

Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards Review

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Fields in Trust (FIT)

Founded in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), Fields in Trust (FIT) are a national charity and operate throughout the UK to safeguard recreational spaces and campaign for better statutory protection for all kinds of outdoor sites. They are the national organisation responsible for acquiring, protecting and improving the standards of playing fields, playgrounds and play space where they are needed and for those who need them most. The trust provides guidelines and highlights the value of national standards.

Whilst focus has previously been on the *Six Acre Standard (2001)*, which was intended to provide guidance to local authorities, developers, consultants, community organisations and others who wished to ensure that the provision of outdoor playing space was adequate; *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (2008)* published by FIT supersedes all previous editions of the 'Six Acre Standard'.

Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (2008)

The guidance aims to ensure that the provision of outdoor playing space meets local needs. The information in the publication is aimed at and should be of particular value to those who are developing local standards for new developments; those who are concerned with ensuring sufficient outdoor playing space in existing areas; and those who are planning new developments.

The guidance does not intend to set a benchmark for a maximum or minimum standard of outdoor space in terms of quantity, however does strongly recommend that any moves to adopt standards *below* the appropriate benchmark; could only be justified where public participation and support can be evidenced.

Pedestrian Distance & Straight Line Distance

Straight Line Distance is calculated at 60% of Pedestrian Distance, based on NPFA research of 4 - 14 year olds and the distance travelled within timeframes.

| Time | Pedestrian Distance | Straight Line Distance |
|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 20 minutes | 1300 metres | 780 metres |
| 15 minutes | 1000 metres | 600 metres |
| 10 minutes | 700 metres | 420 metres |
| 5 minutes | 400 metres | 240 metres |

The table below indicates the benchmark standards set out in the publication:

| | Quantity <i>Hectares per 1000 Population</i> | | | Quality | | | Accessibility | | |
|---|---|--------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------|----------------|---|--|---|
| | Urban | Rural | Overall | Urban | Rural | Overall | Urban | Rural | Overall |
| Playing Pitches | 1.15 | 1.72 ^{*1} | 1.20 | Technical Performance Quality Standards (FIT) ^{*3} | | | 1.2 km of all dwellings in major residential areas. | | |
| All Outdoor Sports | 1.60 | 1.76 | 1.60 ^{*2} | Other Technical Standards ^{*4} | | | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Athletics <i>(floodlit synthetic track)</i> | 1 floodlit track per 250,000 people | | | n/a | n/a | n/a | 30 mins drive | 45 mins drive | n/a |
| Tennis <i>(community courts)</i> | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 20 mins walk | 20 mins drive | n/a |
| Bowls | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 20 mins walk | 20 mins drive | n/a |
| Children's Play | Formal^{*5} | Informal | Overall | Formal | Informal | Overall | LAP^{*6} | LEAP^{*7} | NEAP^{*8} |
| | 0.25 | 0.55 | 0.80 | Fields in Trust's Play Value Assessment for Playgrounds (FIT) | | | 100 metres walk (or 60 straight line) | 400 metres walk (or 240 straight line) | 1000 metres walk (or 600 straight line) |
| | | | | Quality Assessment Tool (Children's Play Council) | | | | | |

^{*1} The Benchmark Standard for rural areas is significantly higher than for urban areas. This reflects the greater number of dispersed settlements, villages and small market towns, in rural areas and their separate needs for local facilities. It should not be taken to imply that each new settlement in a rural area requires a higher level of local provision than their urban counterparts. Each new settlement must be considered in the light of its own circumstances and its own locality.

^{*2} 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.

^{*3} Such as those published in 'Design and Maintenance of Outdoor Sports Facilities' (FIT).

^{*4} Such as those produced by Sport England, the Governing Bodies of Sport or professional or trade organisations.

^{*5} Designated playing space including equipped playing space.

^{*6} Local areas for play or 'door-step' spaces for play and informal recreation.

^{*7} Local equipped, or local landscaped, areas for play – for play and informal recreation.

^{*8} Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation, and provision for young people.

Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (2015 Review) - Phase 2 Survey Findings for England and Wales

This document is a review of how open space standards are used by local planning authorities in England and Wales. It confirms the relevance of benchmark standards alongside local assessments but does not make any recommendations for revised standards at this stage.

The Review has been used to inform the proposed standards for accessibility of parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural open space, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people and allotments.

The Review states that Neighbourhood Planning will be of ongoing relevance and the review of FIT standards will need to consider how this will be reflected in standards, for example incorporating the Local Green Space designation as advocated in the NPPF.

Natural England

Natural England works in partnership with local governments, developers, local communities and other stakeholders to ensure the natural environment is protected and wherever possible, enhanced.

Natural England is responsible for the designating and protecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's). The agency attempts to:

- Facilitate and encourage access to National Nature Reserves;
- Monitor and consider the effects of access on wildlife nationwide; and
- Stress the value of local sites and recommend local authorities form partnerships for the provision of local sites and SSSI's.

The following Natural England report considers green space guidance nationwide and the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt).

'Nature Nearby' Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (March 2010)

The concept of Nature Nearby is one of providing inspiring green spaces with high quality access to the natural environment. This is achievable through the application of the three Natural England standards:

- An Accessibility and Quantity Standard – to ensure equitable provision both close to home and within sustainable transport distances, i.e. Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt);
- Service Standards – for core services and facilities for each site type; and
- A national Quality Standard, i.e. The Green Flag Award scheme.

The Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) recommend:

- That no person should live no more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2ha in size;
- That there should be at least once accessible 20ha site within 2km from home;
- That there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km of home;
- That there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km of home; and
- Provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population.

The standards provided were justified in the following ways:

- The importance of everyday contact with nature for well-being and quality of life;
- Everyone should be able to enjoy contact with nature, in safety, without having to make any special effort;
- In towns and cities, natural green space can play an important role in helping safeguard our national treasure of wildlife and geological features;
- Accessible natural green spaces provide everyone with an excellent chance to learn about nature and how to protect it; and
- Adequate provision of vegetated areas helps ensure urban areas function ecologically.

The three underlying principles of ANGSt are to improve access, naturalness and the connectivity of green spaces.

Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust has developed the *Woodland Access Standard (WASt)*, which complements ANGSt. It recommends that everyone should have access to a woodland of at least 2 hectares within 500 metres of their home, and of at least 20 hectares within 4 kilometres.

Green Flag Award Scheme

The Green Flag Award Scheme is licenced to Keep Britain Tidy by The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who own the Scheme. Keep Britain Tidy is an environmental charity and anti-litter campaign for England.

The Green Flag Award Scheme is the benchmark for national standards for parks and green spaces in the UK. The aim of the scheme is to set a 'benchmark of excellence' for recreational green spaces and encourage others to achieve high environmental standards through partnership working. It rewards the best green spaces in the country. The Scheme was launched in 1996, with the first awards given in 1997 and it continues to provide the benchmark against which parks and green spaces are measured.

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners provide the following standards for allotments:

- 20 allotment plots per 1,000 households (or 20 allotments per 2,200 people where there are 2.2 people per house); or
- 1 allotment plot per 200 people.

With an average allotment plot of 250m² this equates to 0.125 ha per 1,000 population.

LOCAL STRATEGIC STANDARDS

North Northamptonshire Strategic Sports Facilities Framework (final, May 2010)

The Strategic Sports Facilities Framework arose from the need to agree a set of strategic sports facility priorities for the county of Northamptonshire as a whole. The Framework produces a set of sports facility priorities for North Northamptonshire; this document alongside a similar completed for the county of West Northamptonshire will fit together to provide a comprehensive set of priorities for the strategic facility provision across the county up to 2026.

The main aims of the document include the influencing of the Core Spatial Strategy review by providing an evidence base for improving sports facilities, informing Local Development Framework Documents, 'make the case' for sport and reflect the priorities set out in emerging Whole Sport Plans. It focuses on those facilities which are of strategic importance within North Northamptonshire. These are split by National, Regional, Strategic, Hub, Satellite and Local Facility Network.

Sport England has given parameters for all Boroughs' sport provision and the calculations for Wellingborough are based on the assumption that the area should have the same level of provision per thousand head of population as the average for the East Midlands.

| East Midlands Average (2010 Report) | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Facility Type | Quantity <i>Hectares per 1000 Population</i> | Unit |
| Sports Halls | 0.37 | Badminton Courts |
| Swimming Pools | 13 | m ² Water Space |
| Synthetic Turf Pitches | 0.03 | Full size pitches |
| Indoor Bowls | 0.06 | Rinks |
| Indoor Tennis | 0.02 | Courts |
| Athletics Tracks | 0.06 | Lanes |
| Health and Fitness Stations | 2.85 | Stations |
| Gold Driving Ranges | 0.24 | Bays |
| Badminton Courts | 0.37 | Badminton Courts |

North Northamptonshire Strategic Sports Facilities Framework (final, September 2014)

The North Northamptonshire Strategic Sports Facilities Framework (2014) updates the April 2012 study to include revised population data and projections through to 2031 in line with housing levels set out in the emerging Joint Core Strategy document for North Northamptonshire, as shown in the table below.

| | Housing target 2011-31 Emerging JCS 2012 | Population growth 2011-31 (Edge Analytics 2012) | Housing target 2011-31 Pre-submission JCS 2014 | Population growth 2011-31 (CCHPR 2013) |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|
| Corby | 14,200 | 32007 | 14,200 | 33610 |
| East Northants | 7,900 | 11252 | 8,400 | 13633 |
| Kettering | 10,700 | 18470 | 10,400 | 18863 |
| Wellingborough | 7,700 | 11053 | 7,000 | 11925 |
| North Northants | 40,500 | 72782 | 40,000 | 78031 |

This document forms part of an evidence base for policies and proposals in Local and Neighbourhood Plans and their supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plans and aligns to policies set out in the NPPF.

Sport England has given parameters for all Boroughs' sport provision and the calculations for Wellingborough are based on the assumption that the area should have the same level of provision per thousand head of population as the average for the East Midlands. The East Midlands average figure is provided yearly by Sport England, so differs from year to year and shows a slight change from the 2010 study.

| East Midlands Average (2014 Report) | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Facility Type | Quantity <i>Standard of provision per 1000 Population</i> | Unit |
| Sports Halls | 0.37 | Badminton Courts |
| Swimming Pools | 13 | m ² Water Space |
| Synthetic Turf Pitches | 0.04 | Full size pitches |
| Indoor Bowls | 0.06 | Rinks |
| Indoor Tennis | 0.02 | Courts |
| Athletics Tracks | 0.04 | Lanes |
| Health and Fitness Stations | 2.85 | Stations |
| Golf Driving Ranges | 0.24 | Bays |
| Athletics Training Facility | 0.0023 | Facility |
| Closed Road Cycle Track | 0.0023 | Facility |
| Gymnastics Centre | 0.0023 | Facility |

LOCAL STANDARDS

Borough Council of Wellingborough: Planning for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation (2005)

The 2005 open space study and associated report for Wellingborough Borough Council was conducted by PMP in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance (PPG17) and its companion guide. The study involved a comprehensive review of existing work undertaken by the Council and assessed local needs through household questionnaires. Results of the questionnaire provided a baseline to set and apply local standards, and to provide an overall open space framework which guided the future management and designation of open spaces in the area whilst ensuring all local needs and aspirations were met.

The study also involved a green infrastructure assessment which identified the current (2005) provision and opportunities to improve the network. The main focus of the study was to:

- Pull together existing work on open spaces in the borough of Wellingborough;
- Undertake consultation with local residents to assess local needs;
- Develop existing strategies further to provide local standards;
- Apply local standards to assess whether current provision meets the needs of Wellingborough;
- Develop a Green Infrastructure assessment for the town of Wellingborough ;
- Review and assess existing open space, sport and recreation planning policies and provide recommendations; and
- Provide recommendations for the future application of developer contributions.

Key findings of the study are under the headings of quantity, quality, accessibility and value.

Quantity

Provision standards were determined from quantity analysis alongside consultations and surveys. Standards were developed for consideration and possible adoption by the council alongside PPG17.

| PPG17 Typology | Quantity Provision Standard |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Parks and Public Gardens | 0.70ha per 1,000 population |
| Natural and Semi-Natural Space | 1.80ha per 1,000 population (Urban) 0.38ha per 1,000 population (Rural) |
| Amenity Green Space | 1.60ha per 1,000 population (Urban) 0.50ha per 1,000 population (Rural) |
| Provision for Children & Young People | 0.625 play areas per 1,000 population (Urban) 0.50 play areas per 1,000 population (Rural) |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | 2.40ha per 1,000 population (Excluding golf courses) |
| Allotments | 0.38ha per 1,000 population (Urban) 1.30ha per 1,000 population (Rural) |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | PPG17 suggests quantity standard not required due to the nature of the typology. |
| Green Corridors | PPG17 suggests that the setting of a quantitative standard is not appropriate |
| Civic Spaces | PPG17 suggests that the setting of a quantitative standard is not appropriate |

Quality

The study developed a quality vision for each typology based on local or national standards, current provision, and other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessment and consultation on local needs.

Accessibility

Specific information gained from the household questionnaire provided specific information in assisting the establishment of distance thresholds and accessibility standards for each type of open space as defined by PPG17. The recommended distance thresholds for each typology are as follows:

| Typology | Mode of Transport | Recommended Travel Time | Estimated Equivalent straight line Distance |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Parks and Public Gardens | Walk | 15 mins | 600m |
| Natural and Semi-Natural Space | Walk | 15 – 20 mins | 600m |
| Amenity Green Space | Walk | 10 mins | 420m |
| Provision for Children & Young People | Walk | 10 mins | 420m |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | Walk | 20 mins | 780m |
| Allotments | Walk | 15 mins | 600m |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | No Standard Set | | |
| Green Corridors | No Standard Set | | |
| Civic Spaces | No Standard Set | | |

Borough Council of Wellingborough Sports Facilities Strategy (2008)

In 2008 Nortoft Partnerships were commissioned by the Borough Council of Wellingborough to produce the Sports Facilities Strategy – The provision of built facilities for sport & recreation in the Borough. A robust assessment of the future need for built facilities for sport and recreation was undertaken in line with the brief as well as updating the previous Playing Pitch Strategy. Consultation with the local area included household surveys, Parish Council consultations, focus groups and clubs survey.

The study considered projected population growth up to 2021, and between 2021- 2026 the demand for sport & recreational facilities in line with these projected populations.

Key findings of the study include:

- The cost of new facilities proposed in the strategy to meet the needs of an increasing population and aspirations in relation to participation have been estimated and consideration given as to how they may be provided; and
- A summary of options for a range of new facilities, where they would be located, and what the facility would consist of.

The requirements to meet the key standard of sport facility provision per 1000 population are:

| Facility | Unit of Provision | Provision per 1000 |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| Swimming pools | Water space | 14 sq m |
| Sports halls (3+ badminton court size) | Badminton courts | 0.28 courts |
| Synthetic turf pitch | Full size pitches | 0.05 pitches |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Grass playing pitches | Hectares playing field | 1.55 ha |
| Indoor bowls | Rink | 0.08 rinks |
| Outdoor bowls | Green | 0.10 greens |
| Indoor tennis | Courts | 0.04 courts |
| Outdoor tennis | Courts | 0.20 courts |

The following facilities were proposed for the period 2021-2026:

| Facility | Proposal |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| Athletics Track | Synthetic track, 6 lane floodlit |
| Indoor bowls | 6 rink indoor centre |
| Indoor tennis | 3 courts |
| Outdoor bowls | 2 greens |
| Outdoor tennis | 3 courts |