

Planning Policy Wales

Technical Advice Note

16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



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This document is one of a series of Technical Advice Notes (Wales) (TANs) which supplement "Planning Policy Wales".

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1. Introduction

Purpose and Scope of Guidance

1.1 This Technical Advice Note (TAN) should be read in conjunction with 'Planning Policy Wales' (PPW) 2002, which sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Assembly Government (the Assembly Government). PPW, Minerals Planning Policy Wales, Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statements (MIPPS), TANs and circulars together comprise national planning policy. Local planning authorities in Wales should have regard to national planning policy in the preparation of development plans. It may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by the Assembly Government and Planning Inspectors in the determination of appeals and called-in planning applications. This TAN provides technical guidance to supplement policy set out in PPW. It advises on the role of the planning system in making provision for sport and recreational facilities and informal open spaces, as well as protecting existing facilities and open spaces in urban and rural areas in Wales.

1.2. Documents listed in the margin provide information which should be read in conjunction with the TAN.

National Policy Context

1.3 **'One Wales - A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales'** (June 2007), sets out the Assembly Government's overarching strategy for its actions to introduce change in Wales. It recognises that most people do not take enough physical activity to gain health benefits. It accepts that physical activity is beneficial to health, and provides for the creation of an all-Wales coastal path, encourages sport, physical activity (particularly cycling and walking) and the enjoyment of the natural environment. It promotes the retention of school playing fields to develop opportunities for schools and colleges to work with local sports clubs to invest in sports coaching. The Assembly Government also seeks to foster a sense of 'public ownership' in relation to the countryside, urban green spaces and the coastline, recognising that many socially excluded groups do not currently enjoy available social, cultural and health benefits.

'One Wales - A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales' Welsh Assembly Government (June 2007)

'The Five Year Implementation Plan on Food and Fitness, Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Young People in Wales' Welsh Assembly Government (2006)

1.4 'People, Places, Futures - The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update' (July 2008) sets out Assembly Government policies and priorities in a spatial context, including creating sustainable communities and sustainable accessibility. It recognises that the quality of the environment is fundamental, sets out actions for the protection or enhancement of urban and rural areas and provides the context and direction of travel for Local Development Plans (LDPs) produced by local planning authorities.

'People, Places, Futures - The Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update' Welsh Assembly Government (July 2008)

1.5 The Update brings the Wales Spatial Plan of 2004 into line with 'One Wales' and gives status to the Area work which has been undertaken since the plan was originally prepared. It recognises that our environment is fundamental to our quality of life and that its protection and regeneration is essential for health and well-being and for economic opportunities. The Update recognises that climate change must be addressed if we are to avoid consequences, and that doing so provides the opportunity to rethink the way we live and work, by encouraging more walking and cycling as part of daily life, providing safe and clean open spaces with more opportunities to enjoy wildlife, and improving the way we manage air quality, waste, soils and water.

1.6 'Climbing Higher : The Welsh Assembly Government Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity' (January 2005) sets out the long-term strategy for sport and physical activity in Wales for the next twenty years. Sport is defined by the Council of Europe as "physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aims at expressing or improving physical fitness and well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels". Active Recreation is defined as "physical activity carried out in leisure time, including activities such as dancing, aerobics or brisk walking".

'Climbing Higher: The Welsh Assembly Government Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity' (January 2005)

The purpose of the strategy is to achieve

- An active, healthy and inclusive Wales, where sport, physical activity and active recreation provide a common platform for participation, fun and achievement, which binds communities and the nation and where the outstanding environment of Wales is used sustainably to enhance confidence in ourselves and our place in the world.

1.7 'Climbing Higher' has spatial land use planning implications at national and local levels. It includes targets, in particular that by 2025:

- The percentage of people in Wales using the Welsh natural environment for outdoor activities will increase from 36% to 60%
- 95% of people in Wales will have a footpath or cycle path within a 10 minute walk
- No-one should live more than a 6 minute walk (300metres) from their nearest natural green space
- All public sector employees and 75% of all other employees will have access to sport and physical activity facilities at, or within 10 minutes walk of the workplace.

1.8 By encouraging healthier lifestyles, the Assembly Government hopes to improve the health and well-being of people in Wales, including older people, those with disabilities, children and young people. It aims to address health inequalities by encouraging everyone to adopt healthier lifestyles and ensuring access to local services, including the encouragement of cycling and walking.

1.9 Young people's recreational needs are a priority, improving levels of physical activity and access to facilities in and outside schools. The Assembly Government recognises the critical importance of play for the development of children's physical, social, mental, emotional and creative skills. Its '**Play Policy**' (October 2002) together with the '**Play Policy Implementation Plan**' (February 2006), aims to help create an environment which fosters children's play and underpins a national strategy to provide for their play needs. The Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that all children have access to rich, stimulating environments in which to play freely. It recognises that play is integral to the health and well-being of children and young people, founded on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also recognises that providing opportunities for physical activity can help address wider health and well-being issues, particularly obesity, and that the closer a play area is to home, the more likely it is to be used by children.

'Play Policy' Welsh Assembly Government (October 2002)

'Play in Wales: Play Policy Implementation Plan' Welsh Assembly Government (February 2006)

1.10 The Assembly Government's Child Poverty Strategy '**A Fair Future for our Children**' (2005) sets out proposals, cross cutting targets and milestones to monitor progress to eradicating child poverty in Wales by 2020. Early actions include those to provide summer holiday activities and play opportunities.

'A Fair Future for Our Children'
Welsh Assembly Government
(2005)

1.11 The natural and built environments of Wales are a valuable resource for sport and recreational activities and need to be managed in an effective way to ensure that they can be used sustainably, particularly in the light of targets set out in 'Climbing Higher'.

1.12 National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty cover 25% of Wales's land area. With Country Parks they offer particularly important opportunities for open air recreation. The Assembly Government considers that National Parks should continue to support a wide range of opportunities and, in so doing, maximise their ability to deliver the Assembly Government's social inclusion objectives. Where there are conflicts between conservation and the promotion of public enjoyment, National Park Authorities have a duty to give priority to the conservation of their areas.

'Policy Statement for the National
Parks and National
Park Authorities in Wales'
Welsh Assembly Government
(March 2007)

1.13 The Assembly Government has a duty to promote sustainable development, which recognises the interdependence of environmental, social and economic systems. Its long term strategy to protect and enhance the environment is set out in the '**Environment Strategy for Wales**' (2006). The Strategy states that every community should have a high quality, well planned and maintained built environment which provides access to green spaces and areas for recreation, and supports biodiversity. It recognises that poor quality environments with poorly maintained buildings, public spaces and lack of parks and green spaces can have a detrimental effect on our quality of life, and on our health and well-being. It also recognises that local environmental quality is often poorer in our more deprived areas. The '**First Action Plan**' sets out the actions needed to deliver early outcomes. The '**Second Action Plan**' (2008), a more strategic document focusing on selected themes, provides the basis for action to 2011.

'Environment Strategy for Wales'
Welsh Assembly Government (May
2006)

'Environment Strategy First Action
Plan' Welsh Assembly Government
(2007)

'Environment Strategy Second
Action Plan' Welsh Assembly
Government (2008)

1.14 The Strategy focuses on improving the built and natural environment, including encouraging the provision and retention of green spaces in urban areas.

1.15 The Strategy envisages an increased number of people walking and cycling, and using the natural environment for physical activity and enjoyment. It focuses on improved walkability in urban areas and improved access to the countryside and coast. It recognises that, in sensitive areas, the volume of people and means of transport may need to be managed to ensure that people's enjoyment and the quality of the areas is not degraded. In promoting walking and cycling, the Strategy embodies the principles of the Assembly Government's 'Walking and Cycling Strategy' (2003) which sought to increase levels of both through the provision of facilities, and their promotion and reflection in policies and guidance, including in LDPs.

1.16 This TAN aims to further integrate the links between health and well-being, sport and recreational activity and sustainable development in Wales through the development of land use planning guidance in accordance with policies set out in PPW. Throughout the TAN, references to recreation should be taken to include children's play.

'Moving Up a Gear: A Cycle Tourism Strategy for Wales' Welsh Assembly Government/Visit Wales (2003 under review 2008)

'Walking and Cycling Action Strategy for Wales' Welsh Assembly Government (2003)

'Planning Policy Wales' Welsh Assembly Government (2002)

2.0 Open Space Assessment

2.1 PPW requires local planning authorities to provide a framework for well-located sport, recreation and leisure facilities which should be sensitive to the needs of users, attractive, well designed, well maintained, safe and accessible to all. PPW also refers to the need for the planning system to ensure that adequate land and water resources are allocated for formal and informal sport and recreation.

2.2 The objectives set out in PPW can best be achieved by undertaking local assessments of need and audits of existing provision. These assessments, taken together, form an Open Space Assessment which, among other things, should be used to inform the preparation, monitoring and review of LDP policies. Information from such assessments may also be useful for the preparation of corporate Open Space Strategies and Community Strategies in which broader environmental, social and health issues can be addressed.

2.3 Research undertaken for the Assembly Government has considered the role of Open Space Assessments in planning, and how they could be undertaken to provide consistent information to enable community needs for sport, recreation and open space to be addressed.

2.4 The Open Space Assessment and LDP policies should provide the basis of an Open Space Strategy, prepared in conjunction with other sections of each local authority, and with stakeholders like community and town councils being involved from the outset. National Park Authorities in Wales will need to co-operate with local authorities, community and town councils and other stakeholders in their areas when such assessments are prepared.

2.5 The Open Space Assessment should address all forms of open space provision (see typology in Annex B). 'Open space' is defined in Annex A as all open space of public value, including land, and water areas like rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs and disused dock basins which offer opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism.

2.6 In order to encourage walking, cycling and horse riding and other low carbon modes of travel which can help tackle climate change, particular attention should be given to opportunities to use disused railway and canal towpaths to

'Research on Public Open Space Audits' Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners for Welsh Assembly Government (November 2007)

provide local and long distance routes and to enhance and extend linear open space corridors, including circular routes which can help reduce the use of roads. Opportunities for combining and maximising recreation and tourism benefits should also be investigated, for example in relation to inland waterways which can provide level, accessible links within and between urban and rural areas. Sensitive design should contribute to the creation of routes which are attractive and safe and which encourage users.

Setting Local Standards

2.7 PPW does not prescribe particular standards of provision. Instead, these should be based on the results of the Open Space Assessment process. A well conceived strategy will seek to improve the match between current levels of provision and existing and likely future patterns of demand. It should allow local planning authorities to develop evidence based policies and standards that reflect local social, economic, demographic and geographical characteristics. Locally generated standards should be based on robust evidence derived from the Open Space Assessment, and should include:

- Quantitative elements (whether new provision is needed for the area)
- Qualitative component (against which to measure need, including for enhancement of existing facilities)
- An accessibility component (how is the provision effectively accessible to the local community)

2.8 There are likely to be different patterns of recreational provision and demand in urban and rural areas, including areas which are attractive to tourists and experience significant seasonal variations in population. Undertaking local assessments and developing locally distinctive strategies means that policies can be developed which are relevant in differing contexts, and are better able to address issues related to local climate change.

2.9 Fields in Trust (FIT), formerly the National Playing Fields Association, has prepared 'Benchmark Standards' for outdoor sport and play to replace the "Six Acre Standard". These should be helpful for authorities formulating local standards of provision, and for others with an interest in the provision and protection of spaces for sport, recreation and play.

'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play'. National Playing Fields Association/Fields in Trust (2008)

2.10 The new 'Benchmark Standards' recommend that, overall there should be 1.2 ha of land for playing pitches per 1,000 population, with variations between recommendations for urban and rural areas. It also recommends that there should be 1.6 ha of land for all outdoor sports per 1,000 population, also with urban and rural differences. The 'Benchmark Standards' recognise that facilities should meet technical and accessibility criteria which reflect the quality and usefulness of particular spaces.

2.11 The FIT 'Benchmark Standards' recognise that local authorities may wish to set their own standards using other assessment tools, but recommend provision for children's outdoor playing space of 0.25ha per 1,000 population for 'Designated Equipped Playing Space', 0.55ha for 'Informal Playing Space' and 0.80ha for 'Children's Playing Space'. The 'Benchmark Standards' also provide guidance on appropriate levels of accessibility with 'local areas' for play or informal recreation within 100metres of homes, 'locally equipped or landscaped areas' within 400metres, and 'neighbourhood equipped areas' providing for the needs of children and young people within 1,000metres. A summary of the 'Benchmark Standards' is included in Annex C.

2.12 CABE Space (part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) provides advice and guidance on urban green spaces in England. Its research and advice is also relevant to Wales. CABE has prepared a toolkit to enable the quality of public space to be assessed in terms of access, use, maintenance, design and appearance, and other factors. The Green Flag Award Scheme was launched in Wales in 2002 to celebrate the best spaces having reached a nationally accepted standard of excellence, and about half of local authorities now have award winning green spaces in their areas. CABE has also undertaken work to investigate the links between physical activity and the environment, and a framework for categorising types of sport, recreational and green spaces.

2.13 The Design Commission for Wales (DCfW) also provides advice about various schemes in which open space and recreation may be elements. The Commission is particularly concerned to champion high standards of design, which encourage social inclusion and sustainable development.

'Green Space Strategies:
a Good Practice Guide'
CABE Space (May 2004)

'Physical Activity and
the Built Environment'
CABE (2006)

Sources of Baseline Information

2.14 The Sports Council for Wales (SCW) provides advice on all aspects of planning for sport and recreation including those considered in LDPs, and is a statutory consultee which must be consulted about planning applications affecting playing fields, currently where a playing pitch of at least 0.4 hectares is included. In due course this threshold is to be reduced to sites including a playing pitch of 0.2 hectares.

2.15 Local planning authorities may also find it helpful to notify SCW about other applications affecting the provision or loss of sport and recreational spaces and major sport and recreation facilities, and those for substantial residential developments. SCW can then decide whether it wants more information about particular planning applications on which to advise or comment.

2.16 SCW provides information and advice about the changing patterns of participation and facilities needed for sport and recreation for local planning authorities, other organisations and individuals. It publishes analyses of the supply of, and the demand for, facilities and can advise on standards to evaluate levels of local provision, usually as part of the development plan process. The extent to which a standard is acceptable in an area is ultimately a matter for the local planning authority, having regard to local circumstances.

2.17 The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is the Assembly Government's statutory adviser on outdoor recreation, and provides technical advice on nature and landscape conservation, and planning policies for recreation facilities. It also undertakes research on participation, education and health in relation to outdoor recreation, and urban and rural green spaces.

2.18 Recognising that accessible, natural green spaces make an important contribution to the quality of the environment and of life in urban areas, CCW has developed a toolkit to help ensure everyone in Wales has access to natural greenspace. CCW recommends that provision should be made for at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 population, that no one should live more than 300metres from their nearest natural greenspace, that there should be at least one 20ha site within 2km of home, that there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km, and that there should be one 500ha site within 10km. Local planning authorities may wish to use and adapt these provisions to address their own needs and circumstances.

'Keeping Up With Demand: An analysis of Facility Provision in Wales' Sports Update No 48 Sports Council for Wales (March 2002)

'Framework for the Development of Sport and Physical Activity. From Strategy to Action' Sports Council for Wales (April 2006)

'Providing Accessible natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities: A Practical Guide to Assessing the Resource and Implementing Local Standards of Provision in Wales' Countryside Council for Wales (2006)

2.19 The toolkit is intended to help authorities identify, provide for, and improve natural green areas for their communities, possibly linked to the preparation of Open Space Assessments. It should also provide baseline information to enable progress made in meeting Assembly Government targets for proximity to open and green space to be monitored. Some authorities have already undertaken, or propose to undertake, assessments using the CCW Toolkit. By 2010 it is expected that many more authorities will have undertaken, or be carrying out such Assessments.

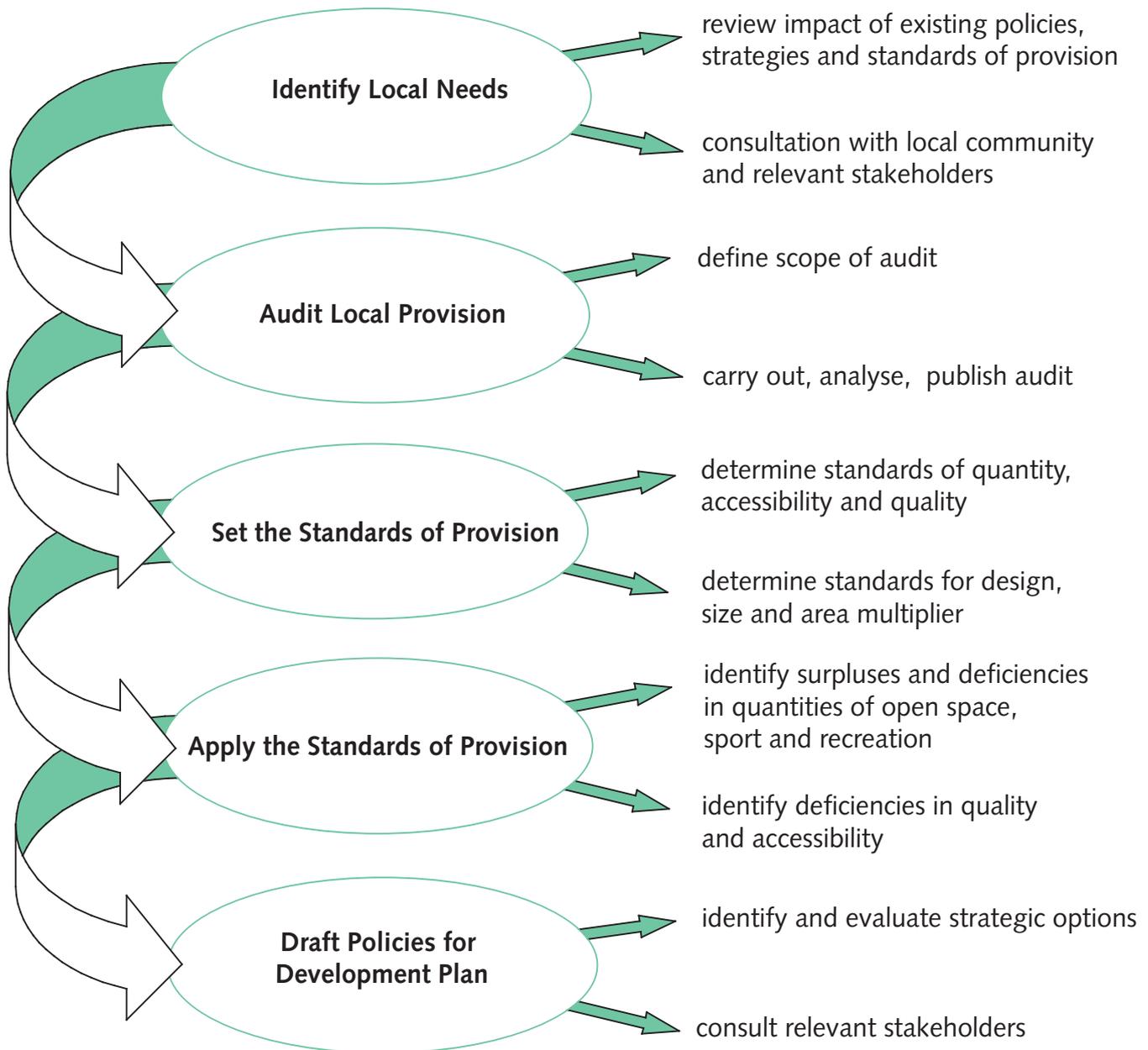
2.20 The preparation of LDPs, supplementary planning guidance and development briefs offers opportunities to address issues related to open space provision and use.

2.21 Local planning authorities should also bear in mind the need to obtain advice and information from town and community councils in their areas and from the Environment Agency, which has statutory duties including fisheries, conservation, recreation, navigation, water resources and flood risk. British Waterways and the relevant port authorities should also be consulted as appropriate in the plan preparation and decision making process.

2.22 Tourists can contribute to the use of sport and recreation facilities, and to the use of footpaths and cycleways. General information about tourist visits can be obtained from the United Kingdom Tourism Survey prepared by the Office of National Statistics and from Visit Wales.

Key Preparation Stages

2.23 Open Space Assessments should be based upon the following key stages:



2.24 Assessments offer the opportunity to identify the quantity and quality of open spaces in an area, and are a basis for providing, improving and managing spaces for the economic, social and environmental benefits they bring to communities. The precise format for undertaking a survey will vary, but should include each of the above key stages.

2.25 Undertaking assessments will require collaboration between all relevant authority departments, external bodies in the private and voluntary sectors, users and local communities, particularly town and community councils, so that the needs of residents and of visitors to the area can be taken into account. When completed, such assessments should result in better planning, and corporate policies which facilitate sound decision making as part of the plan making and development management process, making it easier to negotiate planning obligations, and provide evidence for use in planning appeals.

2.26 Assessments will normally be prepared by, or on behalf of, a local planning authority. Where they have not been undertaken, surveys prepared on behalf of a planning applicant may be a useful input to the planning process, provided they are consistent with the methodology set out above and policy objectives in PPW.

2.27 Some local planning authorities will wish to use the FIT 'Benchmark Standard' as the basis of their LDP policies, unless they choose to develop standards which they consider more closely reflect local circumstances.

2.28 LDPs should draw on a broad range of approaches in which an appropriate level of open space provision can be identified to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

2.29 Local planning authorities should ensure that an Open Space Assessment has been completed as an important part of the LDP preparation process. However, they should not delay work on the preparation of the LDP where an Assessment is not available. Instead, they should make use of information which is to hand, and in which they have confidence.

2.30 LDP policies should have clear outputs, identifying how sport and recreation facilities and the open space network will adapt to changing circumstances and priorities, including those related to climate change.

'Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' The Department for Communities and Local Government (July 2002)

'Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17', Department for Communities and Local Government (September 2002)

'National Planning Policy Guideline 11: Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space', Scottish Executive (June 1996)

'Rethinking Open space - Open Space Provision and Management: A Way Forward' Scottish Executive (2002)

3. Development Plans

Local Development Plans

3.1 Clear, effective and well implemented planning policies for sport, recreation and open space should give developers and the public certainty about the type of development that will be permitted at a given location. Policies should be founded on robust evidence derived from the Open Space Assessment.

3.2 The LDP should set out the strategic vision for the authority with regard to providing, protecting and enhancing facilities for sport, physical activity, open space and recreation, and provide clear area-based or criteria-based policies. Plans should consider the scale and distribution of facilities and activities when allocating sites for open space and recreational use. Particular regard should be given to the needs of communities, which have poor provision of open space and recreation facilities, and to those of socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

3.3 The preparation of an Open Space Assessment should provide a positive basis for establishing the necessary strategic vision. The LDP should also form strong links between other relevant plans and strategies such as the Community Strategy, Health, Social Care and Well - Being Strategy and Local Biodiversity Action Plans and, where appropriate, Community First Action Plans and National Park Management Plans.

3.4 PPW identifies the issues that should be addressed in the development plan. These include guidance on the following general categories.

Protecting and Enhancing Existing Sport and Recreation Facilities and Open Spaces

3.5 Outdoor facilities like playing fields, recreation grounds, play areas, footpaths and cycle routes and woodland can provide significant health, and environmental benefits for the community. In places, the loss of outdoor facilities and their replacement by indoor provision, the provision of facilities with secure access and admission charges and centralised, instead of localised provision, can have a significant effect on their role in meeting recreational and amenity needs, particularly those of young people. By undertaking an Open Space Assessment local planning authorities should be in a position to identify areas of

'Woodlands for Wales: The National Assembly for Wales Strategy for trees and woodlands' National Assembly for Wales (2001)

recreational and open space value that require protection. Appropriate policies to this end should be set out in the LDP. FIT, the Open Spaces Society and others can advise on means of protection other than those provided by the planning process. Changing demographic characteristics and patterns of recreation may mean that some facilities no longer meet requirements, and alternative forms of provision for open space and facilities may be more appropriate.

3.6 The use of open spaces and facilities may be affected by factors such as landform and landscape features, their relationship to adjoining land uses, means of access such as footpaths, cyclepaths and roads, the mix of users, levels of security, vandalism, unsupervised dogs, maintenance standards, the provision of warden or ranger services, and proximity to home, particularly for younger children. The poor condition of recreational facilities, playing fields and open spaces may be a constraint on their use, particularly in relation to the quality of facilities, surfaces and drainage. In such circumstances it may be more appropriate to prioritise improvements rather than to seek additional provision.

3.7 Playing fields and green open spaces have special significance for their recreational and amenity value and, particularly in towns and cities, for their contribution to the urban environment and for supporting biodiversity. Playing fields and green spaces add interest and vitality to living and working environments. As a means of responding to climate change, they can help maintain reasonable local temperatures, improve local air quality in urban areas, and may be useful in reducing surface water run off. Tree planting may offer shade while areas, particularly those linked by pathways, can contribute to biodiversity, particularly where sensitive management practices are used. In addition to their environmental role they can also offer health and well-being benefits, and opportunities for community engagement. When not required for their original purpose, they may be used to help meet the need for informal recreational or amenity land in the wider community. Only where it can be clearly shown that there is no deficiency, should the possibility of their use for alternative development be considered. Playing field loss will need to be justified in relation to policies in the LDP, PPW and, where available, be consistent with the findings of the Open Space Assessment.

3.8 Sometimes, the retention and enhancement of facilities may best be achieved through the redevelopment or rehabilitation of a small part of a site, particularly where this would be related to playing field use, for example the

'Building Health:Blueprint for action'
National Heart Forum (2007)

'Planning for Climate Change'
Consultation Document.
Welsh Assembly Government
(2006)

'Public Space Lessons: Adapting
Public Space to Climate Change'
CABE (2008)

provision of changing facilities, which would not adversely affect the quantity or quality of remaining pitches, or their use. Some forms of development, for example housing, may affect the use of remaining playing areas, and the possible benefits offered by such development should be weighed against the possible effects on open space, which may occur.

3.9 In some circumstances better, or at least equivalent, alternative provision can be made available. This means that the replacement land or facilities should be equivalent to, or better than, that taken in terms of its capacity to provide for the area's needs. It will usually, but not necessarily, relate to its size, characteristics, location and accessibility. Such provision should be made available for use as soon as possible, if necessary linked to a planning agreement and to any planning permission which may be granted for the development or use of the playing field to be lost. Consideration should be given to the proximity and nature of any replacement site or facilities to the communities affected, particularly where these are deprived or disadvantaged, to their accessibility to the community as a whole, and to disabled people.

3.10 Whether there is an excess of playing field provision in an area is essentially a matter for each local authority to decide, based on evidence. Each authority should have up to date, accurate information about open space, sport and recreational facilities consistent, where available, with the Open Space Assessment, to enable it to make and justify decisions. Where such information is not available, any potential developer will be expected to provide information to demonstrate that land or buildings are surplus to requirements. Local communities will also be important sources of information about existing and proposed spaces and facilities.

3.11 Redevelopment may include alternative forms of provision, such as all-weather pitches or other recreation-linked uses such as natural wildlife areas or community woodland schemes. Whilst resulting in fewer grass pitches, all-weather pitches are able to provide a substantive improvement in terms of playable hours and usability as part of a co-ordinated playing field strategy. This will, however, need to be balanced against the need to retain an adequate supply of natural turf pitches for team sports, the amenity importance of particular playing fields, and their importance as places where children can play and which can be used for informal recreation by the community.

3.12 Open space, particularly that with a significant amenity, nature conservation or recreational value should be protected. Local planning authorities should identify these areas in the development plan and establish criteria against which sites should be assessed if development pressures arise. It is important that urban vacant and underused land is not unnecessarily protected from development where the land is not of significant amenity, nature conservation or recreational value, as it may potentially relieve development pressures in more sustainable locations.

Planning New Open Space and Recreation Facilities

3.13 Standards for new open space and recreational provision should be based on robust evidence drawn, where available, from the Open Space Assessment. The aim should be that everyone has easy local access, by means other than the car, to formal and informal recreational facilities and open space. This can include linear green spaces or waterways, which connect into a wider open space network. In considering provision, local planning authorities should be mindful of the needs of disabled people and of people in deprived communities, and the more limited ability of people in disadvantaged groups to travel far from their local areas.

3.14 When setting out policies that include standards for the provision of new recreation and open space facilities, it will be desirable to set out the minimum acceptable size of particular forms of provision. Advice on the provision and design of sports facilities can be obtained from the SCW. Those responsible for the management and maintenance of facilities are likely to have a key role in determining the appropriate local form of provision.

3.15 Local planning authorities should ensure that new development, including that in commercial and industrial areas, makes adequate provision to meet the recreational needs arising, and opportunities for walking and cycling. This should mean better planned, more attractive developments, which relate to the policies and priorities of the LDP. Rather than applying blanket standards of open space and recreational provision to all new developments, consideration should be given to how the new development relates to the priorities established in the LDP. This may require a contribution to enhancing off-site facilities, paths and towpaths or spaces, for example where the development concerned gives rise to an additional need, rather than direct on-site provision.

3.16 For major new residential and mixed-use allocations, the LDP should set out clear guidance on the scale and form of provision sought, possibly amplified in supplementary planning guidance or in development briefs. These will need to reflect priorities from the Open Space Assessment where available.

3.17 In urban fringe areas, particularly where there is insufficient land in urban areas, there may be opportunities to provide sport and recreation facilities in ways which do not conflict with other policies to protect the environment and amenity of communities.

3.18 In rural areas, facilities should be located in or adjacent to settlements. Any proposed developments in the open countryside would require special justification. Appropriate proposals linked to farm diversification may be given favourable consideration.

3.19 The provision of open spaces, places and facilities for sport, recreation and play should be important considerations in proposals for regeneration. The Tidy Towns scheme provides funding to enable local authorities to run a wide range of projects to improve the local environment, including creating new wildlife habitats, community gardens or arts projects to bring neglected land back into community use. More generally, consideration should be given to the redevelopment of previously developed land and to the multiple use of open spaces and facilities, particularly school facilities, which may have the potential to become community, local sports club and team focal points for enhanced provision. Schools are encouraged to open their playing fields and premises for community use, particularly where there is limited provision of playing fields and open space.

Major Sport and Recreation Facilities

3.20 Wherever possible, major sport and recreation facilities like rugby, football, and athletics stadia should be located in, or adjacent to town centres, on sites which can contribute to town centre vitality and viability and are accessible by a range of transport modes. Where suitable sites in such areas are not available, consideration should be given to edge of centre sites, particularly those with good access to public transport, and preferably on previously developed land. Wherever such developments are located, consideration should be given to access arrangements and

NAFW Circular 34/2003
'Community Focused Schools'

to the safety and amenity of residents, users and the public at large. Wherever possible, walking should be the primary means of access to such facilities, followed by cycling and the use of public transport, with private transport the least favoured option.

Provision for Children and Young People

3.21 It is vital that children and young people, including those who are disabled, can access areas for casual and more formal organised uses, which provide safe, secure opportunities to socialise and play. While formal, equipped play areas provide opportunities, particularly for young children within communities, these are not the only forms of provision which should be offered. Wheeled play areas, ball game areas, 'playable spaces', community woodland and informal areas for 'environmental play' can provide opportunities for children to interact and gain the social, health and well-being benefits which come from opportunities for active, physical play.

3.22 The integration of play areas into the built and natural environment, avoiding the creation of artificial boundaries, can help provide safe and accessible areas for play and socialising - usually linked to housing. The design of new streets, and traffic management of existing streets can help create safer spaces for play in residential areas. Providing well lit, overlooked spaces, can promote the more effective, safer use of streets, with reduced speed limits. Ideally, they should be community led, with full and effective involvement of children, families and older people in their design. Although not usually traffic free, and with parked cars, streets can provide for a range of play and recreation activities. The type and range of spaces, surfaces, and equipment provided will vary to reflect, for example, the character of the street, community preferences and resources.

3.23 Involving children and young people in planning provision is essential, particularly in providing advice about the location and design of formal and informal play areas for new housing developments. Local planning authorities should seek to involve them from the outset, when preparing development plans, design briefs, supplementary planning guidance, and local play strategies. Play Wales provides advice, guidance and support on play environments for children and young people, and local planning authorities will find it useful to consult the organisation when considering how best to meet the play needs of these groups.

'Play Policy' Welsh Assembly Government (2002)

'Play in Wales: Play Policy Implementation Plan' (February 2006)

'A Better Place to Play' Environment Agency (2005)

'Developing Accessible Play Space - A good practice guide' ODPM (now DCLG) (2003)

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

'Manual for Streets' Departments for Transport and for Communities and Local Government (June 2007)

Off-road Recreational Vehicles

3.24 The unregulated use of off-road vehicles for recreational purposes in Wales is increasing, and sometimes takes place in urban open spaces, green lanes, footpaths and in the countryside. Where there is no dedicated land or facilities, and where there may be conflict with other users such activities may cause harm to the amenity of residents, and affect landscape, and environmental features. Such uses in remoter rural areas can give rise to particular enforcement problems. There is little provision of facilities beyond those used for occasional events associated with the temporary use of land for motor car and motor cycle racing for 14 days a year (except in Sites of Special Scientific Interest) permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. It is for local planning authorities to consider whether it would be appropriate to use Article 4 Direction powers to withdraw permitted development rights and bring such uses under planning control.

3.25 Local planning authorities should have regard to existing activities and likely demand, and the merits of preparing policies to facilitate regulated practice and racing when preparing their Open Space Assessments and LDPs. They may find it helpful to co-operate with neighbouring authorities as appropriate when considering provision of some types of facilities, to avoid cross border issues such as over-use and nuisance.

3.26 There are different types of off-road activities, with particular requirements raising different planning issues. When considering potential sites, care should be taken to avoid sites likely to have an unacceptable impact and, where sites are selected, to seek to mitigate effects, by ensuring that motor vehicles are segregated from other users; that adequate access and parking arrangements can be provided for participants and spectators, including those who are disabled, and for emergency vehicles; that sites and buildings can be screened and located to minimise visual impact and noise generated; that existing landscape features can be incorporated; that hours of operation are controlled to minimise the impact of the activity on the surrounding area; that sites are away from residential areas, preferably on suitable previously developed land, and that sites with historic, scientific, nature conservation, landscape or agricultural importance are avoided.

'Regulating the use of motor vehicles on public rights of way and off road - A Guide for Local Authorities, Police and Community Safety Partnerships' DEFRA and Welsh Assembly Government (December 2005)

'Off Road or Off Limits: Recreation Driving in the National Parks' Council for National Parks (2005)

Allotments

3.27 Allotments are important green spaces in urban and rural areas, and their cultivation can contribute to sustainability, provide opportunities for leisure, exercise and healthy food, improve biodiversity and encourage interaction between different groups in the community. In accordance with the provisions of the Smallholdings and Allotments Act 1908, local authorities and town and community councils are under an obligation to provide sufficient plots for residents where they believe there is a demand for allotments. Authorities should ensure that statutory allotments within their areas are properly protected, promoted and managed and are sufficient to meet the demands of local residents wishing to cultivate them. In particular, all such sites should include a suitable element of wildlife habitat. The importance of combined allotment/compost/wildlife sites is likely to increase, particularly where the density of residential development rises. Policies in the LDP should address the need to provide and protect allotment/compost/wildlife sites where a shortfall has been identified, and to improve the accessibility of such sites for all users. It may be appropriate to use Section 106 Agreements to provide allotments in combination with composting and natural green spaces.

3.28 Where it is proposed to develop land used as statutory allotments for other purposes, the local authority should seek to mitigate loss with a requirement to provide new, alternative allotment/compost/wildlife sites. Statutory allotments, provided by local authorities, receive protection under the Allotments Act 1925. There may be fewer safeguards for privately owned or temporary allotment sites occupied in accordance with agreements between the landowner and allotment holder. The consent of the Welsh Ministers is required under Section 8 of the Act before statutory allotments can be used for other purposes. In considering an application for such consent, the Welsh Ministers cannot take into account the merits of the development proposed, being concerned essentially with the question of whether demand for allotments in the area could still be met were the allotments concerned to be no longer available.

Water Based Recreation

3.29 Wales is well resourced with opportunities for coastal and inland water based recreation. Water related recreation can contribute to the physical and mental health and well-being of participants, contribute to the rural and urban economy and to environmental management.

3.30 The Assembly Government's Coastal Tourism Strategy (2007), is intended to provide a framework for the development of coastal tourism, while respecting environmental quality and achieving community benefits. It seeks to take forward recommendations for water sport development to maximise benefits from the proposed All - Wales Coastal Path, and to identify possible locations for marinas for further investigation.

3.31 The Environment Agency Wales has headed research to prepare 'A Better Place to Play in Wales', Wales' Strategy for Water Related Recreation (May 2008), to develop awareness of, and facilities for water based sport and recreation in an environmentally sensitive way. Inland waterways offer a range of recreation and other opportunities to stimulate economic activity and contribute to the range of sustainable development and conservation opportunities. The recreational potential offered should be considered as part of the Open Space Assessment and be reflected in LDP preparation. This consideration should include an assessment of sufficient and appropriate public access to these facilities, and their ability to accommodate recreation without affecting water quality, biodiversity, and the amenity of other users and communities in surrounding areas. The Environment Agency Wales, British Waterways and relevant port or harbour authority should be consulted early in plan preparation, and as appropriate when planning decisions are taken, to ensure that issues related to water resources are properly addressed. Inland water features, such as rivers, canals, reservoirs and lakes can provide environmental, social and economic benefits, and opportunities for active and passive recreation. The potential for extending navigable routes should be considered on a sub regional basis to enhance their recreational and tourism benefits.

3.32 Sport and recreation proposals, particularly those which contribute to the restoration, regeneration and protection of Wales's inland water resources, harbours and docks and marine and freshwater wildlife should be encouraged, subject to there being no unacceptable adverse effects on the environment, water quality, biodiversity, the amenity of local residents and the enjoyment of the resource by other users.

'Welsh Coastal Tourism Strategy'
Draft Final Strategy Document
Welsh Assembly Government
(2007)

'A Draft Strategic Plan for Water
Related Recreation in Wales.'
University of Brighton. Consultation
draft (December 2007)

'Waterways for Wales: The Way
Forward.' British Waterways (2004)

'A Better Place to Play in Wales'
Wales' Strategy for Water Related
Recreation. Environment Agency
Wales (May 2008)

Marinas

3.33 The provision of water based recreation facilities, including coastal and inland marinas and berths for watercraft requires a strategic approach. Changes in circumstances in one area can have impacts in others, including other planning authorities. Local planning authorities should consider joined-up approaches to future provision with other authorities sharing access to the same waterways. The existing provision of marinas and watercraft berths, and anticipated future demand should be identified in the Open Space Assessment, and LDP policies should reflect the Assessment's findings. Proposals should be considered in relation to their likely social, economic and environmental effects. The Welsh Coastal Tourism Strategy sets out criteria which proposed marina developments should meet if they are to be considered for public financial support.

'Catching the Wave:
A Water Sports Tourism
Strategy' Welsh Assembly
Government (2004)

Golf Courses

3.34 Golf is an established recreational activity and also has the potential to contribute as a popular tourist attraction in Wales. Subject to thorough consideration of the impact upon the landscape, land use patterns and the natural environment, creative use of previously developed sites in accessible locations can produce good quality golf courses and driving ranges, accessible by public transport. Proposals for mixed development, including a golf course and residential, wildlife or other uses in out of town locations should be considered in relation to policies for these other forms of development.

3.35 LDPs should identify suitable locations for golf courses, dependent on the authority's Open Space Assessment, where one has been prepared, and identified future need for golf course and driving range provision. A strategic, inter-authority approach to the provision of golf courses is encouraged to promote golf as a tourist attraction, as well as a sporting or recreational activity.

Cemeteries and Churchyards

3.36 Although their use for sport and recreation will usually be inappropriate, churchyards and cemeteries can provide tranquil green spaces with high levels of amenity, particularly in urban areas. Some have historic or nature conservation importance. The finite capacity of cemeteries means there is a requirement to identify areas for future need and demographic data can provide local planning authorities with information to forecast future provision. Such areas need to be accessible to all.

Countryside

3.37 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a new statutory right for public access to open air recreation on mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. It devolved to the National Assembly for Wales the power to extend that right to coastal land. Local Authorities and National Park Authorities have established Local Access Forums to advise them on the improvement of public access to land for open air recreation and enjoyment.

3.38 Access to the countryside is important for the rural economy, community services, public transport and, when linked to recreation, as a means of improving health and well-being. When seeking to improve access to the countryside, particular regard should be given to the needs of people with mobility issues, including people with disabilities and those with young families. Consideration should also be given, where possible, to improving access opportunities for members of black and ethnic communities and residents of Communities First areas who do not traditionally make use of rights of way and other access opportunities.

Accessibility and Rights of Way

3.39 PPW requires major generators of travel demand to be located in, or close to town centres. Proposals to create new sport and recreational facilities, or to enhance existing facilities, could increase traffic and put greater demand on parking and public transport. In considering proposals for facilities which may generate high levels of travel demand, local planning authorities should use a sequential approach to development, locating such facilities in, or close to, town centres where possible.

3.40 Safe cycle routes and footpaths which avoid busy roads and other potential hazards, can provide a positive recreational opportunity in themselves, as well as having the potential to link to wider open space corridors, play spaces or recreational facilities, particularly for children and young people. Promotion of walking and cycling helps to address issues related to climate change, and is consistent with government sustainability objectives such as improved health, safe routes to school, a reduction in car journeys and the encouragement of tourism.

3.41 There is an extensive network of rights of way across the country which, suitably maintained and protected, provides a significant recreational and tourist resource.

Public rights of way should be protected, and information about them, shown on Definitive Maps and statements, should be considered when assessing applications for planning permission. The electronic planning application form contains a question on the existence of rights of way which should help authorities identifying affected paths.

3.42 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, requires each local authority to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan which, with the LDP, should provide for the use, maintenance and enforcement of existing rights of way, including enhancements to natural history interest. The LDP should also consider the potential for extending and enhancing local and long distance recreational routes for walking, cycling and horse riding. In some places, particularly in environmentally sensitive locations, it may be appropriate to provide improved access using dedicated public transport links.

3.43 The local planning authority should provide guidance in the LDP to ensure that sport and recreational facilities and open spaces are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. Where this is not possible, authorities should consider the provision of suitable bus or rail services, or adequate parking for sport and recreation users, particularly where participants have their own, sometimes bulky, equipment. Children's play areas should usually be linked to housing areas by public paths and cycle routes, where personal safety and security can be more easily ensured.

3.44 It is essential that local authorities consider accessibility for people who have impaired mobility or another impairment, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and the Disability Equality Duty, which came into force in December 2006. The Act gives any disabled person the right to equal access to facilities, goods and services, while the Disability Equality Duty places a duty on all public authorities to promote equality for disabled people.

'Planning and Access for Disabled People - A Good Practice Guide' ODPM (2003)

'Planning for Inclusive Design (Access Statements) Final Interim Guidance' Welsh Assembly Government (2007)

'Planning, Building, Streets and Disability Equality - A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for Local Authority Departments Responsible for Planning, Design and Management of the Built Environment and Streets' Disability Rights Commission (August 2006)

4. Development Management

4.1 The following guidance sets out some of the issues which should be taken account by applicants, and by local planning authorities determining planning applications.

Design

4.2 Early consideration of design issues should be given to the planning of new sport and recreational facilities and areas of open space. Good design can help create safe, secure, accessible, user friendly attractive spaces, which reduce opportunities for crime and disorder, favour active travel choices and increased biodiversity, whilst facilitating management and maintenance work in the longer term. Design improvements to existing facilities can encourage further use and enhance the quality of the public realm. It is particularly important that people with mobility and sensory impairments and learning difficulties, and their organisations, should be actively involved in the design and provision of recreation and open space facilities.

4.3 Access Statements, which are required to accompany many planning applications, are essential to show that the principles of inclusive design and access for all people have been considered from the outset of the development process. The content of such statements should reflect the involvement of local communities, access groups and local authority access officers, and set out the rationale underpinning the development proposal.

'Access Statements' Disability Rights Commission (2004)

Noise

4.4 Local planning authorities should assess the compatibility of noise generating recreational and sporting activities with other uses. The siting, location and intensity of use of such activities should be given special regard in order to minimise their impact on the amenity of local residents and on the surrounding area. Local planning authorities need to balance the positive contributions of leisure pursuits to the area and user enjoyment, against local environmental quality and possible nuisance to other people.

4.5 When dealing with planning applications for activities which have the potential to generate significant levels of noise, the frequency with which the noise occurs and the disturbance likely to be created should be taken into account by the local planning authority. Local planning authorities should also consider the cumulative effects of

different activities in the same area on the local community and environment. The attachment of reasonable conditions to planning approval could be used to control noise emissions, particularly during unsociable hours.

4.6 Some noise generating activities enjoy permitted development rights granted by Part 4 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, and so may not require specific planning permission provided they occur on a temporary basis. However, permitted development rights may, if necessary, be withdrawn by making a direction under Article 4 of the Order.

Floodlighting

4.7 The provision of floodlighting at sport and outdoor recreational facilities can allow for more efficient use of such facilities through extended opening hours. However, when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that the amenity of people living nearby is fully considered, and there is no unacceptable adverse impact on the character of the locality, including its visual amenity, or on features of nature conservation importance. Any permission granted may need to be subject to conditions, for example, limiting the hours during which the lights may be operated and/or the frequency of their use, or requiring the installation of downlighting, lit floorscapes, shielding or of particular types of light. Modern lighting systems can greatly reduce glare and stray light. They can be more energy efficient, particularly where they use power from renewable sources, and should be installed wherever possible.

4.8 Providing lighting on urban walkways and major cycle routes can encourage a modal shift in travel patterns throughout the year, improving their attractiveness by enhancing the safety and security of users.

4.9 Further advice on floodlighting can be obtained from the Sports Council for Wales and from FIT.

Accessibility

4.10 Particularly in and around areas of ecological and environmental value, local planning authorities should ensure that the impact of increased access on existing features and uses is fully considered.

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

4.11 Many types of sporting and recreational activities can be based on mixed use sites which can also include entertainment, retail and leisure facilities. Sport and recreation proposals likely to result in significant trip generation, should be accompanied by travel assessments and implementation information to ensure that the location is accessible by public transport, cyclists and walkers. This would relate to certain proposals for leisure facilities, cinemas and conference facilities, stadia and schools.

4.12 Local planning authorities should seek to promote and provide better facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, including people from ethnic minorities, disadvantaged and disabled people. Planning agreements to secure the provision and maintenance of cycle/walking routes and cycle storage and, where appropriate, showering and changing facilities, may be useful.

Management and Maintenance

4.13 Provision for the management and maintenance of public open space, sport and recreational facilities, including paths and lanes which facilitate walking and cycling, should be a consideration by local planning authorities in the determination of planning applications. Maintaining safe, attractive facilities and areas of open space is a fundamental aspect of long term management, to minimise environmental impact, help meet the Assembly Government's objectives for sustainable development, and to address issues related to climate change.

4.14 Local planning authorities may consider using maintenance and management agreements for recreational and open space or amenity land. This is particularly important in the case of provision of recreation and play facilities as part of new developments, and which are not to be transferred to the local authority.

Planning Conditions and Planning Obligations

4.15 Planning conditions and obligations (Section 106 Agreements) can be used to provide open space, sport and recreational facilities, to safeguard and enhance existing provisions, and to provide for their management. PPW indicates that planning obligations should only be sought where they are necessary to make a proposal acceptable in land use planning terms. Local planning authorities will usually be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision for

recreation is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs. An assessment of need and an audit of existing facilities, will enable local planning authorities to use planning obligations to provide a benefit for the land and/or the locality by providing open space and suitable facilities, particularly in relation to housing, retail and employment developments. LDP policies should be used to provide the framework within which planning obligations are sought.

Local Authority Land

4.16 Local authorities may not dispose of open space or appropriate it for another purpose, unless they first publish notice of their intention to do so for two successive weeks in a local newspaper and consider any objections received. When local authorities wish to dispose of land, they are under a general obligation to seek the best financial consideration.

4.17 A compulsory purchase order, which includes open space as defined in the legislation, or any new rights over it, is subject to special Assembly procedure unless the Welsh Ministers certify that suitable alternative land is being given in exchange or that the land, when burdened with the proposed rights, is no less advantageous than it was before. In the case of the acquisition of open space and the giving of exchange land, the Welsh Ministers must be satisfied that the exchange land is no less in area than the existing open space and equally advantageous to the public in terms of its size, location, recreation value, landscape quality, accessibility and biodiversity. Similar arrangements apply to common land. In certain cases it is unnecessary to provide exchange land.

5. Cancellation

5.1 This Technical Advice Note cancels TAN (Wales) 16 'Sport and Recreation' (March 1998).

Annex A

Open Space

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. For the purposes of this guidance, open space should be regarded as all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism, and can also act as a visual amenity, and may have conservation and biodiversity importance.

Areas which are privately owned may have amenity value, although access will not be possible without the agreement of the land owner. Areas like domestic gardens are relevant, since places without or with few gardens, are likely to be more reliant upon the provision of public spaces.

Typology of Open Space

The following typology of spaces is put forward as a useful basis for preparing Open Space Assessments and development plan policies. Many spaces have multiple uses, and areas should be categorised by the primary or main use of the area concerned:

- i. **public parks and gardens** - including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens;
- ii. **natural and semi-natural greenspaces** - including woodland, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, open access land (e.g. mountain, moor, heath, downland, common land and meadows) wetlands, wastelands and derelict open land and rocky areas (e.g. cliffs, quarries and pits), and coastal land;
- iii. **green corridors** - including river and canal banks, footpaths, cycleways, bridleways, disused railway land and rights of way; these may link different areas within and between urban areas. They may also form part of a network which links urban areas, or links them to the surrounding countryside.
- iv. **outdoor sports facilities** (with natural or artificial surfaces, publicly or privately owned) - including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas. A sports pitch is currently defined as a playing field, larger than 0.4 hectares in size, that has been marked for team games in the last five years.
- v. **amenity greenspace** (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) - including informal recreation spaces (private or open to the public), roadside verges, greenspaces in and around housing and other premises e.g. hospitals, schools and colleges, industrial and business premises, domestic gardens and grounds, and village greens;
- vi. **provision for children and young people** - including play areas, areas for wheeled play, including skateboarding, outdoor kickabout areas, and other less formal areas (e.g. 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters);
- vii. **allotments, community gardens, and city (urban) farms** - a statutory allotment is defined as having an area not exceeding 40 poles (1,000sq metres);
- viii. **cemeteries and churchyards;**
- ix. **accessible areas of countryside in the urban fringe** - which directly adjoin or are connected to an urban area;
- x. **civic spaces**, including civic and market squares, promenades and other predominantly hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians. These spaces may include planted areas and trees;
- xi. **water** - including open air tidal and freshwater pools, ponds, rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, docks, and harbours.

This typology should be taken into account by local planning authorities when assessing existing need and provision, and when determining future requirements for open space and recreational facilities.

Annex C

NPFA/Fields in Trust

Benchmark Standards for Outdoor Sport and Play

'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' (NPFA/FIT 2008)

Summary

In 2006, Fields in Trust (FIT) commissioned independent research to survey local planning authorities and consult key stakeholders around the United Kingdom. Using the results of that survey, it recommended Benchmark Standards to planning authorities and others, to help develop local standards. FIT's recommendations are similar to those in the 'Six Acre Standard', and it estimates that 70% of planning authorities either refer to, use, or adopt the recommendations of the 'Six Acre Standard' in development plans.

The Benchmark Standards are based upon survey returns in England, where they can clearly be applied. They will also help those developing standards elsewhere in the United Kingdom, including Wales.

Benchmark Standard Recommendations for Outdoor Sport

Quantity - Playing Pitches

Benchmark Standards for Pitch Sports

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

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

Quantity - All Outdoor Sport

Benchmark Standards for All Sports

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

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

Quality - Outdoor Sport

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

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

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

Accessibility - Playing Pitches

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

Accessibility - Other Outdoor sports

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

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

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

Benchmark Standard Recommendations for Outdoor Play

Quantity - All Playing Space

Children's Playing Space	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Designated Equipped Playing space	0.25
Informal Playing Space	0.55
Children's Playing Space	0.80

Quality Benchmark for Children's Playing Space

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

Accessibility Benchmark Standards for Children's Playing Space

Type of Space	Distance criteria (metres)	
	Walking Distance	Straight Line Distance
Local areas for play or 'door-step' spaces for play and informal recreation	100	60
Local equipped or landscaped areas for play and informal recreation	400	240
Neighbourhood equipped areas for play and informal recreation and provision for young people	1000	600