

Overview of open space, sport and recreation provision in Bromsgrove

- 15.1 This study has been completed in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide. It provides an overview of the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities across Bromsgrove.
- 15.2 This section considers the wider benefits of open spaces and the impact and implications of the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities on wider priorities. It also summarises the recommended local standards set, and the application of the local standards for all typologies. Consideration is then given to the implementation of the study in a planning policy and development control context.

The wider context

Why are green spaces in Bromsgrove important?

- 15.3 There has been a national recognition in recent years of the continuing importance of parks and green spaces. Various policies and strategies have shown a commitment to renewal of this vital part of our heritage including Government Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for open space, sport and Recreation¹ and the CABE Green Space Report². The role that green spaces can have in meeting policy objectives linked to other agendas, such as education, diversity, health, safety, environment and regeneration is also recognised. The Green Spaces, Better Places Report (DTLR Task Force May 2002)³ highlighted that parks and open spaces:
- contribute significantly to social inclusion because they are free and accessible to all
 - can become a centre of community spirit
 - contribute to child development through scope for outdoor, energetic and imaginative play
 - offer numerous educational opportunities
 - provide a range of health, environmental and economic benefits.
- 15.4 As highlighted in Section 3, the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities can play a wider role in improving health.
- 15.5 Increasing sport and physical activity is a key target both nationally and locally and parks and open spaces provide an alternative means of encouraging local residents to participate. The 2006 - 2007 Active People survey indicates that 22.2% of the population currently participate three times per week or more in moderately active sport or recreation. This is above the national average and places Bromsgrove in the upper middle quartile in terms of participation.

¹ Department of Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, July 2002,

² Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), "A guide to producing parks and green space management plans."

³ DTLR, 2002: Green Spaces, Better Places (Urban Green Spaces Task Force 2002)

- 15.6 Within Bromsgrove, levels of participation have risen by 1.5% to 23.7%. This level of participation is significantly above both the regional and national figures and indicates that participation targets have been achieved. In addition to the growth in participation, volunteering has also increased. However, there has been a decline in club membership and the proportion of residents satisfied with sports provision in the district has reduced significantly from 71.2% to 65.9%. This may be linked to the ageing stock of facilities in Bromsgrove.
- 15.7 Analysis of the market segmentation data prepared by Sport England, which analyses the characteristics of the population profile and estimates their subsequent likelihood to participate in different sporting activities indicates that alternative opportunities for participation in physical activity can help increase the proportion of people participating in sport and physical activity and help Bromsgrove meet national and local targets for participation growth. “Tim” is the most dominant group and residents falling into this category have a propensity to participate in competitive sport.
- 15.8 The effective provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities is therefore imperative if opportunities to maximise participation are to be taken.
- 15.9 The value of open space is not just recreational. The strategic contribution that open spaces can make to the wider environment includes:
- defining the local landscape character and softening the urban environment
 - providing an appropriate context and setting for built development and infrastructure
 - emphasising the presence of particular natural features such as the coast and river valleys
 - supporting habitats and local wildlife
 - combating climate change and flood risk.

Linking green spaces

- 15.10 As highlighted previously, the provision of appropriate high quality green space results in an array of benefits that far exceed the recreational value that these sites offer to residents. Linkages between green spaces further enhance the benefits that can be achieved.
- 15.11 Green Infrastructure (GI) comprises a network of multi-functional greenspace set within, and contributing to, a high quality natural and built environment. Green Infrastructure is widely considered to be an essential requirement for the enhancement of quality of life, for existing and future generations, and to be an integral element in the delivery of ‘liveability’ for sustainable communities.
- 15.12 This PPG17 study provides a starting point for understanding the wider green infrastructure across the District and the benefit that this can bring to the local community. One of the key priorities of the community strategy is “achieving greener and safer” green spaces, highlighting the role that green space can play in improving the quality of life.

Planning green space, sport and recreational facilities at a local level

- 15.13 At the local level, the role that green spaces play in the achievement of wider corporate objectives is recognised.
- 15.14 Worcestershire's Local Area Agreement (LAA) deals with areas that are of greatest concern to local people and is developed around six building blocks, specifically:
- Communities that are safe and feel safe.
 - A better environment – for today and tomorrow.
 - Economic success that is shared by all.
 - Improving health and well being.
 - Meeting the needs of children and young people.
 - Stronger communities.
- 15.15 The effective provision of green space can play a key role in the delivery of targets within these areas. Targets of particular relevance to this study include:
- Reduce crime and fear of crime
 - Build respect and reduce anti social behaviour
 - Improve quality of life
 - Create greener and safer public open space
 - Obtain 11 green flag awards in Worcestershire
 - Create 8 additional play areas
 - Reduce levels of vandalism and graffiti
 - Reduce health inequalities
 - Increase quality of life for older residents
 - Increase opportunities for residents to participate in recreation, leisure and culture.
- 15.16 Table 15.1 summarises the contributions that achievement of some of the key objectives arising from the assessment of local needs and existing provision can generate.

Table 15.1 - Achievement of wider LAA objectives through the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Meeting the needs of children and young people	Stronger communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing identified deficiencies in the provision for children and young people in quantitative terms. The recommended increase in the provision of amenity space will also provide more informal opportunities for children and young people • ensuring that the quality of facilities and the type of facilities meet the needs of local young people • maximising the involvement of children and young people in the day to day design and planning of facilities for children and young people • maximising the role of school facilities in the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting and encouraging community involvement in the provision, maintenance and management of open spaces • addressing identified deficiencies to ensure that all residents have access to high quality open spaces.
Economic success that is shared by all	Improved health and well being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering attractive places and enhancing local identity and image through investment in the quality of facilities • maximising opportunities through regeneration to enhance the quality of open spaces and provide open spaces of the right type and in the right place • ensuring that new development results in positive change in the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximising use of open spaces and sports facilities for physical activity and achievement of the Council's targets for increasing participation in sport and physical activity • investing in the quality of sports facilities to increase access to local residents and ensuring that all residents have access to local facilities • promoting the wider benefits of open space on physical and mental health • ensuring that open spaces meet the needs of all sectors of the community.
Communities that are safe and feel safe	A better environment for today and tomorrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing the safety of open spaces and the perception of safety of open space sites through the promotion of good quality design and planning • ensuring that open space, sport and recreation facilities are designed with safety and crime prevention in mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximising the quality of open spaces in the authority • tailoring the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities to meet local need • creating a culture of ownership and respect for open space, sport and recreation facilities

15.17 Table 15.2 overleaf summarises the role of open space in the achievement of the priorities of other regional and local strategies. The key objectives of each of the documents are summarised in Section 3.

Table 15.2 – Contribution of the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities to wider strategy objectives

Document	Short term objectives for the future delivery of open space			
	Enhance the quality of open spaces across the District	Ensure the quantity of open space is sufficient to meet local needs	Maximise access to existing open spaces	Maximise the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities
Regional Documents				
Regional Spatial Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Sports Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Documents				
Community Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corporate Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children and Young People’s Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Worcestershire Play Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓

Current position

15.18 As discussed in sections 4 – 14, local standards have been set for different types of open space, sport and recreation facilities. These standards are summarised in Table 15.3 below.

Table 15.3 – Recommended Local Standards

Typology	Quantity Standard	Accessibility Standard
Parks	0.27ha per 1000 – existing level of provision	15 minute walk time (720m) and 15 minute drive time
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	0.44 ha per 1000 population – above existing level of provision	15 minute walk time (720m)
Amenity Green Space	0.42 ha per 1000 population – above existing level of provision	10 minute walk time (480m)
Provision for Children	0.27 ha per 1000 population – at existing level of provision	10 minute walk time (480m)
Provision for young people	0.30 ha per 1000 population – above existing level of provision	15 minute walk time (720m)
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1.67ha per 1000 – above the existing level of provision	10 minute walk time (480m) to grass pitches 15 minute drive time to Tennis courts / bowling greens 20 minute drive time to synthetic pitches, golf courses and athletics tracks
Allotments	0.19 ha per 1000	20 minute walk time (960m)

15.19 The primary issues emerging for each type of open space are summarised overleaf.

Parks and Gardens

- parks and gardens were highlighted as particularly valuable to local residents. The wide range of facilities available at this type of open space was seen to provide many recreational opportunities for residents. Parks were perceived to provide important functions for children and often considered to be a focal point of the community, particularly in rural areas of the district.
- the role of parks and gardens in meeting targets to increase level of physical activity and improve health should also not be underestimated. The wider benefits of parks are wide reaching and many parks in Bromsgrove are also important sources of natural and semi natural open space
- the quality of parks and gardens is average. Site assessments identify a need to focus on the improvement of maintenance at parks and gardens.
- although increasing quality of existing parks and gardens in the district is highlighted as particularly important, application of the accessibility standards reveals that distribution of parks is uneven and there are some areas where residents are outside of the recommended distance thresholds. While priority should therefore be given to improving the quality of existing sites, opportunities to provide new facilities should be exploited, particularly in Hagley where there are shortfalls of both parks and amenity spaces. While populations in the rural settlements are insufficient to warrant the creation of a park, support should be given to the development of the pocket parks scheme.

Natural and Semi Natural Open Space

- natural and semi natural open space is one of the most frequently visited type of open space in the district, indicated by 21% of respondents to the household survey. This emphasises the value of this type of open space to local residents.
- in addition to the recreational value of natural resources, residents also frequently recognise the wider benefits of natural open spaces, particularly in terms of providing opportunities for biodiversity and habitat creation.
- the need to protect natural and semi natural open space from development was a key theme throughout consultation and while recreational opportunities should be encouraged, this should be balanced with conserving and promoting biodiversity.
- application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards highlights that the improvements to the quality of sites is of particular importance. Natural and semi natural open spaces are unevenly distributed and new provision may also be required in some areas. Maximising access to natural and semi natural sites both within urban settlements and to those in the surrounding countryside should also be a key future priority. The creation of green linkages will be of particular importance in the achievement of this goal. Current linkages to the countryside are perceived to be limited

Amenity Green Space

- the community interaction benefits of amenity green space are recognised, with residents identifying this type of open space as valuable to the local community.
- application of the quantity, quality and accessibility standards illustrates the need for qualitative enhancements to a number of existing amenity green space sites. Amenity spaces can be particularly important to local residents in light of their close proximity to the home.
- while the overall focus is on increasing the quality of amenity spaces, there are several areas of deficiency and consideration should be given to the provision of new spaces within these areas. Application of the quantity standard demonstrates that all settlements with a population exceeding 500 residents should contain a minimum of one amenity space. Additionally, new provision in Hagley is a particular priority.

Provision for children and young people

- equipped provision for children and young people was the overriding theme of consultations throughout the study. Residents expressed concerns over the quantity of provision, as well as highlighting that the quality of many facilities is insufficient and that facilities are perceived to be boring and not challenging.
- the four outcomes of the strategy are:
 - children and young people to have increased opportunity to access and enjoy a variety of play
 - increased inclusive play opportunities
 - a greater understanding of the importance of play
 - children and young people are involved in the design and delivery of play
- analysis of existing facilities highlight that there is significant variation in the quality of sites although sites are distributed relatively evenly across the District. In order to improve the overall quality and quantity of play opportunities in Bromsgrove the Council has prioritised the development of larger, strategically located facilities which offer a wider variety of facilities and play value. Improvements to the quality of facilities will be as, if not more important than the quality of provision.
- there are particular priorities for new or re-profiled provision, particularly in the following wards:
 - Bromsgrove West: Hagley and Clent
 - Bromsgrove North: Beacon and Hillside
 - Bromsgrove North East: Wythall South and Hollywood and Majors Green

- Bromsgrove Central: Marlbrook and St Johns
- Bromsgrove East: Tardebigge and Alvechurch
- since the mapping of accessibility catchments highlights that existing facilities have overlapping catchments, this suggests that scope to re-structure existing provision to achieve an improved and more balanced distribution of facilities should be explored.
- any new facilities developed should meet the suggested quality criteria and should provide exciting play opportunities for children and young people. Site assessments carried out at existing facilities should also be used to inform decisions on those facilities in need of enhancement.

Outdoor Sports Facilities

- PPG17 considers the provision of all the different types of outdoor sport facilities as one and does not break down the typology into more detailed assessments for each sport. However, for the purpose of this study each sport has considered individually. The demand led nature of outdoor sports facilities however means that specific studies (such as a playing pitch strategy) should be undertaken in order to accurately define shortfalls and surpluses. The local quantity standard should be used for broad planning purposes only. Future decision making should draw upon local sport specific demand led assessments
- consultation highlights issues with both the quantity and quality of facilities. Analysis of the existing provision supports this with pockets of deficiency identified in the Bromsgrove North East and Bromsgrove West analysis areas and variable quality ratings achieved during site assessment visits. Consultation indicated that enhancing the quality of sports facilities is perceived to be more important than increasing the quantity of provision
- generally there is a good distribution of outdoor sports facilities across the District with all residents having access to at least one outdoor sports facility within the recommended travel time. All residents, with the exception of those in the far North East of the District (Hollywood and Majors ward) are within a 15 minute drive of tennis court provision and the majority, with the exception of those in the far North West of the District (Hagley Ward), fall within the accepted travel times of bowling greens, athletics tracks and STPs.
- whilst most residents are within a 15 minute walk of a playing field site there are areas in all analysis areas that fall outside of these catchments. Both enhancing the quality of existing outdoor sports facilities and increasing access to school-based provision are considered key priorities for the District
- the key issues arising from the application of the methodology include:
 - there is a perception that pitches are of poor value for money. Drainage at pitches and the provision of ancillary accommodation are particular priorities with regards the quality of pitches
 - there is an theoretical oversupply (17.4) of adult football pitches on the peak day across the District

- there is an undersupply of junior pitches (-8.6) on the peak day (Sunday). However, in practice the adult pitch stock is being used by junior teams
- there is an undersupply of (-1.8) mini-soccer pitches on the peak day (Sunday). This indicates that mini soccer teams are likely to be using adult / junior pitches
- there is a slight shortfall of cricket pitches (-2) on the peak day (Sunday)
- there is an oversupply (19) of adult rugby union pitches on the peak day (Saturday)
- there is an undersupply (-10.5) of junior rugby pitches on the peak day, which is Sunday mornings. However, there is also a theoretical surplus of adult pitches on this day, which is used to accommodate junior matches
- in order to maximise resources, increasing access to school facilities should be a key priority going forward.

Allotments

- there are currently 12 allotment sites across Bromsgrove, totalling 15.28 hectares and equating to an overall level of provision of 0.174 hectares per 1000 population. All Council owned allotment sites have waiting lists and it is evident from Parish Plans, consultation with allotment users and the Council's allotments officer that demand for allotments is increasing.
- findings from the household survey indicated a significant level of dissatisfaction with the current provision of allotments in Bromsgrove, with 47% of residents stating provision was insufficient.
- the majority of residents indicated that they would expect to walk to an allotment, hence an accessibility standard equivalent to a 15 minute walk has been set. This reflects the expectation for local provision.
- the quality of allotments was perceived to be average by respondents to the household survey. Allotment users emphasised poor maintenance at allotments, with rubbish and poor footpaths identified as the main issues. Good access, good footpaths and clean and litter free were identified as the essential features of allotment site. Despite this, site visits indicate that the quality of allotments in the district is good although there are some areas for improvement.
- the current distribution of allotments across the district is uneven, with the majority of sites located in Bromsgrove Central and Bromsgrove West. The application of the recommended local standards highlights deficiencies in all areas of the district except Bromsgrove Central. Even in Bromsgrove Central where almost all allotments are located, all sites contain waiting lists and there is ongoing unmet demand.

Cemeteries and churchyards

- cemeteries and churchyards can be significant providers of open space, particularly in rural areas. In towns they can represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land required, but are important for nature conservation.
- local standards for accessibility and quantity have not been set. Despite this, it remains important to consider the future delivery of cemeteries and churchyards anticipating future demand as well as assessing the current level of provision.
- the quality of cemeteries and churchyards is currently good in comparison to other typologies. This high standard should be maintained. Analysis of the quantity of cemeteries in the district indicates that supply is likely to be sufficient to meet demand over the LDF period. There is a cemetery extension which has been set aside at Catshill.
- the wider benefits of churchyards are significant and it is wrong to place a value on churchyards and cemeteries focusing solely on quality and accessibility. In addition to offering a functional value, many cemeteries and churchyards have wider benefits including heritage, cultural and landscape values.

Green Corridors

- green corridors provide opportunities close to peoples' homes for informal recreation, particularly walking and cycling, as part of every day activities, for example, travel to work or shops. Therefore the development of a linked green corridor network will help to improve the health and well being of the local community. In this way, green corridors can be integral to the achievement of targets for increased active recreation.
- there are already a large number of footpaths and green corridor networks within the study area and consultation indicates that they are well-used. Future opportunities and developments should seek to enhance the pathways along rivers and canals.
- future development needs to encompass linkages between large areas of open space, create opportunities to develop the green corridor network and utilise potential development sites. Development should consider both the needs of wildlife and humans.
- a network of multi-functional greenspace will contribute to the high quality natural and built environment required for existing and new sustainable communities in the future. An integrated network of high quality green corridors will link open spaces, helping to alleviate other open space deficiencies and provide opportunities for alternative means of transport. Sustrans National Cycle Route 5 routes directly through Bromsgrove Town although much of this route has been highlighted as being not directly suitable for cyclists.

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15.20 The table below summarises the key priorities implications for the LDF and other delivery vehicles arising for each type of open space:

Open Space Type	Key Priorities for the LDF
Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximise the role that parks can play in striving to increase participation in health and physical activity across the district • continue to promote activities and alternative means of exercise at parks to maximise usage • ensure that the LDF contains policies that protect parks from development • drive a strategic programme of qualitative improvements across the district to enhance the quality of parks • consider the designation of pocket parks within those settlements outside the catchment of a park • seek to develop a network of 'green linkages' between existing open spaces and parks and gardens to link neighbourhoods with green space • facilitate access to parks and gardens through the provision of sustainable public transport links.
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify opportunities for improving the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces both in terms of the wildlife and habitat values of the site, but also for recreational purposes • maximise biodiversity on natural and semi natural open spaces through the implementation of effective management and maintenance regimes • monitor the impact of recreation of natural and semi natural open spaces • incorporate a policy protecting existing natural and semi natural open space within the Local Development Framework • seek to enhance the quality of natural and semi natural open space in the district, aiming to achieve the recommended quality vision at all sites • should the opportunity arise, consider the provision of a new semi natural open space in Bromsgrove North East and in Stoke Prior.
Amenity Green Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek to improve the quality of amenity green spaces in the district aiming to achieve the recommended quality vision at all sites. Use the findings of the site assessments to prioritise those sites in need of significant improvement • where new development occurs ensure that new amenity space is provided if the development falls outside of the recommended catchment of an existing amenity space site • seek to provide new amenity spaces in Hagley, in areas of Bromsgrove central devoid of provision and in settlements where the population exceeds 500 residents • exploit opportunities to use amenity spaces as green corridors and

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Open Space Type	Key Priorities for the LDF
	to provide links between wider green spaces and residential communities.
Provision for Children and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the findings of site assessments to facilitate the improvement of facilities for both children and young people across the district in terms of the quality • encourage the involvement of children and young people in the design of facilities • promote the development of risky and challenging play facilities as well as more traditional play opportunities • facilitate the provision of new facilities in the areas identified as devoid in provision • ensure that new developments contribute towards the provision of large, strategically located sites.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect all outdoor sports facilities from development unless it can be proven that the replacement of a facility will result in a higher quality facility in a nearby location • seek to improve the quality of outdoor sports facilities. Sites should meet National Governing Body criteria. This includes the provision of appropriate changing facilities • improve access to tennis court provision at school sites and improve public transport links to existing sites • upgrade the quality of identified sites tennis court provision • investigate demand and potential for new provision in Hollywood and Majors ward • focus on increasing access to existing publicly accessible bowling greens in the District and promoting wider participation opportunities • increase access to school-based STP facilities in the District and develop at least one additional pitch • facilitate the delivery of improved pitches including the provision of changing rooms and drainage installation.
Allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regularly review, investigate and monitor demand for allotment provision and look for opportunities where demand is increasing through ongoing evaluation of waiting lists. Evaluation of demand should consider demand in areas where allotments are not currently provided as well as monitoring the usage of existing sites • ensure that allotments are protected from development through the Local Development Framework and provide ongoing support to local providers • investigate demand and consider the provision of new allotments within Rubery, east Hagley, Bromgrove East and Wythall • evaluate the existing management practices of allotments in Bromsgrove Central and investigate opportunities to provide half plots in order to accommodate more residents. In light of the large waiting lists at sites in this area, identify opportunities to provide additional sites. Given the distribution of the existing sites, new provision should be located in areas of deficiency.

Open Space Type	Key Priorities for the LDF
Cemeteries and Churchyards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise and promote the nature conservation value of closed cemeteries and churchyards and investigate the implementation of ecological management • the Council should keep under review the opportunities for the reuse, expansion or acquisition of suitable land to ensure the continued and sustainable provision of local cemeteries • seek to create a programme of qualitative enhancements for new churchyards that come into council ownership.
Green Corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working in tandem with Worcestershire County Council, the PCT and other key partners to help maximise the use of green corridors and Public Rights of Way in the District and to deliver the PROW improvement plan • facilitating the protection and development of the network through the inclusion of appropriate policies in the LDF • driving a programme of qualitative improvements across the district including enhanced maintenance of footpaths and increased signage • promoting the opportunities available to increase usage of green corridors • maximising the use of natural resources such as river corridors for walking, cycling and wildlife • undertaking a green infrastructure assessment in conjunction with adjoining local authorities.

15.21 In summary therefore, the main implications relating to quality, quantity and accessibility arising through this study for each type of open space which should be addressed through the Local Development Framework (LDF) and include:

- protect all parks, natural areas, allotments and sports facilities through a policy in the LDF
- facilitate enhancement of sites in terms of biodiversity as well as a recreational resource
- facilitate the delivery of new play areas and facilities for young people focusing on ensuring that provision is appropriately located and targeted at the local audience – this may include rationalising and reprofiling existing sites
- allocate additional land for the provision of allotments particularly in Hagley, Rubery, Wythall and East Bromsgrove
- support the improvement of the quality of outdoor sports facilities and address deficiencies where possible
- promote the development of green linkages including the development of cycleways and the Public Rights of Way Network and maximise the recreational role of River corridors

- encourage the use of sustainable transport by linking large parks and open spaces by green corridors and public transport routes
- maximise contributions from developers where appropriate.

The plan led system

- 15.22 The overall conclusions of the report should be used to guide future planning policy and to inform development control decisions. The report will be a key component of the LDF which will provide the long term development vision for the District and will be made up of a series of development plan documents and supplementary planning documents including the Core Strategy.
- 15.23 Development Plan Documents (DPDs) should include general policies relating to open space, sport and recreation facilities that are supported by the findings of this study and other relevant documents.
- 15.24 As well as contributing to the development of general policies, this document also informs more specific documents within the Local Development Framework Portfolio specifically:
- Supplementary Planning Documents on Open Space
 - Site Specific Policies and allocations DPD
 - Area Action Plans
- 15.25 The remainder of this section provides guidance on the use of this PPG17 study, particularly with regards the determination of developer contributions (for consideration within the DPDs) and the identification of issues within specific areas. The same principles can also be applied in Area Action Plans and for large scale regeneration schemes.
- 15.26 This is particularly important in Bromsgrove where two Area Action Plans are underway, specifically the Longridge site and the Town Centre Action Plan.
- 15.27 The Town Centre AAP will see significant changes to the nature of the town centre area and provides an opportunity to ensure that open spaces and civic spaces meet needs and aspirations. The Longridge Area Action plan will see circa 1750 houses developed. In light of the new population, additional open space, sport and recreation facilities will be required and it will be essential to ensure that the level of provision meets the minimum standards set out within this open space assessment.

Planning Contributions

- 15.28 Assessments of need undertaken in relation to PPG17 should drive the future provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities. Planning contributions can be a key source of funding to ensure that provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities meets the aims and objectives of current and future residents.
- 15.29 With regards the use of planning obligations, paragraph 33 of PPG17 states: “planning obligations should be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space, sports and recreation provision. Local Authorities will be justified in seeking planning obligations where the quantity or quality of provision is inadequate or under threat, or where new development increases local needs. It is essential that local authorities have undertaken detailed assessments of needs and audits of existing facilities, and set appropriate local standards in order to justify planning obligations.”
- 15.30 The primary issues arising in the determination of required contributions from developers are discussed below and overleaf. In order to ensure that contributions are used effectively, a joint working group should be established consisting as a minimum of representatives from planning and leisure and relevant representatives of Area Committees.

Determining whether the development proposed is required to provide open space, sport and recreation facilities

- 15.31 It is necessary and reasonable to request provision of formal and informal public open space from residential and commercial development that is likely to generate increased demand for and use of such infrastructure.
- 15.32 It is recommended that the local standards within this PPG17 assessment should be applied to most new dwellings, including flats and conversions to residential use. However, the standards should not necessarily apply to all new residential developments, with some likely exceptions including replacement dwellings, extensions and annexes which will not necessarily increase the demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- 15.33 Where the proposed development is for specialist housing which will not create a demand for all or some of the elements of the open space, sport and recreation, consideration should be given as to whether it is appropriate to ask for contributions. For example, housing for elderly people will not generate a significant requirement for outdoor children’s equipped play space or casual / informal play space, thus no such provision should be sought.

Plan 1	Guidance relating to the type of development from which contributions will be sought should be set out in planning documentation (eg in SPD).
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Quantifying the need for new open space, sport and recreation facilities

- 15.34 The application of the quantity standards in this report based on the increased level of demand ensures that the developer is paying directly for the associated impact of the development rather than it being dependent on what open space happens to be around the development.

- 15.35 The first stage in assessing the quantitative need for new open space, sport and recreation facilities is based on estimating the number of residents living in the proposed development. This can be calculated using an average occupancy standard or by setting out more detailed assumptions within SPD. This is intended to provide an initial guide to the likely open space requirement. This initial figure should, in all circumstances be updated by a detailed calculation based on the number of bedrooms, once a reserved matters application is submitted.
- 15.36 These occupancy figures can be applied to the local quantity standards (see table 14.4) to calculate the quantitative need arising from development.

Table 14.4 Calculating Quantitative Need

Typology	Local Quantity Standard per 1000 population	Equivalent Local Quantity Standard Per Person
Parks and Gardens	0.26	0.00026
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	0.44	0.00044
Amenity Green Space	0.42	0.00042
Provision for Children	0.027	0.000027
Provision for Young People	0.03	0.00003
Outdoor Sport Facilities	1.67	0.00167
Allotments	0.19	0.00019

Determine whether the open space can/should be provided on-site

- 15.37 A new area will normally be required if the increase in demand arising from the development is above the minimum size threshold.
- 15.38 To ensure the provision of useable areas of open space which can be easily and economically maintained, open space should not normally be provided on site if the levels required fall below the minimum size standards. Minimum size standards should be determined locally.

Plan 2	Determine a series of minimum size guidelines in order to inform decisions relating to on and off site provision
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- 15.39 Following the determination of appropriate minimum size guidelines, based on the local quantity standards (table 15.4), it is possible to ascertain the development size thresholds for which on site provision will normally be required. This will be dependent on detailed consideration of occupancy levels for each application. The calculations that will be required are set out below. These cannot be computed until a minimum size has been set.

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Typology	Minimum Size Threshold (hectares)	Local Quantity Standard (hectares per person)	Number of people to achieve minimum size threshold	Number of dwellings required (based on 2.5 persons per dwelling)
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- 15.40 Open space types with larger minimum sizes (for example parks) are only likely to be provided on the largest planning application sites. When providing open space on-site, particular priority should be given to the type of open space with the greatest shortfall in the area.
- 15.41 In terms of on-site provision, it may be possible to combine types of open space without adversely affecting their individual functions. For example, it may be feasible to accommodate amenity green space within the clearance zones of provision for children and young people. It may appropriate to provide design guidance as part of the portfolio of planning documents.
- 15.42 Below the threshold for on site provision, it is suggested that there is a requirement for developers to make a contribution for off site provision. The pooling of these funds will enable the purchase of new sites which will reduce the pressure on existing public spaces and facilities.
- 15.43 The local quantity standards within this study indicate that there are deficiencies in the majority of open space types. As a consequence, much new development will need to provide or contribute towards new open space provision. However, where there is an existing suitable open space, sport and recreation facility (for any typology) which can serve the development appropriately the Council should use the contribution for improving the quality of facilities rather than requiring further provision in a locality which is already well served by that typology and which can absorb the increased level of usage. This means that actual requirements will vary by location.
- 15.44 Existing facilities should only be considered where they are within the local accessibility catchment, set out earlier in this section in Table 15.2.
- 15.45 It is therefore recommended that where the necessary space is not provided by the developer and there are no alternative schemes within an appropriate distance from the site to which the developer can contribute towards, planning permission should not be granted.

Calculating the recommended open space contribution for new open spaces.

- 15.46 The level of developer contributions for off-site provision will depend on whether it includes the costs of land acquisition. Standard costs towards the enhancement of existing open space and provision of new open spaces (across all typologies) should be clearly identified and revised annually. In light of the pressures on land availability, it is recommended that the Council should include the cost of land acquisition.

SECTION 15 – SUMMARY AND PLANNING OVERVIEW

- 15.47 The cost of open space can be difficult to determine based on what elements of open space provision should be included within the costing, for example, whether the cost of a facility should include site preparation, eg levelling, drainage, special surfaces and what ancillary facilities to include within costings, what level of equipment and land costs. A detailed set of costs associated with each type of open space should be prepared.

Plan 3	Prepare a detailed set of costings for each type of open space which can be applied to new developments
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Maintenance

- 15.48 Where the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities is principally of benefit to the occupants of a proposed development rather than the wider public, consideration should be given to the payment of a commuted sum to cover the cost of future maintenance in perpetuity. This is intended to avoid situations where open spaces become neglected and deteriorate to an extent that their functions are harmed.

Worked example

- 15.49 Pre application discussions are underway regarding a housing development for 70 dwellings. The development consists of 30 four-bed dwellings, 30 three-bed dwellings and 10 two-bed dwellings. The development site is **1.5 hectares** (47 dph).
- 15.50 Using the assumed occupancy rates in table 14.3, calculate the number of additional residents living in the locality. This is set out below.

Category	Number	Open market housing/flats	Additional Residents
2 Bedroom Dwelling	10	2.5 persons per unit	25
3 Bedroom Dwelling	30	3.5 persons per unit	105
4 (+) Bedroom Dwellings	30	4 persons per unit	120
TOTAL			<u>250</u>

SECTION 15 – SUMMARY AND PLANNING OVERVIEW

15.51 Using the local standards, calculate the quantitative need for new open space, sport and recreation facilities. This is set out below.

Typology	Local Quantity Standard Per Person	Additional Residents	Total Requirement
Parks and Gardens	0.00026	250	0.065
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	0.00044	250	0.11
Amenity Green Space	0.00042	250	0.105
Provision for Children	0.000027	250	0.007
Provision for Young People	0.00003	250	0.0075
Outdoor Sport Facilities	0.00167	250	0.42
Allotments	0.00019	250	0.047
TOTAL			<u>0.76 hectares</u>

15.52 Consider which typologies are above the minimum size and could be expected to make an on site contribution. For the purposes of an example, it is assumed that the minimum size requirements for natural and semi natural open space and amenity space are 0.1ha and on site contributions would therefore be required. All other requirements are below the suggested minimum size.

15.53 Consider whether (based on evidence presented by the developer) there is suitable open space, sport and recreation facilities within the accessibility catchment which, can serve their development safely and appropriately rather than seeking on site provision on natural and semi natural open space, amenity green space and allotments.

15.54 In this example, there are no amenity green spaces available within the catchment areas. The only natural and semi natural open space that is available is very small and inadequate for the quantitative needs of the local community. Therefore there is a presumption that as a minimum on site provision totalling 0.105 hectares of amenity green space and 0.11 hectares of natural and semi natural open space would be provided.

15.55 It will be essential to consider the maximum amount of land that can be set aside for public open space in each development. If the total on site provision required may make the development unviable, the Council may decide to waive the requirement for one type of open space, favouring a contribution towards off site provision.

15.56 The next stage is to calculate the recommended open space contributions towards new / improved open space, sport and recreation facilities. The cost per hectare of providing each type of open space that is not to be provided on site should be multiplied by the total requirement generated by the new development.

Informing Area Action Plans

15.57 In addition to informing the S106 process, the findings of this open space and PPG17 assessment also inform Area Action Plans and Development Control Decisions.

15.58 The application of the standards to the geographical area in question will provide an indication as to the amount of open space of each type that is required within an area. The accessibility standards should guide the Council in the distribution of this type of open space.

15.59 In the same vein, standards can be applied to determine the value of existing open spaces to the local community. This procedure should be followed before the loss of any open space to development.

15.60 As highlighted, the use of the local standards for the Area Action Plans for Bromsgrove will be particularly important.

Summary and recommendations

15.61 The open space, sport and recreation study is an invaluable tool in the formulation and implementation of planning policies. This relates to both the protection and enhancement of existing open space and the framework for developing planning obligations.

15.62 The key recommendations arising with regards the implementation of the findings of this PPG17 assessment through the planning system are as follows:

- incorporate general policies within the core strategy relating to open space, sport and recreation facilities
- incorporate the local standards into the LDF and use these as a basis for decision making
- ensure contributions are sought towards the full range of open space, sport and recreation typologies
- continue to base the nature and scale of contributions on the size of development and the impact on open space, sport and recreation provision. The Council should seek contributions from all residential developments that increase the demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- the Council should devise a series of minimum size thresholds which will guide decision making relating to on and off site provision. This is necessary to ensure the provision of useable areas of open space that can be easily and economically maintained and ensure that the system is transparent. Open space should not normally be provided on site if the levels required fall below the minimum size standards.
- off site contributions should be derived from standardised open space costings.