport and recreation provision and assessments should reflect this; the references at the end of this Guide suggest some useful sources. The wider planning framework will also include national Planning Policy Guidance, Regional Planning Guidance, the regional strategies of national agencies and other strategic plans, local biodiversity action plans, nature conservation strategies and rights of way improvement plans.

**4.6** Some regional strategies are likely to identify a need for 'wider than local' provision. For example, Sport England has helped a number of governing bodies of sport to prepare national facilities strategies, most of which identify the need for regional facilities. Some also provide guidance on the most appropriate nature of local facilities. Any 'wider than local' provision also has the potential to help to meet at least some local needs.

### *Local Strategies*

**4.7** The Planning Green Paper (see endnote 4) and the Government's follow-up policy statement *Sustainable Communities - Delivering Through Planning* (see endnote 5) make clear that one role of the planning system is to deliver the land use elements of other local strategies. Where suitable local strategies exist, therefore, it will be important to identify what these elements are. This should lead to a published corporate view on those facilities which should be protected or enhanced, where new facilities may be required, and those which it may be acceptable to use for some other purpose. This will provide a clear, open and transparent rationale for any redevelopment proposals. Local strategies with significant land use implications in terms of open space, sport and recreation are likely to include:

- Community Plans
- Cultural strategies
- Parks and other open space strategies
- Sport and recreation or playing pitch strategies

- Children's play strategies

**4.8** Sport England has published guidance on the preparation of local sport and recreation strategies in *Planning Across Boundaries* (see endnote 6). Its Facilities Planning Model (see endnote 7) can also be a useful tool in relation to swimming pools, sports halls and synthetic turf pitches, and Sport England is intending to extend its use to indoor bowls centres and indoor tennis centres.

**4.9** In an ideal world, these local strategies should pre-date and provide part of the justification for planning policies and provision standards for open space, sport and recreation. However, councils without access to current local strategies should not delay the preparation of their planning policies, but rely on local assessments. The land use implications of relevant strategies can then be fed into formal reviews of planning policies as and when they are available.

### Reviewing Existing Planning Policies and Provision Standards

**4.10** Most if not all authorities already have both planning policies and provision standards relating to open space, sport and recreation in their development plan and experience of their use. There is no point in discarding them before new ones are available and it will be sensible to review their impact and effectiveness so as to build on those elements of them which have been most successful. This should be done both on a cross-department basis and in a way which involves local communities and local developers. It will also be sensible to review a number of different developments of different ages. The key questions to ask include:

- Have existing policies and provision standards delivered the full range of high quality, accessible open spaces and sport and recreation facilities in the right places to meet local needs? Are they valued by local communities? If not, why not?
- Have existing policies relating to the calculation and use of commuted sums for long term management and maintenance been effective? If not, why not?
- Has the use of planning obligations been successful? If not, why not?
- What lessons can be learnt from the most recent Local Plan Inquiry and decisions relating to any appeals against a refusal of planning permission in the area?

**4.11** There are three main areas in which the departments responsible for open space or sport and recreation management and maintenance are increasingly questioning their authorities' planning policies:

- **Equipped play areas:** the high costs of inspection and maintenance have resulted in many authorities removing items of equipment from play areas
- **On-site greenspaces:** a growing number of local authorities are refusing to adopt and subsequently maintain new greenspaces provided by developers, even if accompanied by a commuted maintenance sum, because their management and maintenance budgets are

already over-stretched.

- **Sports pitches:** the amount of land used for public grass pitches when set against their limited use and often poor quality, and their appeal to only a relatively small proportion of the local community

## Consulting Communities and Developing a 'Vision'

**4.12** It is impossible to identify local needs properly without involving local communities. Establishing the views of local communities is also an essential part of the Best Value regime and the Community Planning process and one of the key themes in *Sustaining Communities - Delivering through Planning* (see endnote 8).

**4.13** In order to minimise 'consultation fatigue', and maximise cost-effectiveness, it will obviously be desirable for authorities to undertake local consultations on a crossdepartment basis, ideally in a way which links two or more potentially separate consultations. Consulting local communities in rural areas is potentially more onerous than in urban ones and by far the best way of doing it is usually through Parish Councils.

**4.14** Community consultations are usually particularly useful in terms of identifying:

- Local people's attitudes to existing provision
- Local expectations and needs which are currently 'invisible' because there is no current provision
- A qualitative 'vision' for the type of open spaces or sport and recreation facilities which communities want to see in their areas

### *Attitudes To Existing Provision*

**4.15** Spaces and facilities are valuable if they meet local needs. There are three simple tests:

- Can those who wish to use the various types of open space or sport and recreation facilities get to them when they wish to do so? If not, why not? The most common constraints are personal, such as a lack of time, and therefore outside the ambit of the planning system, but others such as poor accessibility may be significant. Paragraph 7 of PPG17 notes that authorities should include cost when considering accessibility.
- If so, do they meet users' needs when they get there? If not, why not?
- Do users find using them enjoyable and worthwhile? Why? If not, why not?

**4.16** Authorities can use these tests in both group discussions and surveys and should analyse the results in ways which allow them to determine the needs of different groups within the community, such as people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities, children and young people, older people, men and women and special interest groups such as sports teams or clubs.

**4.17** Paragraph 10.37 gives some suggestions for maximising the effectiveness of local consultations while 10.38 gives details of how to undertake local surveys. DETR also published *Guidance on Enhancing Public Participation in Local Government* in 1998.

**4.18** A self-completion postal questionnaire is usually the cheapest method, but response rates are often low and it is difficult to know if the results are representative. Probably the best and most cost-effective approach is to draw up and implement a rolling programme of user and other surveys linked to the Best Value process, or wider purposes such as the preparation of a Community Plan.

#### **Good Practice Example: Birmingham City Council**

Birmingham City Council has conducted an on-going programme of quantitative and qualitative market research related to the city's parks for a number of years. Originally designed to inform CCT specifications, the results have provided both the basis for a Best Value Review of the Council's parks and nature conservation service and a valuable input to planning policy. Over a ten-year period, the Council's researchers have conducted around 11,000 interviews. The consultation process concentrated on:

- Establishing patterns of park use by residents and how often parks are used, by whom and for what purposes, together with reasons for non-use
- Gathering reactions to development options and suggestions
- Gathering socio-economic, disability and ethnic minority group related information
- Gathering qualitative information, including details of what it is like to live in different areas of the city.

#### *Assessing the Adequacy of the Amount of Existing Provision*

**4.19** A simple way of assessing the adequacy of the amount of existing provision is to compare the quantity of provision in an area with its population. Many local authorities have done ward-based calculations of this type and then used national standards to identify which wards have a 'surplus' or 'deficiency' of provision. In principle, this is a sensible approach, except that:

- Ward boundaries are essentially arbitrary and very few local communities identify with them - indeed, most people have no idea where they are. In addition, a ward can appear to be poorly provided but have very good provision just outside its boundary. It is therefore better to use clearly identifiable neighbourhoods, separated from adjoining areas by physical barriers such as railway lines, rivers or canals, or perceptual barriers such as areas which are perceived to be unsafe. Local discussion groups can help to define appropriate neighbourhoods if they are not obvious. Moving away from a wardbased approach also encourages councillors to think strategically rather than in terms of 'how can I argue that my ward is a priority?'
- There is no way of knowing whether national standards are appropriate to the local situation. A much better approach, therefore, is to consult local communities as to the

adequacy of provision in a sample of areas with different levels of provision per person. Assessing the population of an area is simple using GIS. Knowing those areas in which the *local community* thinks there is under or over-provision, or in which the level of provision is 'about right', will provide the basis for quantity standards in Step 3.

**4.20** This approach needs care, however, because:

- One form of provision can sometimes substitute for another, requiring very careful interpretation of the results
- Some forms of provision (for example, artificial turf pitches or country parks) can be relevant to a number of neighbourhood areas; this problem can be overcome by using a hierarchy of provision and relating consultations to appropriate levels of the hierarchy.
- Where local provision is regarded as inadequate by local people, it is important to establish why this is the case
- It is important to ensure that the needs of special interest groups have been taken into account. For example, it is impossible to identify a level of pitch provision which is 'about right' without consulting sports pitch clubs and teams

#### *Identifying 'Reasonable' Local Expectations*

**4.21** The location, quantity and quality of existing provision nearly always affect local perceptions of need. For example, there may be more than enough parks in an area, but if they are of poor quality they may not be meeting local needs. Some people will then take that view that there is a need to provide more of them; but a better answer, in terms of both overall land use and sustainability, will first be to drive up the quality of those which already exist, provided they are accessible to those who may wish to use them.

**4.22** It is obviously impossible to plan to satisfy all the needs which might be identified in the course of an assessment and this highlights the need to determine 'reasonable' expectations or requirements. This nearly always requires careful judgement, involving a mixture of statistical or objective assessments, using participation data and population details, and community consultations. The statistical assessment should normally come first as it will provide a broad framework of what a 'reasonable' level of provision is likely to be, which it will then be possible to refine in partnership with local people and special interest groups. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (see endnote 9) provides one way of doing this. Paragraphs 10.39-10.41 give information on published research which may be useful, while the national agencies' websites also provide valuable information.

**4.23** Community consultations should not be 'fishing expeditions' but have clearly targeted purposes. It is therefore important for them to be undertaken by people with appropriate facts at their fingertips so they can respond immediately to incorrect information. If skilfully handled, and if communities are given full information in an open and honest way, local consultations can help local people to realise that there are no 'easy answers'. People also tend not to know what they want so much as want what they know, which can make identifying 'invisible' needs difficult. They also sometimes want solutions to the symptoms rather than the causes of

decline, for example requesting additional lighting or even CCTV surveillance of spaces when the real problem may be poor maintenance, leading to low levels of use and anti-social behaviour.

### **Good Practice Example: Basingstoke and Deane**

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council serves an area with a population of around 150,000, roughly two thirds of whom live in Basingstoke itself. It undertakes an annual household survey, based on a representative sample, to inform the work of its Leisure Services, using the same questionnaire and methodology over several years to ensure comparable results and identify trends. Through the survey, it monitors the percentage of people who take part in various leisure activities in Basingstoke, an "inner" and "outer" ring of settlements around the town and the rural area and:

- The frequency with which different social groups (defined by age, gender, occupation and housing type) take part in different activities or use around 25 different leisure facilities in the Borough, including arts facilities, sports halls and swimming pools, parks, community centres and village halls
- Residents' level of satisfaction with each facility they have visited
- Residents' rating of the benefit of each facility to the local community
- Residents' satisfaction with the management of various facilities and parks and other open spaces
- How Basingstoke compares with other towns of a similar size
- Residents' views as to the need for Improvements to cultural, leisure or recreational opportunities within the Borough.

In 2001, as part of its Local Plan Review, the Council used the Leisure Survey to ask residents which of various identified facilities they expected to have available within 10, 15, 20 and 30 minutes walk of their home. It then analysed the results in various ways, for example by age and gender, housing tenure and postcode sector. The Council is using the results of this survey to identify two "walk-in" distance thresholds: one for use in the town and the other for use in the rural area of the Borough.

#### *Identifying A Qualitative Vision Of What Communities Want*

**4.24** One of the mandatory elements in Community Strategies is 'a long-term vision for the area which focuses on the outcomes that are to be achieved' (see endnote 10). While this over-arching vision is unlikely to provide much detail in relation to open spaces and sport and recreation provision, it should provide a broad context within which to identify a more specific 'vision' for each of the greenspaces, civic spaces and sport and recreation facilities in the adopted typology.

**4.25** Where a local authority is intending to undertake a major household survey, whether for

Best Value or some other purpose, it may be sensible to include questions which will help to do this. When this is not the case, a better approach will be to use workshops or focus groups. The Quality of Life Capital approach (see paragraph 10.29-10.30) can also be adapted for this purpose. The aim should be to identify the particular features of the various types of open space and sport and recreation facilities which local people value and want to see replicated. For example, research by the University of Sheffield for the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce identified that the 'ideal park' should contain variety, vegetation, water in all its forms, sensory stimulation, opportunities for play, provision for young people and comforts such as seating, shelters and toilets. In addition, it also established that children and young people expect:

- Better facilities - somewhere to sit or shelter, play facilities, grassy areas which do not get too muddy and more clearly designated sports facilities
- Cleaner and safer places - better upkeep of areas, more litter bins and more/improved toilets, better lighting and more plants. Younger children also supported a greater adult presence in the form of park keepers.
- A range of different types of spaces - young children want to play where they can be seen while older ones and teenagers prefer to be further away from home. There is also a need to make adequate provision for older children to reduce the extent to which they 'colonise' facilities intended for younger ones.
- Involvement - being consulted, designing spaces, talking to those in charge and helping to take care of green spaces (see endnote 11)

**4.26** Based on these findings, a broad vision for parks might be along the lines of:

*A clean, safe and well maintained landscaped area, including water, which people of all ages will find attractive and stimulating for informal recreation, strolling and 'watching the world go by', with a mixture of colours, scents and sounds, and containing seats, paths and shelters, complemented by toilets, with some areas designated for specific activities such as sport or children's play.*

**4.27** Visions such as this can provide a framework for both planning and management policies linked to the Best Value system. Annex B gives further examples of visions and guidance on a number of qualitative benchmarks derived from them.

## Summary of Local Needs

**4.28** Once the needs assessment is complete, it will normally be sensible to prepare a brief summary of the results. This can be useful for consultations with established local interest groups, Parish Councils and adjoining authorities and national agencies. It will also provide the starting point for estimating future needs later in the assessment process, discussed in paragraphs 7.8-7.13.

## Endnotes

4 DTLR (2001), *Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change*.

5 ODPM, 18 July 2002.

**6** Leisure Futures (1999), *Best Value for Sport: Planning Across Boundaries*, London: Sport England.

**7** Kit Campbell and others (1998), *The Facilities Planning Model: A Planning Tool for Developing Sports Facilities*, London: English Sports Council. DTLR (2001), *Planning: Delivering Fundamental Change*.

**8** ODPM, 18 July 2002.

**9** Kit Campbell, Fred Coalter and Brian Hatfield (1998), *Facilities Planning Model: a planning tool for developing sports facilities*, London: Sport England.

**10** DTLR (2001), *Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change*.

**11** DTLR (2002), *Better Places, the Final Report of the Government's Urban Green Spaces Taskforce*.

## Chapter 5 - Step 2: Auditing Local Provision

### Key Actions

- Decide the scope of the audit and identify existing information (paragraphs 5.1-5.3)
- Plan and undertake the audit (paragraphs 5.4-5.8)
- Analyse the audit to identify distance thresholds, levels and types of use, the quality and value of provision, the quantity of provision and local opportunities (paragraphs 5.9-5.20)

### Useful Tools

- Typologies of provision (Annex A)
- Geographical Information Systems (paragraphs 10.3-10.5)
- Sport England Facilities Planning Model (paragraphs 10.9-10.10)
- Sport England National Benchmarking Service (paragraph 10.11)
- English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Model (paragraphs 10.16-10.17)
- Assessing quality (paragraphs 10.19-10.22)
- Assessing value (paragraphs 10.23-10.26)
- Combining Quality and Value (paragraphs 10.27-10.28)
- Quality of Life Capital (paragraphs 10.29-10.30)
- Published Research (paragraphs 10.39-10.41)

## Deciding The Scope of the Audit

### 5.1 Audits of provision should encompass:

- All existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities within the local authority's area, irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access. The logic for this is that all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs, although to avoid excessive use of resources some councils have ignored open spaces or facilities below an agreed minimum size. A typical example is 0.2 ha for playing fields - the size of a mini-soccer pitch.
- All primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions
- Open spaces of particular historical or cultural interest and value, including any scheduled monuments or listed buildings within them (many parks contain a listed building which adds to their value)
- Those open spaces or sport and recreation facilities outside the local authority's area but likely to be used regularly by its residents. This element of the audit should be necessary only the first time one is undertaken. As all authorities develop audits they should share the results with their neighbours and thereby facilitate cross-border planning.
- To keep the database up to date. Regular monitoring - for example, as part of the process of monitoring grounds maintenance contracts - should be significantly more cost-effective than having to repeat the audit at intervals
- To obtain a consistent level of detail on all existing provision, implying the use of a

standard audit form. It may also be sensible for adjoining authorities to agree to gather comparable information as this will help them to benchmark results with each other

### *Identifying Existing Information*

**5.2** Every local authority should already hold a significant amount of potentially useful audit information, especially if it has a recently compiled asset management plan. It is also possible to obtain useful information from other non-local authority sources. For example:

- Planning Departments normally hold information on sites with specific policy designations, such as Metropolitan Open Land, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Ramsar sites, National or Local Nature Reserves, sites designated under international treaties or included in English Heritage's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*. English Nature also holds data on statutory sites of national and international conservation importance such as SSSIs, NNRs, SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites. Many local authorities operate or support Local Record Centres (LRCs) to collect and manage information and, in partnership with wildlife trusts and others, assist in the designation of regionally and locally important sites for nature conservation. RIGS groups hold data on locally important geological sites. The Countryside Agency maintains a *Register of Country Parks*, while many County, City or Metropolitan Borough Councils (and in London, the Greater London Authority) maintain data on sites with a nature conservation designation, archaeological sites and sometimes landscape character assessments. County Council highways departments normally hold information on rights of way and public transport routes. County Gardens Trusts may also hold valuable information on locally important sites, even if they do not have a formal heritage or other designation.
- Grounds maintenance client departments normally hold information on all of the sites maintained by the local authority, or on its behalf
- Departments responsible for leisure services normally hold information on sport and recreation facilities. The Football Association has recently prepared a *Register of English Football Facilities* and Sport England has a sports facilities database and details of Sport Action Zones and Special Areas for Sport (SASPs). There is also the *Register of Recreation Land*, although it may be of limited practical use as it has not been updated since its preparation in the early nineties.
- Education Departments normally hold information on all council-owned school sites

**5.3** At the same time, it is common for council-held information to be out of date or limited to certain specific characteristics of sites, such as size. Existing records therefore provide a useful starting point, but will almost certainly require checking. This can be done either on the ground (the best but most resource-intensive way) or by obtaining information from sources external to the local authority. In addition, it will often also be sensible to check that land held in trust for the community by local authorities is not subject to any particular restrictions as to its use. Many historic parks, for example, were gifted by philanthropists.

## Planning the Audit

**5.4** Audits are inevitably resource-intensive and therefore must be carefully planned as there is no point in discovering part way through that a key element has been omitted. For example, some of those councils which have undertaken a primarily quantitative audit have concluded that they should have paid greater attention to qualitative issues.

**5.5** The critical considerations when planning an audit are:

- To avoid collecting information which may be 'nice to have' and very expensive to collect but not needed for the assessment
- To ensure that the results of the audit should become a corporate, rather than a departmental resource because several local authority departments will find them useful. Accordingly it may be useful to establish what information other departments may need before starting it.

**5.6** Annex E contains a checklist of the information on existing provision which councils may wish to consider collecting. A simple way of checking that an audit is collecting the right range and level of information is to do a small pilot audit and then analyse it. This will usually identify any need there may be for additional information or potential to simplify the audit before incurring the major part of the cost or committing staff time. Some councils have attempted to avoid doing an audit by digitising aerial photographs, but have usually also had to undertake on the ground checking.

### *The 'Useful Area' Of Sports Facilities*

**5.7** It is rarely necessary to know the exact dimensions or even area of most sports facilities; instead it will usually be sufficient to know that a sports hall contains X badminton courts or a playing field Y pitches. This can be considered to be the 'useful area' and a sensible basis for provision standards in Step 3.

### *Undertaking The Audit*

**5.8** The best time of year to undertake the audit is usually spring and early summer. As well as there being more daylight than in winter, this makes it possible to audit the condition and degree of wear of pitches after the winter season, the condition of plants and other vegetation, and, where appropriate, wildlife habitats. Indoor sport and recreation facilities and other built facilities, such as village halls, can obviously be audited at any time of year.

## Analysing the Audit

### *Identifying Effective Catchment Areas*

**5.9** Catchment areas for different forms of provision, and different modes of transport, provide a simple tool for identifying those areas not currently served by existing open spaces or sport

and recreation facilities. However, catchments vary from person to person, day to day and hour to hour. Recreation planners overcome this problem by using the concept of the 'effective catchment', defined as the distance travelled by around 75-80% of users.

**5.10** Local authorities should therefore assess the effective catchment of each form of provision in their adopted typology. Where user surveys are available they will normally have included questions relating to how far or for how long users have travelled, so the results can provide a useful guide. Where such surveys do not exist, and the local authority is unable to undertake them - whether as part of an assessment or for some other purpose, such as Best Value - paragraph 10.18 suggests a fairly quick and easy method of determining typical catchments.

**5.11** This is particularly important for walking and cycling distances where the nature of users, and their circumstances, can largely determine the effective catchment. For example:

- A play area intended for young children will have a different walking catchment from facilities intended for older children because of the different distances that parents allow children of different ages to 'range' unaccompanied from their home. These distances have been reducing steadily as parents' concerns for their children's safety have grown (see endnote 12).
- Women from some ethnic minorities may not be willing to leave their home area without their husbands
- Older people, and people with disabilities, obviously have particular constraints on how far they can walk unaided

**5.12** Effective drive time catchments can usually be obtained from national surveys. Sport England surveys have found that 75-80% of the users of swimming pools and sports halls come from within a 15-minute drive time. Catchments for those travelling by public transport are obviously determined largely by the availability of services, but can be analysed using acceptable walking times or distances linked to routes and bus stops or stations.

**5.13** For some forms of provision, it may be necessary to have a range of distance thresholds related to facilities of different scales or qualities. For example, a large park is likely to attract users from a wider area than a small neighbourhood one. One way of reflecting the range of possible distance thresholds for facilities of different sizes or quality within a particular type is to use a hierarchy of provision. Paragraphs 10.31-10.35 provide advice on this.

## **Analysing the Quality and Value of Provision**

**5.14** Quality and value are fundamentally different and can be completely unrelated. For example, a high quality facility or open space may be located where it is inaccessible and therefore of little value; while if a run-down or derelict facility is the only one in an area it may be immensely valuable.

**5.15** This means that it is best to assess quality and value separately, ideally against suitable

benchmarks. Paragraphs 10.19-10.26 describe one way of evaluating quality and value, while paragraphs 10.27-10.28 describe how it is possible to combine the results into a composite quality and value assessment to provide a policy-based approach to the enhancement of existing provision. Alternatively, it is possible to use the Quality of Life (QoL) Capital approach, described in paragraphs 10.29-10.30.

## Analysing the Quantity of Provision

**5.16** Once typical effective catchments are known, it should be possible to identify the approximate population served by each facility in the area. The outcome of this analysis will then be a listing of existing provision, by type, with the amount of useful area in each facility (defined in paragraph 5.7 above) and the population within its effective catchment. Where effective catchments overlap, an appropriate proportion of the population in the overlap should be allocated to each facility in proportion to its size. It will then be possible to calculate the quantity of provision per person within the effective catchment.

**5.17** Calculations like this will identify a range of catchment populations served by each type of provision in the audit and therefore the quantity of existing provision per person.

<b>Worked Example</b>	
A town of 100,000 people contains two sports halls, one of which contains four badminton courts and the other six, giving a total provision of ten badminton courts. This gives an apparent level of provision of one badminton court per 10,000 people. However, the effective catchment of both of them has been found to be X km. The population within the effective catchment of the four court hall is 30,000 and the population within the effective catchment of the six court hall is 35,000. In addition these catchments overlap and the population within the overlap area is 5,000 people. The current level of provision in relation to population is then not one court/10,000 people (100,000 people divided by 10 courts), but can then be calculated as follows:	
<i>4 court hall (40% of available provision)</i>	
<b>Population within effective catchment</b>	30,000
<b>Less overlap population</b>	5,000
<b>Population served only by the 4 court hall</b>	25,000
<b>40% of overlap population</b>	2,000
<b>Total population served</b>	27,000
<b>Population per court</b>	6,250
<i>6 court hall (60% of available provision)</i>	
<b>Population within effective catchment</b>	35,000
<b>Less overlap population</b>	5,000
<b>Population served only by the 6 court hall</b>	30,000
<b>60% of overlap population</b>	3,000
<b>Total population served</b>	33,000
<b>Population per court</b>	5,600
<b>Average population per court</b>	5,925

*Note: this approach is effectively the one used in Sport England's Facilities Planning Model and is best done using GIS*

## Analysing Levels and Types of Use

**5.18** Where the necessary information is available, levels and types of use provide a valuable guide to the adequacy of any particular form of provision and a useful benchmark. Obtaining the necessary information is usually difficult other than for local authority sports and leisure facilities, however. Establishing the use of open spaces is particularly difficult, not least because there are unlikely to be records of the number of visitors and use is sensitive to the weather, while the operators of commercial sports or fitness facilities may not be willing to provide details of their levels of use. In these circumstances, it will be better to make an informed guess than ignore the facilities in question. A simple rule of thumb for commercial health and fitness clubs without indoor tennis courts, for example, is that they are likely to have around 1 member per sq m of floorspace.

**5.19** Where the necessary information is available, it is also desirable to relate the level of use to the population within the effective catchment. There are two main ways of doing this:

- **Visits per unit of 'useful area'** (see paragraph 5.7). This gives useful comparative information to identify well and poorly used facilities. For example, if there are two sports halls, one with X visits per year per badminton court and the other 2X, it will obviously be important to try to establish why the first is much less popular.
- **Visits per person within the distance threshold:** paragraph 10.11 gives details of Sport England's National Benchmarking Service (see endnote 13). This provides a simple way of comparing the use of indoor sports halls and swimming pools against similar facilities in other areas in a way which takes account of both their size and catchment population.

**5.20** Wherever possible, it is best to obtain information for several years in order to assess trends and identify the extent to which visitors support local provision. For example, tourists or day visitors may account for a significant proportion of the use of some forms of provision. If some appear to be poorly used, it will also be important to ask why. A low level of use should never be taken to indicate an absence of need or demand, or a surfeit of local provision, without careful investigation. Instead, it can indicate poor location or accessibility, poor maintenance, concerns relating to personal safety in the facility or its vicinity, a need for refurbishment, poor changing or other ancillary accommodation, a poor reputation, poor customer care or high charges. On the other hand, a significant number of requests for bookings that cannot be accommodated, or consistent use at or close to capacity, may indicate a need for more provision.

## Endnotes

**12** See, for example, Harrison, Burgess, Millward and Dawe (1995), *Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities* (Research Report 153), Peterborough: English Nature.

**13** Details of this service are available at [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

## Chapter 6 - Step 3: Setting Provision Standards

### *Key Actions*

- Determine the quantitative component (paragraphs 6.3-6.7)
- Determine the qualitative component (paragraphs 6.8-6.9)
- Determine the accessibility component (paragraphs 6.10-6.14)
- Determine the minimum acceptable size component (paragraphs 6.15-6.16)
- Determine the site area multiplier component (paragraph 6.17)
- Determine the cost components (paragraphs 6.18-6.25)

### *Useful Tools*

- Typologies of Provision (Annex A)
- Sport England Facilities Planning Model (paragraphs 10.9-10.10)
- Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy (paragraphs 10.12-10.15)
- English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Model (paragraphs 10.16-10.17)
- Hierarchies of provision (paragraphs 10.31-10.35)
- Settlement Hierarchies (paragraph 10.36)
- Published Research (paragraphs 10.39-10.41)

## The Nature of Provision Standards

**6.1** Once the assessment of local needs and audit of provision are in place it is possible to set locally-determined provision standards. Paragraph 7 of PPG17 states that local standards should include:

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

**6.2** The relative importance of these three elements will vary from one type of provision to another. For example, it is not realistic for authorities to set a quantity standard for hard surfaced civic spaces, or a distance threshold for an area of inland water used for water sports. For development control purposes, however, it is desirable for provision standards also to encompass:

- A minimum acceptable size
- A site area multiplier
- Normalised capital, establishment and maintenance costs

- Design guidelines

## The Quantitative Component

### *Greenspaces Or Sport And Recreation Facilities*

**6.3** The easiest way to express a quantity standard is a combination of a unit of a 'useful area' of provision and a population, such as X sq m/person (mainly for indoor provision) or Y ha/1,000 people (mainly for open spaces and outdoor sports provision). A better approach for pitches, however, is along the lines of 1 football pitch per X,000 people, 1 cricket pitch per Y,000 people and so on, simply because it is the number of pitches in an area which is important and not the land area of them. If required, it is possible to combine these separate needs into an overall standard for pitches.

**6.4** In addition, Local Biodiversity Action Plans should help determine desirable levels of provision of wildlife habitats and species populations that reflect regional and national conservation objectives. Ideally, they should also reflect the needs identified in local consultations.

**6.5** Appropriate quantity standards should be determined from analysis of existing quantity provision (Step 2), in the light of local community views as to its adequacy and details of levels and types of use (Step 1). This should be undertaken against a background of objective assessment and benchmarking. This can need careful judgement in relation to poor quality or poorly located provision. As paragraph 18 of PPG17 points out, 'Where recreational land and facilities are of poor quality or under-used, this should not be taken as necessarily indicating an absence of need in the area'. At the same time, there is no point in adopting standards which are unlikely to be achievable.

### *Civic Spaces*

**6.6** There may be circumstances in which it is more appropriate for a developer to provide or contribute to nearby hard surfaced provision rather than make on-site greenspace provision, an example being high density flats on a tight urban site. For developments of this kind, and in order to provide equity for different developers, authorities can seek to negotiate a condition or planning obligation and related financial contribution based on their adopted greenspace provision standards. Where an authority intends to do this it should say so in its planning policies or related Supplementary Planning Guidance.

**6.7** In principle, if it is not realistic to make on-site provision, and the development will result in a quantitative or qualitative deficiency in provision, authorities can also require developers of commercial premises, such as shops or offices, to contribute to civic spaces or local greenspaces, such as parks, in the vicinity of their developments and likely to be used by their staff or customers. A high quality setting for a commercial development can enhance its rental value and therefore the developer can ultimately gain by contributing to the public realm. However, there is at present no simple way of deriving a defensible standard for such provision. Some councils have successfully negotiated a contribution from one developer and then used this as a precedent to seek similar contributions from others.

## *The Qualitative Component*

**6.8** The quality standard for each form of provision should derive from the analysis of quality in the audit in the light of community views, the agreed vision and a judgement as to the quality it will be desirable to set as an objective and possible to deliver. It may also be sensible to use quality benchmarks; the National Trust or (in London) the Royal Parks Agency are good examples of agencies with high quality standards which are clearly much appreciated by the public. Quality standards can obviously vary according to the primary and secondary purposes of different forms of provision and their level within any adopted hierarchy of provision. They are not absolute measures, but reasonable aspirations and benchmarks against which to measure the quality of any existing open space or sports facility in order to determine the need for enhancement. They can also be used to monitor improvements over time as part of the Best Value process. Broadly speaking, social justice demands that authorities should aim to bring all the open spaces or sport and recreation facilities in their area up to as consistent a standard of quality as possible; and Best Value demands that they should then progressively raise it. The more that quality standards are measurable, the easier it will be to identify those open spaces or facilities in need of enhancement and set priorities in a transparent manner.

**6.9** Clearly stated quality standards also provide a useful starting point in negotiations with developers over on-site provision.

## **The Accessibility Component**

### *Distance Thresholds*

**6.10** Distance thresholds are a very useful planning tool, especially when used in association with a Geographical Information System (GIS). For example, it is possible to identify the percentage of households within a distance threshold of any particular provision or to compare possible locations for new provision to determine which will be the most effective. PPG17 makes clear that new facilities should be located where they will be accessible on foot, by bicycle or by public transport, while Sport England has suggested that the proportion of local residents within appropriate distances of indoor sports and leisure centres can be a useful performance indicator for Best Value purposes (see endnote 14).

**6.11** Distance thresholds (that is, the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport) are not necessarily the same thing as the effective catchments identified in Step 2. There may be good reasons for a planning authority to set higher or lower thresholds, but this needs careful consideration. Higher thresholds may be appropriate if there is no realistic possibility of sufficient new provision to allow lower thresholds to be achievable, but can result in levels of provision which are too low and may not meet some local needs. Lower thresholds may be needed if there is clear evidence that a significant proportion of local people do not use existing provision because they regard it as inaccessible, but can result in an unnecessarily high and uneconomic level of provision. A better approach, therefore, may be to promote measures designed to improve accessibility, such as better public transport or cycling routes.

**6.12** The method of identifying effective catchment areas in paragraph 10.18 results in simple straight line catchment area radii because it derives 'as the crow flies' distances. This is by far

the easiest and quickest way to plot approximate catchment areas to identify areas without ready access to particular facilities - as circles with a radius of the appropriate distance threshold for different facilities or forms of transport. In some circumstances, however, it may be necessary to adopt a slightly more sophisticated approach and further guidance on this is given in paragraphs 7.1-7.3.

**6.13** For authorities serving both urban and rural areas, it may be necessary to have both urban and rural distance thresholds; an alternative approach is to create a hierarchy of provision. Further advice on hierarchies of provision and settlement hierarchies is given in paragraphs 10.31-10.36.

#### **Good Practice Example: South Tyneside**

South Tyneside's UDP (adopted 1999) sets a target for recreational open space, consisting of informal open grassed, wooded or landscaped land, local parks and small amenity areas of incidental public space, of 3.78 ha per 1000 population. Although including playing fields in dual use, this standard specifically excludes golf courses, allotments, all open spaces of less than 0.2 ha in size, highway verges, cemeteries and hard-landscaped areas. The UDP also promotes a "Hierarchy of open space accessibility" consisting of:

- District parks and open spaces: all dwellings should be within 3 km of an open space of at least 30 ha which provides general facilities for recreational activity within a landscaped setting
- Neighbourhood Parks and Open Spaces: all dwellings should be within 1 km of an open space of between 10 and 30 ha which provides general facilities for recreational activity within a landscaped setting
- Local parks and open spaces: all dwellings should be within 400 m of an open space of between 2 and 10 ha which provides facilities for recreation within a localised area, catering for the specific informal needs of occupants of the immediate vicinity
- Pocket parks and small open spaces: all dwellings should be within 200 m of a small formal or informal area of open space of between 0.2 and 2 ha that is suitable for informal use and has high amenity value

Using a simple GIS, the Council's Planning Department identified that virtually 100% of the Borough's residents live within 3 km of a district-scale park or open space; 92% within 1 km of a district or neighbourhood park; 73% within 400 m of a district, neighbourhood or local park or open space; and 66% within 200 m of at least one public recreational amenity open space or park at any level of the hierarchy.

The mapping process also clearly identified those areas of the Borough requiring additional provision in order to meet the accessibility standard.

The Council is now developing its approach further by assessing the quality of each existing open space.

#### *The Cost Of Using Facilities*

**6.14** The acceptable cost of using a facility can vary and depends on factors such as the nature of the facility, individuals' personal circumstances and how much they have to pay to travel to it. It is therefore very difficult to come to a general view of when a cost is acceptable and when it is not. However, Paragraph 7 of PPG17 makes clear that planning authorities should consider cost issues. For some commercial developments, this may make it possible for authorities to secure access for a broad cross-section of the community.

#### *The Minimum Acceptable Size Component*

**6.15** Including a minimum acceptable size within provision standards provides a transparent, policy-based way of deciding whether to require a developer to make on-site or contribute to off-site provision. It helps to prevent provision which will be too small to be of benefit to local communities, or unnecessarily expensive to maintain. It will often be better to aggregate contributions from several small developments in the same area than to waive a provision standard or require each developer to make a tiny amount of on-site provision.

**6.16** Those responsible for future management and maintenance have a key role to play in determining the minimum acceptable size for different forms of provision. There is no point in the planning system requiring developers to make provision which is then too small to be of much use or unnecessarily expensive to manage and maintain.

#### **Good Practice Example: Fareham Borough Council**

Fareham has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for open space which includes provision standards for pitches, other outdoor sports facilities, children's playing spaces, informal play spaces and other outdoor recreational space. It includes a table setting out which of these types of open space it will require developers to provide in association with each of ten different types of residential development. In addition, it gives full details of how the Council will calculate the amount of open space required on-site, the amount of contributions required for off-site provision and commuted sums. The Council reviews the financial elements of the calculation annually and publishes updated figures every April. Its minimum size standards are:

- Pitches: a minimum of two pitches plus changing and parking
- Other outdoor sports facilities: a minimum of 0.65 ha
- Local equipped areas for play: a minimum of 0.5 ha
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play: a minimum of 1.0 ha
- Informal play spaces: a minimum of 0.1 ha, with no dimension less than 10 m

## The Site Area Multiplier Component

**6.17** Depending on how the quantity component is stated, it may also be necessary to have a site area multiplier component. For example, a local authority might adopt a provision standard of X football pitches (or badminton courts, or sq m of water in a swimming pool, or whatever) per 1,000 people, and use a site area multiplier to convert this into an overall building or site area as in the following worked example:

<b>Worked Example: Site Area Multiplier</b>	
A planning authority wishes to identify a suitable site area multiplier for a football pitch. The basic size of a football pitch is around 100 x 60 m. Pitches should have a safety margin or buffer zone all round of at least 10 m, a pavilion and parking for, say, 15-20 cars plus an access road:	
<b>Typical pitch size</b>	6,000 sq m
<b>Area of pitch plus margins (120 x 80 m)</b>	9,600 sq m
<b>Pavilion, say</b>	80 sq m
<b>Landscaping, say</b>	200 sq m
<b>Parking for 15 cars @ 25 sq m each</b>	375 sq m
<b>Access road, say</b>	500 sq m
<b>Total area, say</b>	10,755 sq m
<b>Site area multiplier (10,755/6,000)</b>	1.79
Note: the multiplier converts pitches into a land area; so. For example, 1 pitch, with changing and parking, requires a site of around 1.79 ha. The multiplier will reduce slightly for multi-pitch sites as a single access road can serve more than one pitch.	

## The Cost Components

### Definitions

**6.18** Many authorities refer to both developers' contributions towards the capital cost of new or enhanced provision and related sums which can be invested to fund maintenance for several years as 'commuted sums'. This is incorrect. 'To commute' means to pay (an annuity) at one time, especially with a discount, instead of in instalments (see endnote 15). Accordingly:

- Commuted sums are intended to fund a stream of revenue payments which will pay for the maintenance or establishment of a particular quantity of a particular form of provision over a number of years (which should be set out in policy or Supplementary Planning Guidance). Developers cannot be expected to fund maintenance in perpetuity.
- Developers' contributions are capital intended to fund a particular quantity of a particular form of new provision, usually off-site

### Commuted Maintenance Sums

**6.19** Good planning requires that new open spaces and facilities are provided where they are needed and financially and environmentally sustainable. The payment of a commuted maintenance sum will be appropriate when a developer hands over title and responsibility for the long term maintenance of on-site provision to a local authority or a third party such as a parish council or trust. The best and easiest way to express it is in terms of a sum per unit of provision, such as £/hectare or £/sq m.

**6.20** Some councils simply multiply the typical annual cost of maintaining a unit of provision by a number of years to calculate commuted maintenance sums, for example £5,000 per year x 10 years = £50,000. It is fairer to developers, however, to calculate the net present value of the anticipated stream of revenue payments. This means commuted maintenance sums should be based on:

- The estimated annual cost of maintenance. However, authorities should not always simply calculate an average unit cost based on their existing maintenance contracts, but consider whether this allows for an adequate level of maintenance. After years of declining expenditure on greenspace maintenance, many budgets are inadequate to maintain greenspace to an adequate standard. Rather than transfer the effects of past budget cuts to new provision, it may be better to estimate a more appropriate cost.
- An assumed rate of inflation
- An assumed discount rate
- The number of years for which the authority requires the commuted establishment or maintenance sum to last.

<b>Worked Example: Commuted Maintenance Sum</b>			
Suppose the cost of maintaining a particular form of provision is £5,000/hectare per year and the planning authority has adopted a policy that commuted maintenance sums should last for 10 years. If the rate of inflation is 2.5% and the assumed discount rate is 5%, the required commuted sum is £42,828/hectare or £4.28/sq m. This is the net present value of the following stream of revenue payments:			
<b>Year 1</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>£5,657</b>
<b>Year 2</b>	<b>£5,125</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>£5,798</b>
<b>Year 3</b>	<b>£5,253</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>£5,943</b>
<b>Year 4</b>	<b>£5,384</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>£6,092</b>
<b>Year 5</b>	<b>£5,519</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>£6,244</b>
Note: each payment is 2.5% higher than the year before			

**6.21** Commuted sums per unit of provision can easily be converted into commuted sums per person or per house using the other elements of provision standards if required, as in the following example:

<b>Worked Example: Provision Standard per Person or per House</b>			
Suppose an adopted quantity standard is 500 sq m/1000 people, or 0.5 sq m per person. This can be converted to a provision standard per			

house if the anticipated occupancy is known. Some authorities monitor the occupancy of houses of different sizes in their areas and use the results in association with their provision standards when assessing the amount of provision which developers should either provide on-site or fund off-site. For example:

Size	Occupancy	Calculation	Provision/house
1-bed dwelling	1.5 persons	1.5 people x 0.5 sq m	0.75 sq m/house
2-bed dwelling	2.5 persons	2.5 people x 0.5 sq m	1.25 sq m/house
3-bed dwelling	4.0 persons	4.0 people x 0.5 sq m	2.0 sq m/house
4+bed dwelling	5.0 persons	5.0 people x 0.5 sq m	2.5 sq m/house

#### *Developers' Contribution To Off-Site Provision*

**6.22** Where a developer contributes to off-site provision there is a need for a normalised **capital cost per unit of provision** to establish the payment required. This cost can include any or all of:

- Land costs and related legal fees
- Construction costs (where appropriate, including both the open space or facility and any essential related works, such as fencing, security or floodlighting, CCTV, changing accommodation, car parking and road access) and related design fees
- Essential equipment eg goals or sightscreens
- VAT, if this will be non-recoverable

**6.23** However, a developer actually meeting any part of these costs cannot also be asked for a contribution towards that element; for example, some councils invoice developers for their legal fees after negotiating a planning obligation. The example below suggests how authorities can establish the contribution required per unit of provision.

<b>Worked Example: Developers' Contributions to Off-site Provision</b>		
Suppose that the adopted provision standard for a particular form of pitch is 1 pitch per 5,000 people. A sports ground contractor gives a budget price for constructing a typical pitch of £100,000, while the most recent changing pavilion built by the authority cost £1,000/sq m, the most recent landscaping £25/sq m and parking/roadways some £35/sq m. This gives a normalised capital cost per pitch of:		
Pitch		£100,000
Pavilion	say 80 sq m x £1,000/sq m	£80,000
Landscaping	say 200 sq m x £25	£5,000
Roads and parking	say 1,375 sq m x £35	£48,125
Sub-Total		£233,125
Professional Fees @ 12%		£27,975

Total contribution per pitch		£261,100
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#### *Commuted Establishment Sums*

**6.24** For off-site provision procured through a planning obligation, paragraph B14 of DoE Circular 1/97 states that 'The costs of subsequent maintenance and other recurrent expenditure should normally be borne by the body or authority in which the asset is to be vested', except 'in the case of small areas of open space, recreation facilities, children's play space, woodland, or landscaping principally of benefit to the development itself rather than the wider public'. However, it is still open for planning authorities to seek short term commuted sums to cover the costs of *establishing* new areas of open space or even sports or recreational facilities. These sums might cover, for example, the replacement of the proportion of plants or trees in a landscaped area which experience has shown will die in the first two or three years after construction, or maintenance of a cricket or other pitch until such time as it becomes playable.

**6.25** Commuted establishment sums can be worked out in exactly the same way as for commuted maintenance sums, but will normally relate to lower annual payments and a maximum of 5 years.

### **Design Guidelines**

**6.26** Attractive, well designed and well maintained greenspaces and civic spaces of all types, ideally including areas of still or moving water, are key elements of good urban design and fundamentally important to delivering places in which people will want to live. While it would be wrong to impose standard approaches, carefully developed urban and landscape design guidelines can help to ensure that developers take full account of the need for 'place-making' and do not simply seek to comply with accessibility, quality and quantity standards at the lowest possible cost. Possible sources of advice and information on suitable guidelines are given in the references at the end of this Guide. Sport England has also published a wide range of design guidelines for sport and recreation facilities.

### **Endnotes**

**14** Sport England (2001), *Performance Measurement for the Development of Sport*, London: Sport England.

**15** Collins English Dictionary

## Chapter 7 - Step 4: Applying Provision Standards

### *Key Actions*

- Identify deficiencies in accessibility (paragraphs 7.1-7.3)
- Identify quality deficiency (paragraphs 7.4-7.5)
- Identify areas of quantitative deficiency or surplus (paragraph 7.6)
- Identify the spatial distribution of unmet needs (paragraph 7.7)
- Forecast future needs (paragraphs 7.8-7.13)

### *Useful Tools*

- Geographical Information Systems (paragraphs 10.3-10.5)
- Sport England Facilities Planning Model (paragraphs 10.9-10.10)
- Sport England Playing Pitch Methodology (paragraphs 10.12-10.15)
- English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Model (paragraphs 10.16-10.17)
- Hierarchies of provision (paragraphs 10.31-10.35)
- Settlement hierarchies (paragraph 10.36)

### Identifying Deficiencies in Accessibility

**7.1** The easiest way to define deficiencies in accessibility is to use overlay or sieve maps, with a separate analysis for each form of provision in the adopted typology. This analysis is particularly simple with a computer-based GIS (see the South Tyneside Good Practice example following paragraph 6.13), as it is possible to use different layers on a common base map. However, it can also be done manually if required. There are two basic steps:

- Draw a circular catchment area around each existing facility or open space in turn, with a radius of the relevant distance threshold. If the authority has adopted a provision hierarchy, this should be done for each level of the hierarchy in turn, while taking account of the fact that provision at each level of the hierarchy may substitute for provision at lower levels. This gives a crude assessment of those areas served - and therefore not served - by existing provision.
- Examine those areas which appear to be served by existing provision. It may be necessary to adjust the circular catchments to take account of barriers, or 'severance factors', which prevent free movement, such as motorways, railways, rivers and canals. They can usually be identified and taken into account fairly easily, even with manual mapping. For example, a circular catchment area which straddles a railway line should be cut off along its length, unless there are suitable means of crossing it.

**7.2** For each form of provision, this simple analysis will identify:

- Those areas *within* the distance threshold of at least one open space or sport and recreation facility
- Those areas *outwith* the distance threshold of all existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities

**7.3** This accessibility-based approach is much better than the simple ward by ward quantitative assessment used by some local authorities and reasonably quick and easy to apply. As well as taking account of the average distance which users are willing to travel to facilities or spaces, it also takes account of particular severance factors. For example, a play area on one bank of a river over which there is no bridge is inaccessible to a housing area on the other bank, even if only a stone's throw away.

### Identifying Quality Deficiencies

**7.4** Most quality deficiencies can be identified using the same maps as for the accessibility assessment by coding spaces or facilities in terms of their quality and value. This will identify spatially those open spaces or sport and recreation facilities most in need of enhancement.

**7.5** Identifying quality deficiencies in biodiversity, however, is likely to require careful monitoring and expert evaluation as degraded habitats may well meet other quality standards in spite of poor wildlife value. Developing local wildlife site systems and preparing and implementing Local Biodiversity Action Plans should help to define and redress any such deficiencies.

### Identifying Areas of Quantitative Deficiency or Surplus

**7.6** Areas of quantitative deficiency or surplus can be identified by applying the quantity standard to the population within the effective catchment of each different type of open space or sport or recreation facility, for each form of provision in turn. This should be done by identifiable neighbourhoods rather than arbitrary areas such as Council wards.

### Identifying the Spatial Distribution of Unmet Needs

**7.7** Following this analysis, it will be possible to plot existing unmet needs on a base map to set out the starting point for the 'effective strategy for open space, sport and recreation at the local level' required by paragraph 4 of PPG17:

- Areas outwith the distance thresholds of existing facilities or spaces. In these areas there will be a need for additional provision, unless it is possible to improve the accessibility of existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities. English Heritage, for example, has published a number of useful guides to enhancing local streets in a way which reflects and builds on their historic character, such as *Streets for All* ([see endnote 16](#)) and *Power*

of Place ([see endnote 17](#)). Paragraph 19 of PPG17 also identifies the importance of making improvements to the public realm and giving proper attention to security and safety issues.

- Those areas within the distance thresholds of existing provision in which there is a quantitative deficiency of provision. In these areas there will be a need for either additional provision or initiatives to increase the capacity of existing provision.
- Those existing facilities or spaces which do not meet the relevant quality standard and require enhancement

## Forecasting Future Needs

**7.8** While it is possible to monitor trends in participation, it is not inevitable that they will continue, especially if they run counter to specific policy objectives. For example, the clear need for the UK to promote life-long participation in physical activity in order to reduce long term demands on the National Health Service is having an impact on how sport is seen and promoted.

**7.9** This means that existing needs (from Step 1, *Identifying Local Needs*) cannot simply be projected forward in proportion to anticipated population change to forecast future needs. Instead, there is a need to assess:

- The future socio-demographic characteristics of the local population. Basic forecasts are usually available from county councils, but may require modification to reflect local housing allocations. In most areas of the country, the average age is rising and cultural diversity increasing.
- Trends in the relative popularity of different activities and the use of various forms of provision; this information is available from published research, such as that given in paragraphs 10.39-10.41.
- The impact of policies designed to mould and shape trends or enhance provision. For example, recent Heritage Lottery Fund investment in historic parks has helped to boost their use significantly while Sport England and local authority sports development programmes designed to promote junior participation may lead to increased adult participation in the medium to long term, although this is by no means certain. Outcome targets, where they exist and are realistic, can be used as the basis for forecasts.
- The impact of planned changes in provision. For example, the rise of commercial health and fitness centres is reducing the need for local authority provision.

**7.10** There is no universally accepted way of estimating how existing patterns of participation will change in the future, although Sport England has published a useful forecast which links population and participation trends, based on the General Household Survey and its own *National Survey of Young People and Sport in England* (see endnote 18).

**7.11** The probable land use implications of a number of current trends can be summarised as:

- Rising prosperity is likely to result in higher interest in health and fitness activities, but possibly less in organised sport

- The decline in sports participation by age may be offset by older people remaining active for longer
- Declining participation by men in activities such as football and rugby may be offset by growth in women's participation
- Higher urban densities should lead to increased use of parks and other greenspaces for informal recreational activities by all age groups and possibly a need for more allotments
- The promotion of small-sided team games has resulted in a growing need for small pitches for mini-soccer and mini-rugby
- A short term reduction in the need for adult pitches for football, rugby and cricket, with a possible resurgence of interest in these sports in the medium term
- Further growth of artificial pitch provision
- Further growth in walking and cycling

7.12 One way of estimating future needs is to use a three step process:

- Estimate how social change will affect local needs and therefore the provision standards identified in Step 3
- Forecast the future population, taking separate account of births and deaths amongst the existing population and net inward and outward migration, and apply the adjusted provision standards to identify future needs
- Combine the results to give the total future need for provision

	Population in 2002	Change by 2020	Net inward migration	Participation Rate
<b>0 - 14</b>	950	-200	+300	25%
<b>15 - 29</b>	1000	-50	+300	15%
<b>30 - 59</b>	2150	-100	+300	10%
<b>60+</b>	1050	+350	0	5%
<b>Totals</b>	5,150	0	+900	

**Worked Example: Forecasting Future Needs**

Suppose that every 100 participants require X sq m of provision and the existing population, the forecast change in that population by 2020 (excluding net inward migration), the forecast of net inward migration by 2020 and the participation rate for various age groups in a particular activity are:

**Step 1:** assume either no change in participation rates or an increase of 10% in the two younger age groups (eg the 10% participation rate for those aged 15-29 increases to 16.5%).

**Step 2:** multiply the population in each group by the participation rate to calculate the number of participants. This gives the following results:

*If participation rates remain constant*

<b>Participants in 2002</b>	655
<b>Participants in 2020, based on change in existing</b>	605

<b>population</b>	
<b>Additional participants in 2020, arising from net inward migration</b>	150
<b>Net change in number of participants 2002-2020</b>	+100
<i>If participation rates increase by 10%</i>	
<b>Participants in 2002 (as before)</b>	655
<b>Participants in 2020, based on change in existing population</b>	638
<b>Additional participants in 2020, arising from net inward migration</b>	162
<b>Net change in number of participants</b>	+145
<b>Step 3: Future Need</b>	
<b>Existing need</b>	6.55X sq m
<b>Additional future need (no change in participation)</b>	7.55X sq m
<b>Increased provision required (no change in participation)</b>	1.00X sq m
<b>Need in 2020 (10% increase in participation)</b>	8.00X sq m
<b>Increased provision required (10% increase in participation)</b>	1.45X sq m

**7.13** In this example there is no change in the number of people in the existing population - in other words, births and deaths cancel each other out as components of population change. However, it is fairly simple to include birth and death rates in the calculation if required.

### **Endnotes**

**16** English Heritage (2000), *Streets for All: A guide to the management of London's streets*, London: English Heritage.

**17** Historic Environment Review Steering Group (2000), *Power of Place: The future of the historic environment*, London: English Heritage.

**18** Sport England (2001), *General Household Survey: Participation in Sport - Past Trends and Future Prospects*, London: Sport England.

## Chapter 8 - Step 5: Drafting Policies

### *Key Actions*

- Identify strategic options (paragraphs 8.1-8.13)
- Evaluate the strategic options (paragraphs 8.14-8.15)
- Draft policies (paragraphs 8.16-8.20)

### *Useful Tools*

- Typologies of Provision (Annex A)
- Hierarchies of provision (paragraphs 10.31-10.35)
- Settlement hierarchies (paragraph 10.36)
- Public Consultation Techniques (paragraphs 10.37-10.38)

## Identifying Strategic Options

**8.1** Most areas will have some existing open spaces or facilities, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which are protected by legislation. The analysis of the audit may also have identified some additional ones. These open spaces or facilities provide the 'base resource' around which it will be possible to identify a strategy which balances economic, social and environmental objectives in order to achieve the best possible long term use of land. This strategy is likely to have four basic components:

- Existing provision to be protected (see PPG17 paragraphs 11, 15, 17 and 32)
- Existing provision to be enhanced (see PPG17 paragraphs 16, 18, 19, and 23)
- Existing provision to be relocated in order to meet local needs more effectively or make better overall use of land (see PPG17 paragraph 13)
- Proposals for new provision (see PPG17 paragraphs 20-32)

**8.2** Some strategies may also have a fifth component - land or facilities which are surplus to requirements and therefore no longer needed (see PPG17 paragraph 10)

**8.3** There are likely to be several different ways of meeting local needs. For example, there may be a need for additional pitches in an area, but several possible sites for new provision as well as opportunities to increase the capacity of one or more existing pitches by adding floodlights or providing a high capacity artificial surface. Accordingly it is necessary to identify the various options before evaluating them in the context not only of PPG17 but also other relevant national or regional planning policy guidance.

### *Identifying Existing Provision To Be Protected*

**8.4** Existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities which should be given the highest level of protection by the planning system are those which are either:

- Critically important in avoiding deficiencies in accessibility, quality or quantity and scored highly in the value assessment; **or**
- Of particular nature conservation, historical or cultural value

#### *Identifying Existing Provision To Be Enhanced*

**8.5** It will almost certainly be desirable to enhance some existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities to increase either their quality or value, and possibly both. These will be those spaces or facilities which:

- Are critically important in avoiding deficiencies in diversity, accessibility or quantity, **but**
- Scored poorly in the value or quality assessment

#### *Identifying Areas In Which New Provision Is Required*

**8.6** New provision may be required where there will be a planned increase in population and will be required:

- In areas outside the distance thresholds of each different type of open space or sport and recreation facility in the adopted provision hierarchy containing sufficient people to justify new provision; **or**
- Where the level of existing provision fails to accord with the quantity standard

**8.7** In these areas, using the adopted provision standards to determine the need for new provision will identify any need there may be:

- To promote new provision and make allocations where the audit identified realistic opportunities to do so; **and/or**
- To require developers to provide or contribute to new provision

#### *Identifying Opportunities For New, Enhanced Or Relocated Provision*

##### *New Provision*

**8.8** The main opportunities for new provision are likely to include:

- Areas where comprehensive redevelopment may be proposed, such as run-down former

### Council housing estates

- Derelict land or brownfield land unsuitable for development, for which open space or sport and recreation provision *may* be a cost-effective new use, depending on location and local needs. However, authorities should not provide important community facilities on land liable to flooding. Even in areas where there is no deficiency in provision, converting land unsuitable for development into open space, and then redeveloping an existing open space may be a sensible policy option. Such land swaps are allowed by paragraph 13 of PPG17 and can result in better overall use of land, significant environmental improvements and higher amenity, provided the new provision will be at least as accessible to users.
- Educational sites, where the school or other educational institution has existing facilities which are not made available for community use or spare land. In some instances, basic facilities may already exist, but require relatively minor alterations before it is acceptable to open them up for public use. For built facilities, these alterations may include a new entrance, separate from the school or other institution, a reception area, staff room, lockers in changing rooms and extra storage. For pitches, it may be necessary to provide additional changing accommodation (if the present changing is within the main school building) or increase their ability to withstand wear.
- Sport and recreation facilities currently owned by major employers, such as large firms, the Ministry of Defence, health authorities or the Civil Service but economically fragile as a result of declining use.
- Disused railway lines or roads: it is often sensible to retain these in case they become needed for another form of public transport. In the meantime, relatively simple surfacing can create new green corridors for walking, cycling and horse riding. Disused railway lines often provide a direct link from inner urban areas to the countryside.
- Rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs and areas of water in both urban and rural environments

**8.9** In urban areas, much of the necessary information on these opportunities should already be available in the form of an urban capacity study. Deciding whether to take advantage of them has to take account of the best possible use of each area of land in the light of other policies.

### *Enhanced Provision*

**8.10** As well as existing provision whose quality it will be desirable to enhance, there may be opportunities to overcome some identified quantity deficiencies by reconstructing or otherwise enhancing existing provision in order to increase its capacity to accommodate use.

**8.11** There may also be opportunities to enhance existing greenspaces or facilities through carefully planned and sensitively designed enabling developments. English Heritage has published a useful guide to *Enabling Development and the Conservation of Historic Assets*. However, enabling development should not be a thinly disguised attempt to justify either a land sale or developer's profit but driven by an identified local need which cannot realistically be met in any other way. For obvious reasons, enabling developments should not create a new deficiency in provision.

### *Relocated Provision*

**8.12** In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or sport and recreation facility, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users, or use land which is not suitable for another purpose.

**Good Practice Example: Hallside Renewable Energy Park, Lanarkshire**

Hallside Steelworks closed in 1979 after almost 100 years of steel-making, leaving a derelict site of some 33 hectares covered with concrete foundations, open basements and contaminated slag heaps. In addition, the surface and sub-surface material were contaminated with heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and zinc. Initial estimates of the cost of reclamation were anything up to about £30M.

In response to the need for additional housing in the area, the then strategic planning authority, Strathclyde Regional Council, agreed to the release of greenbelt land to the south of Hallside on condition that the steelworks site would be restored to a greenbelt use. As the proposed housing site contained two large colliery waste heaps, this provided material which could be spread on the Hallside site to create a cap and then greened. As well as the reclamation of derelict land and provision of much needed new housing, therefore, the development also resulted in the removal of a local eyesore.

The basic concept for Hallside is of a renewable energy park with public access. The newly greenbelt land has been fertilised by the application of some 10,000 tonnes of treated sewage sludge and planted with "fuel crops" - mainly willow and alder. The farming of these crops and their conversion into electricity will fund the management of the area. In addition, the 250,000 trees planted on the site will extract many of the contaminants from the soil by a process known as phytoremediation.

*Identifying Potential Development Sites*

**8.13** Adopted provision standards can also be used to identify existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities which it may be acceptable to class as 'surplus to requirements' and use for some other purpose. However, paragraph 12 of PPG17 makes clear that the first priority should always be to use at least part of any local surplus of one type of provision to reduce any local deficiencies there may be in others. There will nearly always also be other factors to take into account, such as the contribution which open spaces make to the character of an area and, not least, the opinions of local residents and businesses.

**Evaluating the Strategic Options**

**8.14** It is unlikely that there will be a need to pursue all the identified strategic options and therefore it is important to assess which will be the most effective. This evaluation should relate directly to the planning objectives set out in PPG17, other PPGs and relevant local strategies. The criteria which might be used for evaluating strategic options include, for example:

- Maximising the proportion of the local population within the distance threshold for each different form of provision
- Filling gaps in provision while also making the best overall use of the resources of land and money
- Maximising the accessibility of greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities on foot, by bicycle or by public transport
- Improving the green network, for example by creating 'green chains'
- Creating green corridors between urban areas and their surrounding countryside and improving the accessibility of the urban fringe and rights of way in the countryside
- Promoting the joint use of educational land or buildings which have the capacity to meet identified community needs

### *Consulting Appropriate Local Interest Groups*

**8.15** Consulting local interest groups should be an integral part of evaluating the strategic options. The groups it will be sensible to consult will vary from one area to another, but are likely to include Parish or Town Councils, local amenity societies, local sports councils, tenants' groups, local biodiversity partnerships, the regional offices of the national agencies and appropriate county, regional or national governing bodies of sport. The 'Summary of Local Needs' suggested in paragraph 5.8 can be useful for this, especially as it will rarely be possible to consult every local organisation on a face to face basis.

### **Drafting Planning Policies**

**8.16** Planning policies should generally reflect the objectives set out at the beginning of PPG17. This means that most authorities will require their policies and related Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to cover 'place-making' and:

- The protection and/or enhancement of existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities of value - or potential value - to the local community. This can be done by identifying those open spaces or sport and recreation facilities of most value to local communities on the Proposals Map and in an accompanying schedule; or by a criteria-based policy; or by a mixture of both approaches.
- The re-location of poorly located but necessary open spaces or sport and recreation facilities. PPG17 sets out the circumstances in which this may be acceptable.
- The circumstances in which the planning authority may allow the redevelopment of an existing open space or sport and recreation facility. Again, PPG17 offers guidance as to these circumstances.
- New provision required to fill identified gaps in existing provision, together with land allocations where there is a realistic expectation that the local authority will be able to initiate the necessary provision within the time frame covered by the Development Plan (or its successor)
- Additional on-site or off-site provision required as a consequence of new developments, together with how the authority will assess any related commuted maintenance or establishment sums. The amount of on-site provision or developer's contribution to off-site

provision must be based on the adopted provision standards.

**8.17** For those authorities with significant rural areas, there may also be two further specifically rural aspects to policy: the protection and possible enhancement of Rights of Way, together with permissive paths and bridleways, and policies relating to sport and recreation in the countryside. The best approach to such issues is probably to adopt a criteria-based policy.

#### *Exceptions To The Basic Policy*

**8.18** Some types of development may justify exceptions to policy or a flexible interpretation of it. For example, the residents of sheltered housing will not require access to most forms of sports facilities or provision for children and young people, but may require on-site amenity greenspace, even if there is significant provision well within the adopted distance threshold. On-site greenspace may also serve an important visual or amenity purpose. Some authorities do not require student halls of residence to contribute to provision for children and young people, but students can significantly increase the need for most forms of greenspace and particularly outdoor sports provision.

#### **Good Practice Example: Sheffield City Council**

Sheffield has comprehensive Supplementary Planning Guidance on Open Space in New Housing Development. In term time, the city houses a significant number of students and the Council is aware that the Universities and Colleges have their own facilities for outdoor sport, while residences are often set within large grounds. The Council therefore takes the following factors into account when considering whether it will require a financial contribution related to proposals for new student residences:

- The amount of informal open space to be provided within the development site
- Whether the site is more than 1200 metres from existing University or College sports facilities
- The existing provision of recreation open space within the catchment area of the site

**8.19** There may also be circumstances in which it may be desirable to require developers to make provision over and above that required by the adopted provision hierarchy and related provision standards. For example:

- Measures to provide structural or shelter planting to reduce noise (eg developments adjacent to main roads or railway lines) or energy consumption (eg exposed sites)
- Measures to control ground water, prevent flooding or promote sustainable urban drainage
- Measures to protect biodiversity or promote nature conservation
- Measures requiring developers of sites with a nature conservation designation (such as

Sites of Special Scientific Interest), or adjacent to them, to make adequate provision for the protection of their features of interest and promotion of biodiversity

### *Consulting Relevant Stakeholders*

**8.20** As with other planning policies, it will always be sensible to consult relevant stakeholders, such as local development interests and the national agencies, before formally adopting a policy or SPG. Responding to possible objections through discussion and negotiation will nearly always be more effective than at a Local Plan Inquiry while SPG is obviously strengthened if councils take account of the views of local developers before adopting it.

#### **Good Practice Example: Sheffield City Council**

Sheffield City Council has adopted comprehensive Supplementary Planning Guidance on Open Space Provision in New Housing Development. It provides real clarity for developers and is based on nine guidelines covering:

- Types of open space needed in housing developments
- Meeting needs for recreational space
- Ecologically and visually important open space and environmental buffers
- Types of residential development covered by the policy
- Ensuring that new recreation space is usable and easy to maintain
- Enhancing existing recreation space off-site as an alternative to new provision on-site
- Ensuring easy access to recreation space for all residents in new housing developments
- Making financial contributions towards recreation space provision in lieu of direct provision
- Calculating the scale of financial contributions

Each guideline follows a common format, based on definitions, reasons for the guideline, how the guideline will be put into practice and other information. Before adopting the SPG, the Council sought comments on it from a wide range of interests, including Parish Councils, the Housing Corporation, the Sheffield Wildlife Trust, the Sports Council, the National Playing Fields Association, and local, regional and national house builders. It also published all of the comments with its responses to them.

## Chapter 9 - Implementation

### Key Tasks

- Apply the Provision Standards (paragraphs 9.1-9.12)
- Decide whether to waive the adopted provision standards (paragraph 9.13)
- Determine any required capital contribution and/or commuted maintenance sum (paragraph 9.14)
- Determine the need for a compensation agreement (paragraph 9.15)

### Applying Provision Standards

**9.1** Provided authorities have undertaken assessments of need and audits of existing facilities compliant with PPG17, locally determined provision standards will meet the tests of reasonableness set out in paragraph 7 of DoE Circular 1/97, *Planning Obligations* (see endnote 19). This means that authorities will be justified in using them as the basis for planning conditions or obligations in appropriate circumstances. Paragraphs 23 and 33 of PPG17 make clear that obligations can be used to reduce or prevent both quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in provision.

**9.2** The need for on-site provision or developers' contributions to off-site provision may arise from applications for two types of development:

- Those relating to the redevelopment of existing open space or sport and recreation provision for some other use
- Those which will increase the need for open space or sport and recreation provision in the area

**9.3** Both of these require the application of adopted provision standards within the context of defined areas of accessibility or quality deficiency and quantity deficiency or surplus in order to determine the need for either additional provision or the enhancement of existing provision. However, provision standards are only the starting point in negotiations with developers and high quality environments will not result simply from applying them in a mechanical way. This is why it is desirable also to complement provision standards with design guidelines which concentrate on effective 'place-making'.

#### *The Need For Additional Provision*

**9.4** Additional provision will be needed when the total amount of provision within the appropriate distance threshold of the site is or will be below the amount required in the area following the development. Authorities can assess the amount of provision required by applying the provision standard to the anticipated population of the proposed development.

**9.5** The decision as to whether on-site provision or a contribution to off-site provision will be

more appropriate depends primarily on whether the total quantity of each form of new provision required as a result of the proposed development is above the minimum acceptable size in the adopted provision standards. If it is, the new provision should normally be on-site; if not, the developer should normally be required to contribute to off-site provision.

#### *The Need For Enhancement Of Existing Provision*

**9.6** Not every proposed development will require additional provision. If the amount and quality of provision within the appropriate distance thresholds of the proposed development site will match or exceed the adopted provision standards when the development is complete, there is no need for either additional provision or the enhancement of any existing provision. If either or both of these pre-conditions is not met, however, the authority will be justified in requiring the developer either to make on-site provision or contribute to the provision or enhancement of off-site provision.

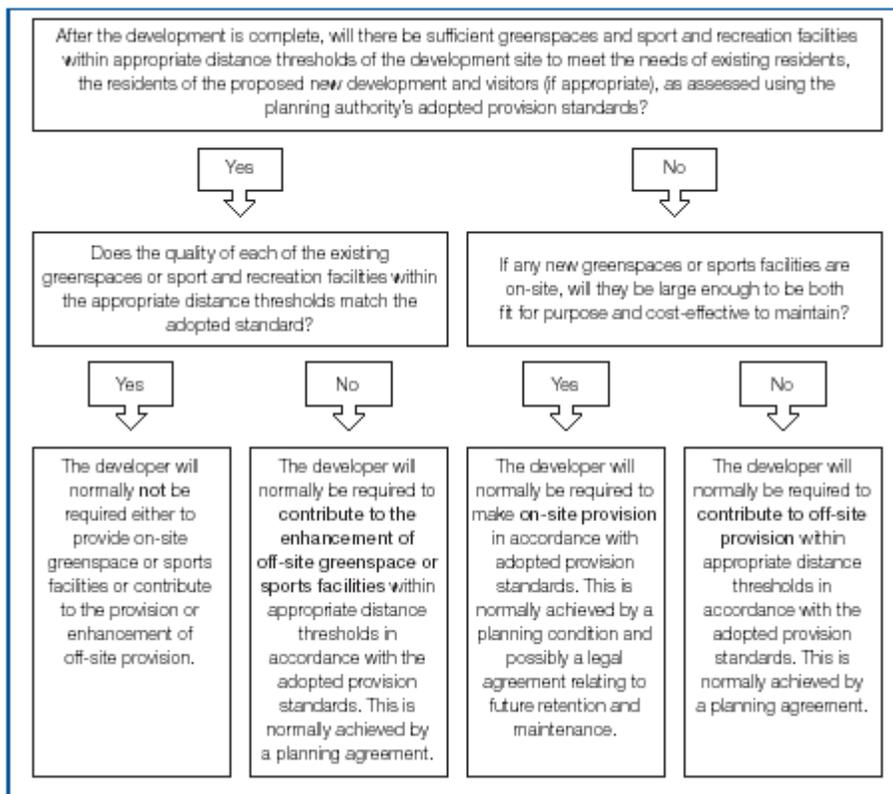
**9.7** Before seeking contributions to off-site provision, authorities should be satisfied that they will be able to use them within the distance threshold of the proposed development site. If they do not use them within five years, developers are able to submit a Section 106A application for their return.

#### *Contributions To The Enhancement Of Existing Provision*

**9.8** The need for the enhancement of existing provision arises when there will be a sufficient quantity of provision within the distance threshold of the development site after the development, but some elements of this provision fail to meet the adopted quality standard. The developer's contribution and/or commuted sum for each type of provision is then whichever is the lower of:

- The contribution calculated using the method above; and
- The capital cost or commuted sum per sq m of provision multiplied by the quantity of provision requiring enhancement

**9.9** The diagram below summarises a logical 'line of thinking' which authorities can use to apply their provision standards as part of the development control process:



### 9.10 This approach will identify:

- Whether each of the various types of greenspace or facilities in the adopted typology and, if appropriate, hierarchy of provision, are available within the relevant distance thresholds of the site
- Whether any existing greenspaces or sport and recreation facilities within the appropriate distance thresholds of the development site are in need of enhancement
- The amount of provision which developers should either make on-site or fund off-site

**9.11** In principle, planning authorities will be justified in seeking either on-site provision or contributions towards new off-site provision, or the enhancement of existing off-site provision, for the full range of open spaces or sport and recreation facilities for which they have adopted provision standards. In practice, however, this will not always be realistic, as most authorities will have a long 'shopping list' of potential community infrastructure requirements which also includes, for example, schools, public transport and affordable housing. This means that it may be necessary to determine the relative priority of different forms of provision, informed by the assessment of local needs and the audit, in the context of the individual circumstances relating to each particular development proposal.

**9.12** The application of the adopted provision standards can obviously result in a mixture of:

- Quantitative requirements for on-site provision, plus commuted establishment and/or maintenance sums

- Contributions and commuted establishment and/or maintenance sums towards off-site provision

### Amending or Waiving the Provision Standards

**9.13** Apart from situations in which it may not be realistic for the planning authority to seek a planning obligation - for example, where land values are very low - there are three main circumstances in which a planning authority may agree to vary or waive its provision standards:

- Where the need for effective place-making, or a particular approach to urban design, dictates the approach to provision
- In connection with small developments. As a matter of policy, some authorities do not require either on-site provision or a contribution to off-site provision for developments of less than a set number of houses. The basis for this is that the cost of negotiating and administering a planning agreement is higher than the value of the benefit gained for the local community. However, they should bear in mind that X developments, each of one house, have the same aggregate impact on local greenspace and sport and recreation provision as one development of X houses. Moreover, the effective cost of negotiating a planning agreement is any marginal costs which may arise, especially if negotiations are 'in-house', and not necessarily the total cost. Some councils seek and obtain contributions from single house developments.
- Where there is a need to discount the on-site population to allow for migration within the area. It is often the case that some of the residents of proposed new houses will already live in the same local authority area. In areas where the average household size is reducing, an increase in housing stock may not result in a commensurate increase in the local population, even allowing for new occupants of the vacated houses. This reduces the extra pressure on the local community infrastructure as a result of the proposed development and it may be appropriate to reduce the quantity of any new off-site provision developers will be required to fund.

### Determining Capital Contributions and/or Commuted Sums

**9.14** Developers' contributions and related commuted maintenance sums are normally paid to the planning authority. However, planning authorities can also appoint other local bodies which serve the public, such as trusts or parish councils, to implement obligations or use commuted maintenance sums on its behalf.

#### *Determining The Need For A Compensation Agreement*

**9.15** If the development relates to an existing open space or sport and recreation facility, the planning authority may be justified in seeking a planning obligation (often referred to in this context as a compensation agreement) to secure the provision of a replacement open space or facility. The flow chart relating to redevelopment of an existing open space or sports/recreation facility in *Undertaking Local Assessments*, above, summarises the policy requirements of PPG17.

### Endnotes

**19** Department of the Environment (1997), *Circular 1/97: Planning Obligations*, London: DoE.

## Chapter 10 - Tools and Techniques

### Introduction

**10.1** This final section of the Guide summarises a number of tools and techniques which authorities may find helpful at various stages of their assessments. The table below summarises where they are most likely to be helpful:

	Assessing Needs	Auditing Provision	Determining Standards	Applying Standards	Drafting Policies
Minimising resource implications	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geographical Information Systems	✓	✓		✓	✓
Planning Methodologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sport England Facilities Planning Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sport England National Benchmarking Service		✓			
Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Model	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Determining Distance Thresholds	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Assessing Quality	✓	✓	✓		✓
Assessing Value	✓	✓			✓
Combining Quality and Value	✓	✓			✓
Quality of Life Capital	✓	✓			✓
Hierarchies of Provision			✓	✓	✓
Settlement Hierarchies			✓	✓	✓
Public Consultations	✓	✓			✓
Published Research	✓	✓			✓

### Minimising Resource Implications

**10.2** Assessments and audits are inevitably resource-intensive. However, they should help to justify planning obligations and the cost of preparing for and participating in appeals against a refusal of planning permission or call-in inquiries without an assessment may well be higher. There are a number of ways in which authorities can minimise the resource implications, including:

- Undertake the assessment and audit in phases over a period of 2-3 years. One simple way of doing this might be initially to ignore those areas where development pressures are likely to be low - for example conservation areas or areas of suburban housing. Another is to concentrate on those forms of existing provision perceived as being under the greatest threat from development, such as playing fields. New policies and provision standards can then replace existing ones progressively, through the adoption of

Supplementary Planning Guidance.

- Link the audit to other essential work. For example, local authorities should inspect the condition of equipped play areas and monitor grounds maintenance or recreation management contracts at regular intervals. With careful management, a Best Value review of a local authority grounds maintenance or sport and recreation service can generate much of the audit information. In addition, the Government's Plan for Sport, *A Sporting Future for All* (see endnote 20), requires local authorities to undertake an audit of all sports facilities in their area in order to contribute to a national 'Domesday Book' of facilities. It is obviously sensible to link this to the assessments required by PPG17.
- Make creative use of new technology. For example, staff undertaking site visits as part of their everyday duties (eg planning officers, contract managers and even contractors) can use a hand-held computer, pre-programmed with standard 'audit forms', to audit sites as and when they visit them for other purposes. They can then download the results into a comprehensive database quickly and easily.
- Use consultants for specific time-limited pieces of work. However, when using consultants authorities should beware of asking them to gather unnecessarily detailed information as this will not benefit the process but simply drive up the cost.
- Seek the assistance of Groundwork Trusts and local amenity or civic societies. This can be successful, but effective quality control requires that those involved are not simply let loose with survey forms but trained first. Parish Councils can also be a useful source of information, although they are unlikely to have the resources actually to assist with a local audit - but may be able to identify local volunteers who can help.
- Appoint temporary staff, such as students studying ecology or landscape design during appropriate vacations. Local colleges and universities will often be happy to assist in selecting suitable students. They are likely to be relatively cheap, but supervising their work and quality control can be time-consuming.
- Seek funding from one of the national agencies or Lottery distributors. For example, Sport England has provided funding for a growing number of local authorities to employ consultants to prepare playing pitch strategies. The New Opportunities Fund may also support local needs assessments.
- Undertake only a sample audit in the first instance, extending it as resources allow. It is better to have enough information to make defensible decisions than put off making an assessment and continue to rely only on possibly inappropriate provision standards.

## Geographical Information Systems

**10.3** More and more local authorities, and especially planning departments, are using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). Apart from complying with the e-government agenda, this brings a number of useful benefits when recording and analysing an audit of open spaces or sport and recreation provision. For example:

- It makes it easy to share information across departments (although this obviously requires protocols relating to how information is updated)
- Once an audit is in place, it is relatively easy to monitor changes to provision through the take-up of planning permissions or changes to local authority management regimes. If this is done, a comprehensive updating of the audit - for example, as part of reviewing policies or related SPG - involves re-auditing only a limited number of spaces or facilities.
- It allows the easy linking of land use data with population data

**10.4** Local authorities have reported patchy experience of GIS, especially when they have set out to use it corporately. Amongst the good practice examples quoted in this Guide, however, Doncaster MBC is firmly of the view that it could not have prepared its greenspace strategy without the aid of GIS.

**10.5** A standard computer database is a less good alternative, while paper-based methods are best avoided as inflexible and potentially difficult to access, especially as it is common for several departments to hold information gathered at different times for different purposes. This can make collating up to date information difficult.

## Planning Methodologies

**10.6** Broadly speaking, there are four broad methodologies which planning authorities can use in relation to open spaces and sport and recreation provision:

- **A supply-led approach.** This is most appropriate for those types of open space for which there will be very few, if any, realistic opportunities to make additional provision and it is impossible to establish a direct relationship between population levels and required quantities of provision. In these circumstances, it will be important to maximise the quality and accessibility of existing provision and therefore planning policies should be supply-led. The most obvious examples are urban parks and those habitats which cannot be recreated such as ancient woodland.
- **A demand-led approach.** This is appropriate when it is possible to quantify the need for a particular form of provision in relation to population. Indoor or outdoor sport and recreation facilities are the most obvious forms of this type of provision.
- **An opportunity-led approach.** This is most appropriate when it is not possible to quantify demand, but open space can sometimes be a sustainable use of land which it will be uneconomical to develop for some other purpose. Contaminated land is an obvious example, provided it is located where it will have the potential to meet local needs. However, key local provision should obviously not be located on land liable to flooding.
- **A design-led approach.** This is most appropriate when it is impossible to quantify demand and the main purpose of the provision is to enhance the amenity of an area or when preparing a masterplan for a major new development. Civic space is the most obvious example. The amount of greenspace or civic space in a development can sometimes be the outcome of an excellent design rather than an input to it.

**10.7** It may not be necessary to have all of the possible elements of provision standards (see paragraphs 6.1-6.2) for every type of provision. The table below summarises what are likely to be the key elements:

	Supply-led provision	Demand-led provision	Opportunity-led provision	Design-led provision
Distance threshold	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality standard	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quantity standard	✓	✓	✘	✓
Minimum size	✘	✓	✓	✓
Site area multiplier	✘	✓	✘	✘
Cost elements	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design guidelines	✓	✓	✓	✓

**10.8** None of these approaches, nor any specific form of provision within the overall typology, is more important than any other.

### **Good Practice Example: Leeds City Centre Urban Design Framework**

The Leeds City Centre Urban Design Strategy explores the character of streets, spaces and buildings in Leeds City centre. It aims to provide a working tool which will encourage good design whenever new developments are proposed. It was prepared by a multi-disciplinary group of officers from the Council, supplemented by a number of local agencies and stakeholders, such as the Leeds Civic Trust, the Chamber of Commerce, the Victorian Society and the Urban Design Alliance (Yorkshire Region).

The Council based the strategy on an audit and analysis focused on the themes of form, movement, space and use in the nine 'quarters' of the city centre identified in the UDP. Eight case studies, ranging from small scale interventions to master plans, developed the principles set out in the strategy into practical recommendations:

- Protect, enhance and provide new spaces responding to the recognisable variety of ginnels, yards, arcades, streets, malls, squares, parks and riverside
- Promote trees and landscaping appropriate to an area
- Promote new and refurbished spaces which are suitable for people of different ages, gender, race and mobility
- Promote public art to enhance spaces and buildings
- Encourage bespoke railings and boundary walls appropriate to adjacent buildings and spaces
- Promote distinctive street frontages
- responding to the character areas and the City Centre street style
- Encourage innovative and attractive multi-use street furniture/signage to prevent clutter
- Encourage community involvement in improvement to spaces and potential for public art
- Co-ordinate traffic (and other) signage and minimise intrusion of posts on footways
- Improve the appearance of surface car parks

- Manage and maintain all spaces in the city centre

### Sport England Facilities Planning Model

**10.9** The Facilities Planning Model (see endnote 21) is a computer-based tool which calculates the demand for sports facilities and compares it with the capacity of existing facilities to accommodate that demand. As it would be unrealistic to assume that users can travel long distances to facilities, the model links demand and supply using catchment areas.

**10.10** All of the parameters used in the model have been derived from user and household surveys and Sport England generally uses the same parameters throughout the country. The output from the model allows the easy identification of areas in which there appears to be inadequate supply capacity to meet the calculated demand, together with an estimate of the amount of unmet demand and therefore the scale of any facilities needed to accommodate any demand which cannot be allocated to an existing facility. The model therefore prescribes a level of strategic provision on the basis of national parameters derived by Sport England and does not, on its own, constitute a local assessment of needs. In particular, it takes no account of the social characteristics of the local population, usually ignores quality considerations and is based on very high capacity parameters.

#### Good Practice Examples: Bristol Pools

Bristol City Council has a number of community pools which are all nearing the end of their useful life and recognised the need for a comprehensive strategy which would avoid piecemeal replacements as pools close and might result in a totally different pattern of provision. Consultants reviewed the condition and use of the existing pools and prepared and evaluated a range of different strategic options for future provision and the Council followed this up by consulting its Citizens' Panel. It then commissioned Sport England to undertake a further review of the various options. By applying a weighting factor to certain pools to reflect their relatively poor quality, the model was able:

- To show that although there was enough water area in Bristol to meet the demand from city residents, several of the pools were under-performing against model forecasts of throughput.
- To identify that Bristol was probably 'exporting' demand to better pools in surrounding areas, based on the fact that pools outside the city generally had higher throughputs than estimated by the model while Bristol pools had lower.
- To show that many of the City's pools are operating at well below the regional average usage levels, when compared to capacity.

Sport England also tested a number of 'what if' scenarios using the Model, including a number of pool closures, improvements to certain

other pools and major investment in new pool provision.

The findings of this local assessment led to a number of Options which formed the basis of a major public consultation exercise which the Council undertook in Autumn 2001. It has since published its Pool Strategy and aims to double the number of swimmers in Bristol through the provision of a network of attractive and accessible pools.

### Sport England National Benchmarking Service

**10.11** As part of the Best Value process, local authorities need to compare the performance of their sport and recreation facilities with those in other areas. However, simple comparisons can be misleading because of differences in the size of facilities and their catchment populations. Sport England's benchmarking service provides a way of making comparisons which takes account of these differences and allows authorities to compare the performance of their facilities with the first, second or third quartile of similar facilities elsewhere.

### Sport England Playing Pitch Strategy Methodology

**10.12** The definitions of a pitch and a playing field in planning legislation (see endnote 21) are:

- **Pitch:** A delineated area which, together with any run-off area, is of 0.4 ha 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
- **Playing field:** The whole of a site that encompasses at least one pitch

**10.13** Many local authorities have a recently prepared playing pitch strategy and Sport England is seeking to persuade - and may part fund - many of those which do not to prepare one. Pitches and playing fields are major users of land and the loss of playing fields to development has been a high profile issue for a number of years. Equally, however, the total use of many pitches is quite low and planning authorities may wish to consider the desirability of retaining pitches where other forms of development might make much better use of land.

**10.14** The methodology compares the demand for pitches for matches with the supply of them and aims to ensure that they are in balance. It has two important limitations:

- The methodology depends on a considerable amount of local information which is sometimes not readily obtainable and a key assumption relating to the number of times each pitch can be used in a typical week. Changing this key assumption can convert an apparent shortfall of pitches to an apparent surplus. This means that it is possible to manipulate the assumptions to reach different policy conclusions - a weakness of all modelling methods. Authorities should therefore be sure to consider such assumptions carefully when preparing a strategy, and, in particular, when reviewing any assessments

undertaken by or for a developer in accordance with paragraph 10 of PPG17.

- The methodology can be a circular argument, because if the number of pitches in an area is inadequate, this will constrain the number of teams and matches, with the result that the supply of pitches nearly always appears to be just about adequate.

**10.15** Sport England is intending to publish new guidance on playing pitch strategies in autumn 2002. This updated methodology seeks to overcome some of the weaknesses of the 1991 approach. This means that where such strategies exist, and have been prepared using the 'old' methodology, it will probably be sensible to re-examine the policy conclusions in the light of the revised approach.

### English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Model

**10.16** There is a growing body of evidence to demonstrate that regular contact with the natural world contributes to people's well-being and relatively passive but frequent recreation within natural greenspaces can provide significant health benefits. This is the basis for English Nature's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) (see endnote 23), which advocates that every home should be within 300 m of an accessible natural greenspace of at least 2 ha, plus:

- At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km
- At least one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km
- At least one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km

**10.17** These standards can be difficult and sometimes impossible to achieve. English Nature has therefore refined ANGSt to put greater emphasis on identifying local needs and improving accessibility and site quality. The new version will be published with a tool-kit for local authorities during 2002 to provide guidance on mapping and site assessment; determining what is natural; assessing accessibility; analysing provision; and identifying measures to improve the quality of existing natural spaces for both people and wildlife.

### Determining Distance Thresholds

**10.18** A fairly quick and easy method of establishing the effective catchment of a particular open space or facility is:

- Get an interviewer to ask a random sample of typical users of the space or facility for their home postcode, or how far or for how long they have travelled, and their mode of transport. This obviously requires care when selecting 'typical' users - for example, half of the players taking part in matches at sports facilities are likely to be playing 'away' and therefore not typical. Undertaking an identical survey when different teams are playing will generate a different result. Recording home postcodes is likely to be the most accurate

approach as many people have a poor judgement of distance, but it will be necessary to get complete postcodes. There are roughly 1.7 million postcodes in the UK covering around 24 million addresses. Postcodes have two components. The 'outward' code consists of the postal area (eg XY), subdivided into districts (eg XY1 or XY2). The 'inward code' consists of a numeric indicator of the postcode sector (eg XY1 3 or XY1 4), plus an alphabetical indicator of the postcode sub-sector (eg XY1 3A) and a final letter (eg XY1 3AB) which identifies a small group of addresses. In residential areas, the full postcode generally relates to under 20 houses. It is possible to purchase full postcode data for use with GIS.

- Calculate the 'as the crow flies' distance each user has travelled.
- Enter the resulting distances into a spreadsheet and calculate the third quartile of the results using a spreadsheet. The result will be the straight line distance travelled by 75% of those surveyed and can be used as the radius of circular effective catchments for different modes of travel. There is no need to calculate the actual 'on the ground' distance because this approach automatically identifies a straight line distance.

## Assessing Quality

**10.19** Any assessment of the quality or nature of existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities needs a clear set of benchmarks, related to stated standards and, ideally, some form of scoring system. It is also an important opportunity for the 'management system' and the 'planning system' to work together. The aim should be jointly to identify those open spaces or facilities which need enhancement, the form this enhancement should take and relative priorities.

**10.20** The best approach to deriving quality criteria is to base them on a 'vision' drawn up by local stakeholders, against the background of nationally agreed quality standards such as the evolving Green Flag Scheme, the work of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (see endnote 24) or the Sports Councils' Quest scheme for sport and recreation facilities. Sport England is also working with the Sports Turf Research Institute to prepare national quality standards for pitches. Annex B gives two examples of approaches to quality assessment used by local authorities.

### **Good Practice Example: the Green Flag Award Scheme**

The Green Flag Award Scheme represents the national standard for quality parks and green spaces and provides a benchmark against which the quality of freely accessible provision can be measured. It is based on eight broad criteria which were defined after extensive consultation with organisations concerned with nature conservation, public safety, community health, education and children's play. They are that parks and greenspaces should:

- Be welcoming
- Be healthy, safe and secure
- Be clean and well maintained
- Be managed in a sustainable manner
- Promote the conservation of wildlife and the built heritage

- Reflect community needs and promote community involvement
- Be well marketed in accordance with a marketing plan
- Be well managed in accordance with a clear management plan

**10.21** These criteria represent what people expect to find in a quality park or green space, whilst recognising the diversity and distinctive character of individual places. They also aim to set the foundations for long-term sustainability by encouraging local communities to become involved in management to conserve the fabric of the area for future generations. Information on the more detailed criteria used for Green Flag assessments is available at [www.civictrust.org.uk](http://www.civictrust.org.uk).

**10.22** Increasingly, the Green Flag Scheme will provide a 'suite' of criteria for assessing the quality of various types of greenspace. During 2002 and 2003, the scheme is to be extended to:

- A Green Pennant Award for community managed green spaces
- A Green Flag Award for heritage conservation
- A Children's Play Award

### Assessing Value

**10.23** Value is an entirely different and separate concept from quality. It relates mainly to three things:

- **Context:** a space or facility which is inaccessible is almost irrelevant to potential users and therefore may be of little value, irrespective of its quality. Similarly, if there is significantly more high quality provision in an area than needed, some of it may well be of relatively little value - and conversely if there is very little provision in an area, even a space or facility of mediocre quality may well be valuable. Greenspaces which form an integral part of historic environments, however, will almost always be of value, irrespective of their accessibility or condition.
- **Level and type of use** (in terms of primary purpose): poorly used spaces or facilities *may* be of little value (although the visual impact of a poorly used greenspace can be significant) while well used spaces and facilities are always of high value. In this context 'well used' should be interpreted in terms of people and wildlife while species richness can also be taken as a specific form of high level 'use'.
- The **wider benefits** it generates for people, biodiversity and the wider environment

**10.24** Assessing the value of a space or facility therefore means evaluating each of these things. It follows that where an audit results in a 'low value' classification for a particular space or facility, the policy options for increasing its value are to relocate it (which changes the context in which it is set); to find a way of boosting its use (possibly requiring a change to its design, management or primary purpose); or to seek to increase the benefits it provides. Identifying which of these options is the most appropriate requires an approach which is as objective as possible.

**10.25** Evaluating context and levels of use is fairly simple, provided the necessary information is available, but evaluating wider benefits is more complicated. They generally include:

- **Structural and landscape benefits:** well located, high quality greenspaces help to define the identity and character of an area, and separate it from other areas nearby - the fundamental principle behind green belts and green wedges
- **Ecological benefits:** greenspaces support biodiversity, provide habitats for wildlife and may exhibit geological features. They also serve broader functions in terms of reducing surface water run-off, ameliorating the impacts of air, water and noise pollution, thereby helping to alleviate the extremes of urban climates. In addition, the more that urban residents can experience greenspaces close to where they live, the less the impacts on the wider countryside.
- **Education benefits:** greenspaces offer opportunities for people to see nature at work, the integration of historic buildings and features in the landscape and the influence of people on the natural heritage. In this respect, they can be seen as 'outdoor classrooms'.
- **Social inclusion and health benefits:** high quality parks, other greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities promote civic pride, community ownership and a sense of belonging and can help to promote well-being. Greenspaces are also one of the very few publicly accessible facilities which are equally available to everyone, irrespective of personal circumstances.
- **Cultural and heritage benefits:** many of the most valued greenspaces have a long history and represent a link with the best of the past; indeed, many designed landscapes and historic parks provide the setting for listed buildings. The character of many conservation areas comes from the spaces between the buildings every bit as much as the buildings themselves. Greenspaces, civic spaces and sport and recreation facilities can also be high profile symbols of towns and cities - for example, Sydney and the 2000 Olympic Games, London's Royal Parks, St Mark's Square in Venice, Central Park in New York, or Moscow's Red Square.
- **Amenity benefits and a 'sense of place':** greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities help to make villages, towns and cities attractive places in which to live, provided local people see them as safe, well maintained and attractive. In addition, in a typical suburban housing development composed of a limited number of house types, it is often the greenspaces which make one area different from another, help to create specific neighbourhoods and provide important landmarks.
- **Economic benefits:** there are many instances where high quality greenspaces or sport and recreation facilities can promote economic development and regeneration. For example, Sport Action Zones are leading the regeneration of some urban areas. Proximity to well designed and maintained greenspaces also helps to enhance property values.

**10.26** Value assessments should relate to each of these benefits. This will provide a rational basis for determining where to focus any investment in order to maximise the value of a space or facility.

## Combining Quality and Value

**10.27** Assessing the quality and value of open spaces and sport and recreation facilities is fundamental to both effective planning and Best Value reviews. If this is not done, it is impossible objectively to identify those spaces or facilities which should be given the highest level of protection by the planning system, those which require enhancement in some way and those which may no longer be needed for their present purpose. Using a simple high/low classification gives the following possible combinations of quality and value for open spaces and sport and recreation facilities:

<p><b>High quality/low value</b></p> <p>Wherever possible, the preferred policy approach to a space or facility in this category should be to enhance its value in terms of its present primary purpose. If this is not possible, the next best policy approach is to consider whether it might be of high value if converted to some other primary purpose. Only if this is also impossible will it be acceptable to consider a change of use.</p>	<p><b>High quality/high value</b></p> <p>Ideally all spaces and facilities should come into this category and the planning system should then seek to protect them.</p>
<p><b>Low quality/low value</b></p> <p>Wherever possible, the policy approach to these spaces or facilities should be to enhance their quality <i>provided</i> it is possible also to enhance their value. If this is not possible, for whatever reason, the space or facility may be 'surplus to requirements' in terms of its present primary purpose.</p>	<p><b>Low quality/high value</b></p> <p>The policy approach to these spaces or facilities should always be to enhance their quality and therefore the planning system should seek to protect them.</p>

**10.28** This provides a simple means of determining the most appropriate policy approach to each existing open space or facility. It also provides a basis for linking planning, design, management and maintenance. If it is used, the audit of provision must seek separately to identify the quality and value of each individual space or facility in order to identify where each existing space or facility fits into the matrix - and where it could be if enhanced in a suitable way. If there is a choice of spaces or facilities of equal quality to declare surplus, and no need to use one or part of one to remedy a deficiency in some other form of open space or sport and recreation provision, it will normally be sensible to consider disposing of the one with the lowest value. Similarly, if two are of equal value, it will normally be sensible to dispose of the one of lower quality.

### Quality of Life Capital

**10.29** A much more sophisticated approach, but one which can also provide a means of involving local communities, is Quality of Life Capital (QoL Capital) (see endnote 25), developed by English Heritage, the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency and English Nature. Based on the values people assign to environmental features, it provides a consistent, systematic and transparent evaluation framework for all scales of decision-making and integrates social, environmental and economic issues. It uses a 'What matters and why?'

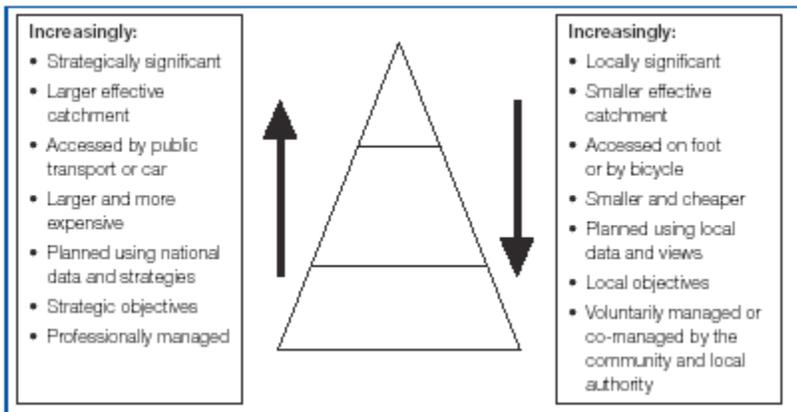
matrix based on five evaluation questions relating to specific features or facilities:

- What are the human well-being benefits and/or services of the feature or facility and to whom do they matter and why?
- At what scale are the benefits significant (eg national, regional, district, neighbourhood)?
- How important are the benefits at that scale?
- Is there enough of the feature or facility?
- What, if anything, could make up for the loss of or damage to the benefit or service - in other words, could something somewhere else be an adequate substitute?

**10.30** Details of the QoL Capital approach are available on the Countryside Agency website, at <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/ruralplanning>

### Hierarchies of Provision

**10.31** Large or high quality spaces or facilities tend to attract users from a wider area than small or poor quality ones and tend to have a higher local profile. This gives rise to the concept of a hierarchy of provision. Hierarchies are a very useful planning tool, but must be purpose-designed to suit a particular context rather than parachuted in from somewhere else. The diagram below summarises the main principles:



**10.32** This three-level hierarchy relates to open spaces or sport and recreation facilities of:

- **Strategic significance** (in the context of the local authority area): these spaces or facilities may either be so large or highly specialist that there is no sense in trying to achieve a pattern of accessible provision across the local authority area. They attract the highest number of users, mainly from throughout the local authority area but possibly wider afield, and therefore have a large effective catchment and high distance threshold. A high proportion of users are likely to travel to them by car or public transport.
- **Middle order significance**: major facilities which will tend to attract a significant proportion of their users from particular parts of the local authority area eg at least two neighbourhoods (in urban areas) or Parishes (in rural areas). Most facilities at this level in

the hierarchy will have an effective catchment of less than about 3 km.

- **Neighbourhood significance:** smaller facilities which will tend to attract almost all of their users from a particular area such as a single neighbourhood, Parish or village. Examples of these facilities are community centres, village halls, village greens, neighbourhood provision for children or other young people and village pitches. Many users of these facilities will walk to them.

**10.33** The number of levels in a hierarchy of provision can vary with local circumstances, but it should rarely be necessary to have more than three or four other than in large cities such as London or Birmingham. The definition of 'strategic' and 'middle order' facilities can also vary, depending on the agency undertaking the assessment. Something which is of strategic importance to a rural local authority containing only a single market town, for example, may be little more than a local or neighbourhood facility to a national agency.

**10.34** Ideally, the hierarchy should encompass each form of provision in the adopted typology, although it is not necessary for all forms of provision to be included at each level in the hierarchy. They can be defined using three key characteristics: **size, effective catchment and essential characteristics** - for example, the range of facilities or nature of use. To create a locally-designed hierarchy:

- List the facilities of each type by size, together with their effective catchments, populations served or levels of use, as established by the analysis of the audit
- Identify those individual open spaces or sport and recreation facilities which can be considered as constituting typical strategic, middle order or neighbourhood forms of provision. Broadly speaking, this should accord with their effective catchment - the larger the catchment, the higher the facility within the local hierarchy, and vice versa. In rural areas, however, a settlement hierarchy may be a more appropriate approach than a facility hierarchy.

Facility	Strategic significance	Middle order significance	Neighbourhood significance
<b>Pitches</b>	Floodlit artificial turf pitches	Borough Council grass pitches	Village pitches
<b>Sports halls</b>	Specialist facilities eg Gymnastics hall	Town centre sports centre	Village halls
<b>Parks</b>	Premier parks	District parks	Neighbourhood parks
<b>Community facilities</b>	None	Purpose-built community	Local meeting halls/village halls

### Good Practice Example

The table below summarises some elements of the leisure facilities hierarchy used by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in Hampshire:

		centres	
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**10.35** When using a hierarchy to analyse deficiencies in provision, provision at a higher level of the hierarchy can substitute for one at a lower, but not vice versa. For example, those who live within the 'neighbourhood park' distance threshold of a park of strategic or middle order significance will have no need of a neighbourhood park as well.

### Settlement Hierarchies

**10.36** In rural areas, village populations are generally fairly low and there can be a significant distance between different settlements. At the same time, it is rarely possible for every settlement to have its own school, post office, general store, pub, village hall and recreation ground. Instead, some forms of provision tend to be located only in larger villages. This gives rise to the concept of a 'settlement hierarchy' in which some forms of provision are concentrated in a limited number of 'key settlements' but intended to serve several settlements. This means that population and distance-based provision standards derived for urban areas will often be of little relevance. An alternative approach is to draw up, in consultation with local communities, a 'shopping list' of the range of provision the residents of towns or villages of different sizes can reasonably expect to have available within their settlement.

<b>Good Practice Example</b>	
<i>The Rural White Paper</i>	
The Rural White Paper, Our Countryside: the Future (see endnote 26), includes a template of services and facilities appropriate to market towns with populations of 2-10,000 and 10-25,000 prepared by a number of East Midlands agencies. It includes:	
Smaller Market Town (2-10,000 people)	
Cultural facilities	Permanent library facilities. Cultural events/local arts venue. Sports pitches with changing rooms, sports hall, weekly cinema. Pubs and restaurant. Recreation park.
Natural environment	Trees/woodland in the built environment. Habitat and open space linked. Watercourse corridors and floodplains enhanced.
Larger Market Town (10-25,000 people)	
Cultural facilities	Permanent library, range of cultural facilities, leisure centre (with swimming pool), local cinema. Pubs and restaurants. Facilities for teenagers other than youth clubs.
Natural environment	Trees/woodland in the built environment. Habitat and open space linked. Watercourse corridors and floodplains enhanced.
<i>Harrogate Borough Council</i>	
Harrogate, in North Yorkshire, is one of the largest districts in England but has a population of only some 140,000. Only ten of the 139 parishes have a population of more than 1,000 people.	
The Local Plan sets out a four-level hierarchy of settlements for the rural area of the Borough and states that most development should occur in	

the higher order ones. The Plan also lists the settlements in each of the top two categories. The hierarchy consists of:

- **Category A settlements:** the main towns and villages, which have a good range of services and facilities eg usually a school and food shop and public transport accessibility
- **Category B settlements:** the smaller villages which are less extensive in form and have fewer services and facilities and poorer public transport accessibility.
- **Category C settlements:** smaller settlements generally lacking in basic services and facilities and public transport, with significant built form and well defined confines.
- **Other settlements:** the smallest sporadic and dispersed settlements, generally lacking in basic services and facilities and public transport, without well defined building confines (including small groups of buildings well separated from larger settlements).

## Public Consultation Techniques

**10.37** Techniques for consulting and involving local communities include:

- **User surveys:** the best way of establishing how far users have travelled to different open spaces or sport and recreation facilities and their views as to their adequacy and quality; but user surveys obviously ignore non-users
- **Household surveys:** the best way of identifying the views of the local community as a whole, but requiring a carefully managed survey with a representative sample. Policy conclusions should never be based only on the views of users alone.
- **Street surveys** or surveys at community events such as fetes and galas: these are less rigorous than household surveys, but significantly cheaper
- **Focus groups, local workshops or Planning for Real®** (see endnote 27) exercises: these are often the best way of eliciting qualitative information, such as the attractiveness or perceived safety of individual greenspaces, the adequacy of particular features or facilities and changes which local people would like to see. Ideally, focus groups should complement quantitative surveys, thereby making it possible to gain greater understanding of the results of them. However, it is also necessary to beware of raising unrealistic local expectations or endorsing unrealistic aspirations.
- **Citizens' Panels, Residents' Panels and Community Forums:** some councils regard these approaches as every bit as effective as surveys, but they may become less effective as time passes.
- **Consultations** with 'Friends of' or other community or user groups, where they exist.

**Good Practice Example: Cherwell District Consultations with Young People**

A survey of 1,000 residents undertaken in the summer of 1998 by Cherwell District Council identified 13 key issues. Four of the top six were:

- There should be more safe places for teenagers to go
- More facilities for youngsters
- More general entertainment facilities
- More supervised activities for children.

In order to refine these issues and decide how to tackle them, the Council organised a Young People's Conference. Those attending identified their top priority as 'places to hang out at night where it is free or cheap'. In conjunction with Town and Parish Councils, therefore, the District Council has developed skateboard parks, multi-games courts, rollerblading opportunities and BMX tracks. The Local Plan also requires developers to allocate land for facilities for young people, together with a capital contribution and commuted maintenance sum.

#### *Survey Methodologies*

**10.38** Sport England's publication, *Model Survey Packages* (see endnote 28), gives details of how to undertake a number of different types of survey, including user and household surveys and self-completion or interviewer administered questionnaires. The former should be adequate for most indoor sport and recreation facilities, but the latter will be better for most forms of open space, including outdoor sports facilities. Using self-completion cards for open spaces will run the risk of generating only a low sample or producing significant litter if potential respondents choose to dispose of the survey cards.

### **Published Research**

**10.39** There is a growing body of research which may provide background information relevant to local assessments. For example, the Government's *General Household Survey* (GHS) is a continuous home interview survey carried out each year by the Office for National Statistics. It includes questions relating to adult (ie 16 years and over) participation in sport every three years. In relation to those aged 15 and below, Sport England has published a *National Survey of Young People and Sport in England* (see endnote 29). Linking these survey results to population data provides a very broad brush assessment of the likely level of demand for different forms of sport and recreation.

**10.40** Using these two surveys, Sport England has published two reports which set out information on current levels of participation in various sports and forecast future participation levels. The first, *Trends in Adult Participation in Sport in Great Britain 1987- 1996* (see endnote 30), is based on the GHS. The second, *General Household Survey: Participation in Sport - Past Trends and Future Prospects* (see endnote 31), links the results of the GHS and *National Survey of Young People and Sport in England* to Government population forecasts. It concludes that if future participation rates remain at 1996 levels, the total number of sports participants in England is likely to rise by approximately 300,000 from 1996-2026 as a result of

population growth. On the other hand, if current participation trends continue, the total number of participants will fall by around 900,000.

**10.41** This suggests that, in many areas, the main policy priority should be to enhance and improve existing provision, rather than increase the amount of provision available. This also reflects the growing need to refurbish - or replace - many existing local authority indoor sports and leisure centres dating from the nineteen seventies. The *Ticking Time Bomb* (see endnote 32) provides a summary of the problems facing swimming pools while advice on how to determine whether to refurbish or replace an ageing sports hall or pool is given in *Modernising Community Sports Facilities - sports halls and swimming pools - refurbishment or replacement?* (see endnote 33) and *Pool Refurbishment v Pool Replacement* (see endnote 34).

### Endnotes

**20** DCMS (2000), *A Sporting Future for All*, London: DCMS.

**21** Kit Campbell, Fred Coalter and Brian Hatfield (1998), *The Facilities Planning Model - a planning tool for developing sports facilities*, London: English Sports Council.

**22** Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995.

**23** English Nature (1996), *A Space for Nature, Peterborough*: English Nature.

**24** Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2002), *Green Spaces, Better Places: final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce*, London: DTLR.

**25** CAG Consultants and Land Use Consultants (March 2001), *Quality of Life Capital: Managing environmental, social and economic benefits*, London: Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and Environment Agency.

**26** DETR/MAFF (2000), *Our Countryside: the future (the Rural White Paper)*, London: TSO.

**27** Planning for Real is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, whose website is [www.nifonline.org.uk](http://www.nifonline.org.uk)

**28** Centre for Leisure Research (2002), *Measuring Sports Participation: Model Survey Packages*, London: The Sports Council.

**29** MORI (2001)., *National Survey of Young People and Sport in England*, London: Sport England.

**30** Sport England (1999), *General Household Survey: Trends in Adult Participation in Sport in Great Britain 1987-1996*, London: Sport England.

**31** Sport England (2001), *General Household Survey: Participation in Sport - Past Trends and Future Prospects*, London: Sport England.

**32** Kit Campbell Associates (2001), *The Ticking Time Bomb: the maintenance, upgrading and refurbishment and repair costs of Scotland's public swimming pools*, Edinburgh: sportscotland.

**33** Sport England (2000), *Modernising Community Sports Facilities: Sports halls and swimming pools - refurbishment or replacement?*, London: Sport England.

**34** Kit Campbell Associates (2001), *Pool refurbishment v Pool replacement*, Edinburgh: Sportscotland.

## Annex A - Open Space Typology

**A1** This annex summarises the primary purposes of the different types of open space in the typology suggested by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce and referred to in PPG17. It splits 'open space' into two main sub-sets: greenspace, which is normally vegetated, and civic space, which is predominantly hard-surfaced. The typology is summarised in the diagram following paragraph 2.6.

### Parks and Gardens

#### *Urban Parks And Gardens*

**A2** Very few new urban parks or gardens were created in the UK in the second half of the twentieth century, other than in the new towns. However, parks can be a good use for some contaminated brownfield sites unsuitable for other forms of development. In some areas this could even be funded by an enabling development on a nearby open space in poor condition which is little used by the local community.

**A3** Even if there is little or no realistic prospect of more urban parks and gardens within a particular local authority area, the planning system should not simply protect them from development. Where their accessibility or quality is poor, or the local population is likely to increase, it can seek to enhance their accessibility - for example by promoting new entrance points or better routes to them - or quality. Planning policies should therefore be predominantly supply or opportunity-led, but not ignore opportunities to improve provision.

#### *Country Parks*

**A4** In the latter part of the last century, many local authorities developed country parks close to major towns and cities. Many have since declined in quality following changes to the various grant schemes which supported their creation or operation. While further country parks are probably unlikely in many areas, it will be sensible to promote their enhancement and, where possible, improve their accessibility by public transport or green corridors and rights of way. Policies will therefore be predominantly supply or opportunity-led.

### Natural and Semi-natural Greenspaces

**A5** The Government has set out the need to promote biodiversity through the preparation and implementation Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs). Many of these relate to semi-natural habitats within towns and cities and a number of LBAPs have identified specific action plans for other forms of greenspace. Planning authorities can assist in achieving the aims of these plans by promoting the provision, protection or enhancement of natural and semi-natural greenspace.

**A6** Opportunities for doing this can really be identified only on a site by site basis, through Phase 1 habitat surveys and biodiversity audits. Broadly speaking, planning for new natural

greenspace in established urban areas has to be largely opportunity-led.

### Green Corridors

**A7** The need for green corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas. This means that there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard, just as there is no way of having a standard for the proportion of the land in an area which it will be desirable to allocate for roads. Instead, planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans national cycle network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities. In this sense, green corridors are demand-led. However, planning authorities should also take opportunities to use established linear routes, such as disused railway lines, roads or canal and river banks, as green corridors, and supplement them by proposals to 'plug in' access to them from as wide an area as possible.

### Outdoor Sports Facilities

**A8** The provision of outdoor sports facilities is normally demand-led and therefore it is possible to develop and use a population-based quantity standard, although this may have to be applied flexibly in rural areas to reflect local aspirations. Converting demand into participation, however, depends not only on the existence of an adequate level of provision but also on individual facilities being both accessible and of sufficient quality to persuade people that they are worth using. In turn, this depends on them having the capacity to absorb potentially high levels of use without deterioration and being cost-effective in terms of provision, management and maintenance.

### Amenity Greenspaces

**A9** Most planning authorities require developers to provide amenity greenspaces as part of new housing developments, both to enhance their appearance and provide opportunities for informal activities such as jogging, sunbathing, dog walking, and children's play 'close to home'. The need for amenity greenspaces is not confined to housing areas, however: in town and city centres and employment areas they provide somewhere for workers or visitors to sit and eat sandwiches, go for a jog or take part in a kickabout. Amenity greenspaces can also serve other purposes, such as reducing the noise from a busy road or providing shelter from prevailing winds.

**A10** To some extent, the need for amenity greenspace is a function of population and therefore a population-based quantitative provision standard is appropriate. However, in many conservation areas and other highly valued developments, such as Georgian squares, the amount of amenity greenspace, and its distribution, was an outcome of the design. In particular, such greenspaces were the focus of the design, unlike many modern amenity greenspaces which are either those parts of sites which are unbuildable (for example because they are underlain by major utility services) or SLOAP (Space Left Over After Planning). At the

same time, amenity greenspaces must always be highly accessible and therefore very close to where the people who will use them live or work. This suggests that higher quality local environments will result from the use of an urban design-led approach than from a simple quantitative provision standard.

**A11** An urban design-led approach is also appropriate in the context of urban forestry or the 'greening' of urban spaces. Trees enhance buildings and townscapes every bit as much as landscapes.

### Provision for Children and Young People

**A12** The broad objective of provision for children and young people is to ensure that they have opportunities to interact with their peers and learn social and movement skills within their home environment. At the same time, they must not create nuisance for other residents or appear threatening to passers-by. In most areas there will be a need for a mix of carefully located facilities (such as equipped play areas, ideally with passive supervision from nearby houses and green corridors, or teenage shelters which are slightly 'out of the way') and more natural areas in which children and young people can take part in energetic activities. For planning purposes, these needs can be most easily specified using accessibility and qualitative standards.

**A13** Most authorities have adopted the NPFA's recommendations for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). This approach, however, tends to result in children's play being allocated to the more unbuildable parts of housing sites and often ignores the needs of older children, such as teenagers. It can sometimes place the design of play areas in the hands of manufacturers with a vested interest in selling their products. Other European countries have developed other approaches which use pieces of timber and different surfaces to create exciting and naturalistic play environments, better integrated with their surroundings than areas of safety surfacing surrounded by dog-proof fences and containing a few pieces of brightly coloured equipment. The Government has recently promoted a number of 'home zone' experiments with the aim of making on-street play safer in established housing environments. In new housing developments, it will be better to 'design in' children's play as an integral part of the housing environment, rather than to tuck it away in fairly sanitised play areas. The Children's Play Council and National Children's Bureau have published a useful guide to planning for outdoor play (see endnote 35) which promotes an approach based on identifying the needs, wishes and entitlements of children and young people rather than preconceptions relating to the nature of play spaces.

### Allotments, Community Gardens and Urban Farms

**A14** The need for allotments, community gardens and urban farms is likely to rise with the growth of interest in organic farming and as a result of rising housing densities and the consequential reduction in the size of many gardens. The number of allotments required in any area is a function of demand and therefore it will be appropriate to use a demand-led methodology, based on local authority records. It is obviously desirable for local authorities not

only to provide and rent allotments, but also to keep a waiting list as this helps to identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution. Accordingly there is likely to be a need for a population-based provision standard, coupled with an accessibility standard or distance threshold.

## Churchyards and Cemeteries

### *Churchyards*

**A15** Many historic churchyards provide important places for quiet contemplation, especially in busy urban areas, and often support biodiversity and interesting geological features. As such many can also be viewed as amenity greenspaces. Unfortunately, many are also rundown and therefore it may be desirable to enhance them. As churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard which will be required is a qualitative one.

### *Cemeteries*

**A16** Every individual cemetery has a finite capacity and therefore there is steady need for more of them. Indeed, many areas face a shortage of ground for burials. The need for graves, for all religious faiths, can be calculated from population estimates, coupled with details of the average proportion of deaths which result in a burial, and converted into a quantitative population-based provision standard. However, in order that relatives can visit them, accessibility is also important.

## Civic Spaces

**A17** The purpose of civic spaces, mainly in town and city centres, is to provide a setting for civic buildings, such as town halls, and opportunities for open air markets, demonstrations and civic events. They are normally provided on an opportunistic and urban design-led basis. Accordingly, it is desirable for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their town and city centre areas.

## Endnotes

**35** Children's Play Council and National Children's Bureau (2002), *More than Swings and Roundabouts: Planning for Outdoor Play*, London: Children's Play Council.

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The **scoresheet** and **scoring system** are available below as downloads.

## Annex B - Quality Assessment Examples

### Introduction

**B1** A number of local authorities have developed their own criteria for quality assessments. This annex gives examples taken from:

- A consortium of local authorities
- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

### Grounds Maintenance Quality Assessment

**B2** The City of Lincoln Council, together with the councils in Cambridge, Oxford, Norwich and Welwyn Hatfield, has developed a 'Grounds Maintenance Quality Assessment' covering formal amenity space, informal amenity space, play areas, allotments, cemeteries, nine types of outdoor sports facility, highways verges and areas of land on the housing account. The example below relates to the scoring system for 'formal amenity open space', which many councils would call parks.

#### *Definition*

**B3** Formal Amenity Open Space refers to sites which have a clearly defined boundary, and which are 'gardened' frequently. Usually these are high profile or important sites within a Council's land holding, often accommodating high, or higher than average visitor usage.

#### *Timing of Inspection*

**B4** These can be at any time, but often summer inspections, at the time of the highest usage, will provide a better picture of how well a park copes when under pressure.

### Score sheet

### Scoring System

**B5** For obvious reasons, the higher the score, the better the space. Lincoln and its partner authorities also links their quality assessments to the cost of maintaining specific types of greenspaces and Best Value indicator BV119 to get an overall quality score. For planning purposes it is probably appropriate simply to use the main quality scoring system. The obvious advantages of using this approach are that the councils are undertaking quality assessments regularly for Best Value purposes and they can benchmark the results with each other. As such, the quality audit for planning purposes does not require additional resources - at least in

relation to those greenspaces maintained by the City Council.

**B6** While this example offers a useful starting point, it can clearly be developed to make it more suitable for planning purposes and especially value assessments. There is also no mention of areas of water, children's play equipment, facilities such as putting greens and special features such as aviaries or public art.

### **Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council**

**B7** Basingstoke and Deane has adopted a 'greenspace vision' as the basis for assessing quality as part of its open space audit. It prepared its vision statements at an officer-level 'brainstorming' session and then converted its vision statements into a list of criteria. For example, its vision for amenity greenspaces is:

*Public access greenspaces, with a mixture of mature planted and open areas of short mown grass with indigenous trees and shrubs which occur locally and are suited to the soil type, laid out in accordance with 'Safe by Design' principles; traversed by hard surfaced paths following desire lines and suitable for walking and cycling, with lighting for safety at night; incorporating areas where maintenance is minimal so as to encourage wildlife and biodiversity; with designated and suitably surfaced areas for ball or noisy games.*

**B8** A vision for a sports pitch site might be something like:

*Sites with a pitch or pitches which comply with the appropriate league rules or governing body specifications for the clubs or teams which use them as designated home pitches; capable of sustaining at least two games and one training session per week in a normal winter; with training floodlights and a pavilion in a good state of repair offering, as a minimum, changing and hot showers and dedicated match officials' changing accommodation. In urban areas, pitch sports sites should have a minimum of three pitches in order to ensure that they are reasonably cost-effective.*

**B9** Once a vision like this is in place for each different type of greenspace or sport and recreation facility, and agreed with local communities, it is possible to derive a scoring system which reflects the key features in the vision. The list of criteria should also encompass the secondary benefits noted above.

**B10** A good way of preparing 'vision statements' for each element of the open space typology might be:

- Evaluate a number of housing or other appropriate developments, taking photographs of what are thought to be good and bad elements (but beware of colouring the judgement by matters outwith the scope of the planning system, such as the quality of maintenance of individual open spaces and the presence of litter)
- Arrange a workshop with relevant staff from appropriate departments of the local authority - for example, planners, landscape architects, managers and maintenance supervisors - to pool experience and views and come to an agreed vision

- Use the photographs and evaluation at focus groups in urban and rural areas to define the open space characteristics which are valued and appreciated by local people

### **The Sport England Playing Pitch Planning Methodology**

**B11** The new version of the Sport England Playing Pitch Methodology (see paragraphs 10.12-10.15) will include a quality standard for pitches.

## **Annex C - National Agency Websites**

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

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

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

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

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## **Annex D - Audit Information**

**Annex D** is available below as a download.

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## Annex E - Useful References

### Government Publications

Government publications are available from The Stationery Office unless otherwise noted; many can also be downloaded from the website of the relevant Department

#### Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (now ODPM)

- *Our Towns and Cities: the future* (the Urban White Paper, published 2000)
- *Our Countryside: the future* (The Rural White Paper, published 2000)
- National Planning Policy Guidance notes (various dates)
- *The Effectiveness of Planning Policy Guidance on Sport and Recreation* (published 1998)

#### Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (now ODPM)

- *Green Spaces, Better Places: Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, London:* (published 2002). This report is complemented by six working group reports, published at the same time:
- Working Group 1: *Reviewing Current Information*
- Working Group 2: *Good Practice for Improving Urban Green Spaces*
- Working Group 3: *People and Places*
- Working Group 4: *Improving Planning, Design, Management and Maintenance*
- Working Group 5: *Partnerships for Improving Green Spaces*
- Working Group 6: *Resources*
- National or Regional Planning Policy Guidance notes (various dates)
- *Improving urban parks, play areas and green spaces* (published 2002)
- Public park assessment: a survey of local authority owned parks focusing on parks of historic interest, (DTLR with the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and the Countryside Agency, published 2001)

#### Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

- *PPG17, Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (published 2002)

## Department for Culture, Media and Sport

- *A Sporting Future for All* (published 2000)
- *A Sporting Future for All: The Government's Plan for Sport* (published 2001)
- *The historic environment: A force for our future* (with DTLR, published 2001)

## Scottish Executive

- *Rethinking Open Space - Open Space Provision and Management: A Way Forward, Edinburgh*: Scottish Executive (published 2002 available from The Stationery Office)

## Sport England Publications

### General

- *The Facilities Planning Model: a planning tool for developing sports facilities* (published 1998)
- *Planning Policies for Sport: a land use planning policy statement on behalf of sport* (published 1999)
- *Performance measurement for the development of sport - a good practice guide for local authorities* (published 2001)
- *Good Practice Guide - providing for sport and recreation through new housing development* (published 2001)

### Sport And Recreation Strategies

- *Best Value Through Sport: Planning Across Boundaries* (published 1999)

### Pitches And Playing Fields

- *A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England: policy on planning applications for development on playing fields* (published 1998)
- *Playing Pitch Strategies: A Good Practice Guide* (to be published 2002)

- *Assessing Playing Pitch Requirements at the Local Level* (published 1995, part of Facilities Factfile 2: Planning and Provision for Sport)

### *Sport England Planning Bulletins*

- *Playing Fields for Sport* (Bulletin 1, published May 1997)
- *Strategic Planning for Sport* (Bulletin 2, published May 1998)
- *Intensive-use Sports Facilities* (Bulletin 3, published September 1998)
- *Planning Obligations for Sport* (Bulletin 4, published February 1999)
- *Sport in the Urban Fringe* (Bulletin 5, published June 1999)
- *Land-based Motor Sports* (Bulletin 6, published October 1999)
- *Stadia, Football Academies and Centres of Excellence* (Bulletin 7, published March 2000)
- *Playing Fields for Sport Revisited* (Bulletin 8, published June 2000)
- *Planning for water sports* (Bulletin 9, published February 2001)
- *Sport and Regeneration* (Bulletin 10, published September 2001)
- *Commercial Sports Provision* (Bulletin 11, published January 2002)

All these references are available from the 'Bookshop' section of [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org); some can be downloaded in pdf format

### **English Nature**

- *Planning for Wildlife in Towns and Cities* (published 1994)
- *A Space for Nature* (published 1996)
- *Revealing the Value of Nature* (published 2002)
- *People and Wildlife: Working Together* (published 2002)
- *Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities* (to be published 2002)
- *Quality of Life Capital: managing environmental, social and economic benefits* (published 2001 in conjunction with Countryside Agency, English Heritage and Environment Agency)

Available from English Nature Publications, PO Box 1995, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23

7XX, or at [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

## English Heritage

- *Power of Place - The Future of the Historic Environment* (published December 2000)
- *Enabling development and the conservation of historic assets* (published June 2001)
- *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* (continually updated)
- *Consultation Management Plans for Restoring Historic Parks and Gardens* (published 2001)
- *A Campaign for London Squares* (published May 2000)
- *Paradise Preserved: An introduction to the assessment, evaluation, conservation and management of historic cemeteries* (with English Nature, published 2002)
- *A Sporting Chance. Extra time for England's historic sports venues - Manchester pilot study* (published 2002)

Available from English Heritage Customer Services, PO Box 569, Swindon SN2 2YR and at [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

## Children's Play Council

- *More than just swings and roundabouts: planning for children's play* (published 2002)

Available from National Children's Bureau Enterprises Ltd, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

## Local Government Association

- *The Value of Parks and Open Spaces: social inclusion and community regeneration* (published 2001)

Available from IDeA Publications Sales, Layden House, 76-78 Turnmill Street, London EC1M 5LG

## House of Commons

- Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee (27 October 1999), *Town and*

*Country Parks: the best and ...* (Twentieth Report of Session 1998-99)

- Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee (20 February 2002), *Public Spaces: The Role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance* (Third Report of Session 2001-02)

Available from the Stationery Office Ltd or at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

### Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)

- By Design - Urban design in the planning system: towards better practice (published 2002)

Available from Thomas Telford Publishing, 1 Heron Quay, London E14 4JD or at [www.t-telford.co.uk](http://www.t-telford.co.uk)

Greater London Authority

- *Nature Areas for City People* (published by London Ecology Unit 1990)
- *GLA Open Space Strategy Guide* (published 2002)
- *Scrutiny of Green Spaces in London* (published November 2001)
- *Assessing Demand for Open Space in London* (published 2000)

Available from the Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queens Walk, London SE1 2AA or [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

### Others

- *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal*, Comedia in association with Demos, (published 1995). Available from Comedia, The Round, Bournes Green, Stroud, Glos, GL6 7NL
- *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, Jan Woudstra and Ken Fieldhouse, London, E&FN Spon
- *Home Zone Design Guidelines*, Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers (2002), Essex: HQ Design and Print
- *The Six Acre Standard: Minimum Standards for Outdoor Playing Space*, National Playing Fields Association (2001), London: the Association



