

Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play

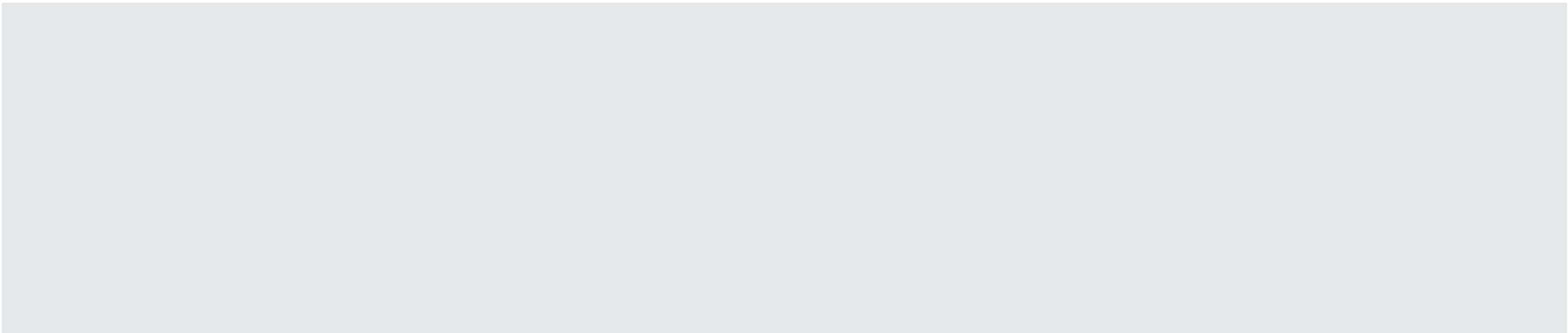
Beyond the Six Acre Standard

England



Green Spaces for Good

Contents



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Foreword



'At first glance the similarities between toddlers playing in the local park and professional athletes competing at the highest level seem tenuous but they both share one basic requirement: a need for outdoor recreational space.'

Parks, playgrounds and playing fields play a vital role in building healthy neighbourhoods contributing to the physical, mental and emotional well-being of local people. Without access to these spaces the quality of life and wellbeing of residents is reduced.

Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard emphasises the need for a range of both formal and informal outdoor spaces to meet our recreational needs and the practical tools to guarantee sufficient space is available.

Outdoor recreational spaces are the foundation stone for an active, healthy nation. Fields in Trust's expert advice ensures provision of these spaces is part of the fabric of our communities.'

The Rt Hon The Lord Coe CH KBE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "The Rt Hon The Lord Coe CH KBE".

'Since the 1930s, Fields in Trust has provided guidance on the provision of outdoor space for sport, play and recreation that is both respected and valued across the sector. This new publication recognises the need for people to have access to a wide range of outdoor spaces for recreational purposes and the intrinsic value these important spaces bring to the health and well-being of our communities.'

HRH The Duke of Cambridge
President, Fields in Trust

'I welcome this updated guide which councils and neighbourhood planning groups may find helpful when they consider planning for open space'.

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Former Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Introduction

'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play' is a one-stop shop for the practitioner – local planning authorities, developers, planners and urban designers, landscape architects and parish and town councils – in the planning and design of outdoor sport, play and informal open space.

Fields in Trust

Fields in Trust is the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), and has been protecting outdoor space for sport and recreation since 1925. Its mission is to safeguard and improve protected space for future generations.

Fields in Trust currently safeguards over 2,500 sites, a total of 28,000 acres of land (11,331ha.) including playgrounds, playing fields, and formal and informal parkland across the UK.

Examples of Fields in Trust's protection work include the [King George V Fields](#), the [Queen Elizabeth II Fields](#) and [Centenary Fields](#).

Open Space Guidance

As part of its protection work, Fields in Trust has offered guidance for practitioners on open space provision and design known as the Six Acre Standard (6AS) since the 1930s and most recently updated to Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (PDOSP) in 2008.

The benchmark standards within PDOSP remain a useful guidance tool. However, there is need for review, given the substantial changes in the political, planning and social landscapes since 2008 including:

- * reforms to national planning policy and guidance and the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning and CIL; and
- * a growing trend towards a preference for individual participatory sport.

Sustainability

Updated guidance for open space and play provision resonates with national planning policy, in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the promotion of its economic, social and environmental roles and the seeking of positive improvements in the quality of the environment, and people's quality of life. In promoting healthy communities, access to high quality open spaces can make an important contribution to health and wellbeing. Such open spaces should not be built on unless any loss is appropriately replaced or outweighed by new provision.

Open space also plays an important role in meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding through integrating Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and providing opportunities for conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

A review of current national planning policy and guidance related to open space provision can be found [here](#).



Policy context

National Policy – England

i. National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as revised in June 2019, forms the key national policy document and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

ii. National Planning Practice Guidance

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides additional guidance to the NPPF, including in relation to open space, sports and recreation, in the form of an online resource.

iii. The Localism Act – Neighbourhood Planning Orders

The Localism Act paved the way for planning powers to be passed down to local communities through the production of Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Plans are to be prepared by community groups, guided by Local Planning Authorities, and plan for a range of land uses, including outdoor sports and recreation uses.

iv. Planning Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a method of collecting funds from development to pay for necessary delivery and maintenance of infrastructure. Local authorities have the freedom to set their own priorities for what the money should be spent on. A portion of the CIL funds (up to 25%) will be payable to local communities with Neighbourhood Plans in place, for the purpose of localised spending on priority projects. CIL funds are capable of being used to fund local sport and recreation facilities.

v. Other Material Orders/Legislation

- * Metropolitan Open Land designation (in London).
- * Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG 17): although no longer current guidance, the content is still of practical value, along with The Companion Guide to PPG 17 (Assessing Needs and Opportunities).
- * Disposal or change of use of playing field and school land (2015).
- * Housing and Planning Act 2016
- * Housing White Paper – Fixing Our Broken Housing Market

Green Flag Awards

Managed by Keep Britain Tidy and Keep Wales Tidy these awards reward the best green spaces in the country. Green Flag recognises the importance of Fields in Trust permanent safeguarding of open spaces in its processes.



Fields in Trust Policy Framework

Good planning and design is central to the philosophy and objectives of Fields in Trust and adds value to the overall quality of an area, helping to create a sense of place and space as well as contributing to the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Fields in Trust policy framework seeks the protection, provision and improvement of outdoor spaces for sport and play as part of the provision of sustainable communities.

Policies are kept under review to ensure that they remain relevant and proportionate. Current land-use policies include:



Policy 1 – Promoting Healthy Communities

As its core principle Fields in Trust protects the legacy of high quality outdoor spaces to facilitate opportunities for sport, play and recreation.



Policy 2 – Protection of Open Space

Fields in Trust seeks to contractually protect individual outdoor spaces for sport, play and recreation in perpetuity via deed of dedication. Fields in Trust does not look to own or manage sites but to work with all recreational landowners to secure the future of their local spaces for recreation.



Policy 3 – Safeguarding of Facilities

Fields in Trust objects to the loss of existing open space for sport play and recreation unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. The development of community playing fields and school playing fields should be refused unless replacement facilities of equal quality and quantity can be provided to serve the same catchment area to meet the need of both new and existing communities.



Policy 4 – Town and Village Greens

Whilst noting that recreational use of land may meet the criteria for registration of land as a town and village green, Fields in Trust prefers that such space be protected by deeds of dedication to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between protection and flexibility to improve the space.



Policy 5 – Green Belt Development

Fields in Trust supports the provision of playing fields and other appropriate recreational facilities in the Green Belt consistent with policy for Green Belt development.



Policy 6 – Sustainable Development

Fields in Trust supports sustainability benefits arising from outdoor spaces including energy use and generation, carbon reduction, conservation of natural resources such as air, water, soil and biodiversity, sustainable consumption and production.



Policy 7 – Telecommunications

Fields in Trust does not normally support telecommunications apparatus and structures on playing fields if they conflict with the primary purpose of the land. Any such cases will be considered on individual merit.



Policy 8 – Planning and Design

Fields in Trust attaches great importance to the planning and design of facilities for communities. Good planning will achieve the provision of open spaces (formal and informal). Designated spaces (LAPs, LEAPs, NEAPs and MUGAs) should be provided on all developments in line with the guidance set out in this document.



Policy 9 – Planning Agreements

Fields in Trust seeks to secure the provision and protection of spaces for outdoor sport, play and recreation through planning conditions or obligations.



Policy 10 – National Planning Policies

Fields in Trust seeks to support national guidance and policies geared towards the protection of outdoor space for sport, play and recreation.

Fields in Trust guidelines: guidance for the practitioner

Fields in Trust's benchmark standards, or local guidance derived from them, were widely used by local authorities for many years and they were referred to by other bodies, including Sport England who used to refer to them for benchmarking purposes. 75% of LPAs in [a survey commissioned by Fields in Trust in 2014](#) use the PDOSP or guidance that promotes equivalent levels of provision demonstrating the continuing relevance of Fields in Trust's Benchmark Guidelines.

The 2015 guidance backed up by research retains the same headline rates of provision, but draws out new recommendations for accessibility, the application of standards and the minimum dimensions of formal outdoor space. The standards also no longer differentiate between urban and rural areas.

Using this current guidance will help to ensure that the provision of outdoor sport, play and informal open space is of a sufficient size to enable effective use; is located in an accessible location and in close proximity to dwellings; and of a quality to maintain longevity and to encourage its continued use. It is recommended that Equipped/ Designated Play Spaces be promoted in the form of:

- * Local Areas for Play (LAPs) aimed at very young children;
- * Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) aimed at children who can go out to play independently; and
- * Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) aimed at older children.

These can be complemented by other facilities including Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and skateboard parks etc.

Open spaces can also provide dual use for Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), delivering recreational benefits by using attenuation and storage areas for play and/or sports areas.

Table 1 sets out Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines for a range of open space and equipped play areas. These benchmarks reflect the findings of the survey of local standards for open space applied by local planning authorities.

Quantity guidelines should not be interpreted as maximum levels of provision, and it is recommended that these are adjusted to take account of local circumstances.

Accessibility guidelines are provided as walking distance from dwellings. Indicative walking distances can be determined from the accessibility guidelines as set out below.

- * 250m = 2–3 minutes' walk
- * 400m = 5 minutes' walk
- * 800m = 10 minutes' walk
- * 1,200m = 15 minutes' walk
- * 1,600m = 20 minutes' walk

It should be recognised that when applying these benchmarks, local features and obstacles to pedestrian and cycle movement should be taken into account. In doing so, accessible and sustainable play and sport facilities will be maximised.

High quality green spaces go a long way to encouraging people to use facilities positively and actively. Fields in Trust favours the use of durable equipment to reduce the burden and cost of maintaining open spaces, and recommend that management and maintenance regimes be put in place to ensure repair and replacement can be facilitated over time as necessary to maintain the standard of quality.

Definitions can be found within the glossary for the open space and equipped/designated play area typologies.



Equipped and designated play spaces should be in accessible locations and in close proximity to dwellings

Table 1: Fields in Trust recommended benchmark guidelines – formal outdoor space

Open space typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ² (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m	* Quality appropriate to the intended level of performance, designed to appropriate technical standards. * Located where they are of most value to the community to be served. * Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community. * Appropriately landscaped. * Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance. * Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time as necessary. * Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment. * Provision of footpaths. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, taking into account the level of play, topography, necessary safety margins and optimal orientation³. * Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Play England Quality Tool.
All outdoor sports ¹	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25 See table 4 for recommended minimum sizes	LAPs – 100m LEAPs – 400m NEAPs – 1,000m	
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	0.30	700m	

¹The 'All outdoor sports' typology includes 'Playing pitches' within it. The remaining 0.4ha within this guideline encompasses courts and green comprising natural or artificial surfaces. See Glossary for more detail.

²Quantity guidelines should not be interpreted as either a maximum or minimum level of provision; rather they are benchmark standards that can be adjusted to take account of local circumstances.

³Technical standards produced by [Sport England](#), national governing sporting bodies or professional or trade organisations, such as the [Institute of Groundsmanship](#) and the [Sports and Play Construction Association](#) can prove helpful.

The guidelines are recommended to relate to residential and mixed-use developments involving non-specialist residential use (i.e. the standards should be reviewed where there are high levels of student housing, or sheltered accommodation) using average household sizes for the relevant local planning authority.

Table 2 sets out recommended benchmark guidelines for the provision of equipped/designated play space. These should be provided on site in accordance with the minimum sizes set out at [Table 4](#). A financial contribution (i.e. through S106 or CIL) towards improvement of an existing equipped/designated play space may be sought in lieu of on-site provision for larger scale play spaces, or where existing play space lies within the walking distance guideline of a proposed development (see Table 2).

Table 2: Recommended Application of Quantity Benchmark Guidelines – Equipped/Designated Play Space

Scale of Development	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)
5–10 dwellings	✓			
1–200 dwellings	✓	✓		Contribution
201–500 dwellings	✓	✓	Contribution	✓
501+ dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3: Fields in Trust Recommended Benchmark Guidelines – Informal Outdoor Space

Fields in Trust [survey of local standards](#) identified the use of local standards for informal outdoor spaces such as Parks and Gardens and the broad use of national standards for space such as Natural England’s ‘Nature Nearby’ Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance. Fields in Trust considers that these spaces can play a valuable role in complementing formal outdoor space provision consistent with its objectives, and provide opportunities for play and recreation. Table 3 sets out benchmark guidelines for informal outdoor space.

Open Space Typology	QUANTITY GUIDELINE ³ (hectares per 1,000 population)	WALKING GUIDELINE (walking distance: metres from dwellings)	QUALITY GUIDELINE
Parks and Gardens	0.80	710m	* Parks to be of Green Flag status. * Appropriately landscaped. * Positive management. * Provision of footpaths. * Fields in Trust protection. * Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime.
Amenity Green Space	0.60	480m	
Natural and Semi-Natural	1.80	720m	

³ Quantity guidelines are provided as minimum guidelines and should not be interpreted as maximum levels of provision, and it is recommended that they are adjusted to take account of local circumstances.

How to apply this guidance

Fields in Trust's benchmarks form a suitable basis for informing planning policies at district or neighbourhood level, and to inform planning decisions on individual proposals.

Quantity

The quantity guidelines can be applied across all urban and rural settings. Account should be taken of the intensity of use of a particular facility: it may be appropriate to relax the quantity guidelines where facilities support a high intensity of usage (e.g. MUGAs, Synthetic Turf Pitches supported by floodlighting).

Accessibility

Accessibility thresholds should be measured as distances actually walked rather than 'as the crow flies' (see also the [indicative walking times on page 5](#)). Significant obstacles or impediments to local access such as main roads should be avoided in accessing open spaces. Open Space and play facilities should be located and be accessible from bus stops, pedestrian and cycle routes to promote sustainable travel. Other larger scale strategic facilities such as swimming pools or golf courses will have broader catchments – these lie beyond the scope of this guidance.

Quality

The quality guidelines should be applied to encourage people to use facilities which are safe, secure and fit for purpose.

Spatial Requirements Recommended Minimum Sizes

The recommended minimum spatial requirements for the more popular outdoor sports and games are set out in [Table 4](#). These requirements allow for safety margins and the movement of pitches from season to season. Unless stated otherwise, the areas given are those for senior use. The information is provided only as a guide. The margins around pitches should allow for maintenance operations to be carried out. Further guidance on the dimensions of each type of facility can be found in many other publications, including those of the [Sports and Play Construction Association](#) and [Sport England](#).

Buffer Zones

A suitable relationship can be created by using the minimum buffer zones for specific facilities. These off-set distances ensure that facilities do not enable users to overlook neighbouring properties, reducing the possibility of conflict between local residents and those at play.



Conflict between local residents and those at play should be kept to a minimum

Table 4: Recommended minimum sizes – formal outdoor space

Open space typology	Minimum sizes		Minimum dimensions	Buffer zones
Playing pitches	<u>Association football</u>			
	Adult soccer	0.74ha	106 x 70 metres	-
	Mini soccer U7/U8 pitch	0.14ha	43 x 33 metres	
	Mini soccer U9/U10 pitch	0.25ha	60 x 42 metres	
	<u>Rugby Union</u>	0.70ha	100 x 70 metres	-
	<u>Hockey</u>			
	Mini Hockey	0.31ha	65 x 48 metres	-
	<u>Lacrosse</u>	0.66ha	100 x 60 metres	-
	<u>Cricket</u>			
	Senior recreational 12 pitch	1.43ha	111.56 x 128.04 metres	-
Other outdoor (non-pitch) sports	<u>Athletics</u>			
	6 lane track	1.51ha	172.03 x 87.64 metres	-
	<u>Tennis courts</u>			
	1 recreational court	0.06ha	34.75 x 17.07 metres	-
	2 recreational courts	0.11ha	34.75 x 31.70 metres	
	For each adjacent court	0.05ha	34.75 x 14.63 metres	
	<u>Bowling greens</u>			
	Flat green	0.12ha	34.4 x 34.4 metres	-
	Crown green	0.08ha	27.4 x 27.4 metres	
Equipped/designated play areas	<u>LAP</u>	0.01ha	10 x 10 metres <i>(minimum activity zone of 100sqm)</i>	5m min separation between activity zone and nearest property containing a dwelling
	<u>LEAP</u>	0.04ha	20 x 20 metres <i>(minimum activity zone of 400sqm)</i>	20m min separation between activity zone and the habitable room façade of dwellings
	<u>NEAP</u>	0.1ha	31.6 x 31.6 metres <i>(minimum activity zone of 1,000sqm comprising an area for play equipment and structures & a hard surfaced area of at least 465sqm (the minimum needed to play five-a-side football))</i>	30m min separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling
Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks)	<u>MUGA</u>	0.1ha	40 x 20 metres	30m min separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling

Annexe A: Glossary

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6AS	Six Acre Standard (2001)	MUGA	Multi Use Games Area	Other outdoor sports	Courts and greens comprising natural or artificial surfaces, including tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks and other outdoor sports areas
Accessibility	Convenient, inclusive and safe accessibility to outdoor facilities, particularly for children and the less mobile	Multi-functionality	Green space performs both important recreational activity space and important environmental functions, such as moderating surface water run-off, air pollution and wind speeds, as well as providing wildlife habitats to aid biodiversity	Parks and Gardens	Formal green spaces including urban parks, country parks, forest parks, and formal gardens
Amenity greenspace	Informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, and village greens	Natural and semi-natural greenspaces	Woodland, scrub, grassland, wetlands, open and running water, and open access land	PDOSP	Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (2008)
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy	NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people)	Playing pitches	Pitch sports including soccer, rugby union, rugby league, hockey, lacrosse, cricket and American football
Designated play areas	Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play comprising casual or informal playing space within housing areas. These play areas comprise LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs	Non-specialist residential use	Dwellinghouse occupied by a single person or by people regarded as forming a single household, not including residential accommodation where care is provided, purpose-built student accommodation or holiday homes	Quality	The needs, expectations and experiences of users, and the design, management and maintenance of facilities
General Residential Use	Residential use within Class C3 of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order but excluding specialist forms of housing such as housing aimed at specialist groups (e.g. sheltered housing, student accommodation etc.) or housing not permanently occupied such as holiday homes	NPFA	National Playing Fields Association	Quantity	A measure of the amount of open space provision which is necessary to meet the needs of the local (and in some cases the regional) catchment
LAP	Local Area for Play (and informal recreation)	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework		
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play (and informal recreation)	NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance		
LPA	Local Planning Authority	Other outdoor provision	Other outdoor provision comprises MUGAS, skateboard parks and other outdoor provision		

Annexe B: Summary report of the survey work

Introduction

1. Fields in Trust undertook a review of recommendations on standards for outdoor play, sport and recreation within *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* (formerly known as the Six Acre Standard). This work was undertaken on a phased basis: a Phase 1 desk top pilot study of 30 local planning authorities undertaken by Pegasus Group (July 2014) and a Phase 2 survey undertaken on behalf of Fields in Trust by David Lock Associates (DLA).
2. The Phase 2 survey comprised an online survey of local planning authorities, supplemented by further desktop research drawing on the Phase 1 study and other sources.

Quantitative Survey of Local Authorities

3. All local planning authorities throughout England and Wales were sent an online questionnaire relating to the practical use of standards for space for outdoor sport and play. A total of 107 English and 12 Welsh authorities responded to the survey. The Phase 2 report analyses the 119 responses from local planning authorities in England and Wales only. This represents a response rate for England and Wales of 33%.
4. A total of 81% of respondents express quantity standards for open space as 'hectares per 1,000 population'.
5. In relation to local standards for open space being met in planning decision-taking, and based on a scoring system with 1 being 'seldom' and 10 being 'always', 64% indicated a score between 7 and 10. This indicates a relatively high degree of compliance with open space standards in planning decision making.

Playing Pitches

6. 52% of respondents were able to provide data about their current standards for the provision of playing pitches on a hectares per 1,000 population basis. The median level of provision was 1.21 hectares per 1,000 population which is comparable with the recommendation of 1.20 hectares per 1,000 population in *'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play'* (2008). In 20 instances, the local planning authority standard for playing pitches employed is lower than the Fields in Trust benchmark recommendation.
7. The median accessibility standard from respondents was 1,200m from dwellings, which matches the Fields in Trust benchmark.

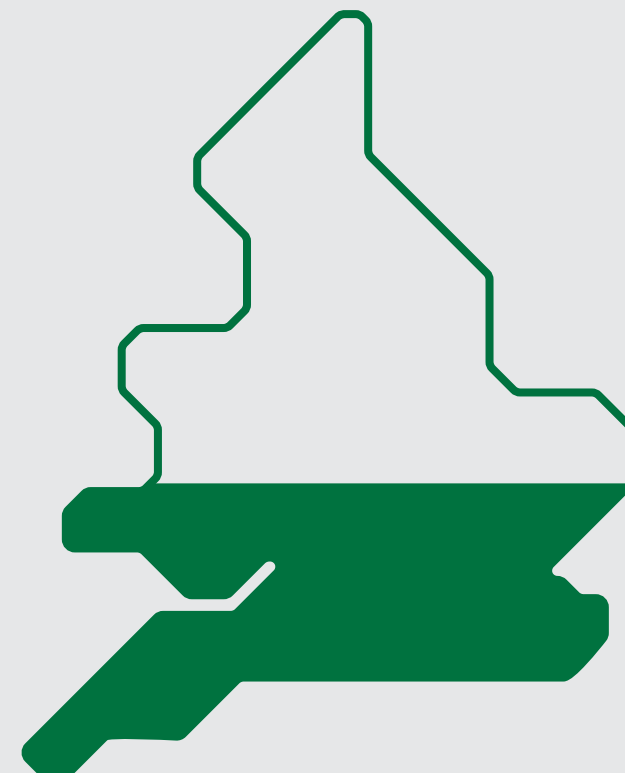
Other Outdoor Sports

8. 25% of respondents were able to provide data about their current standards for the provision for other outdoor sports, expressed as hectares per 1,000 population. Other outdoor sports (excluding pitches) included provision of bowling greens, tennis courts, athletic tracks and Gaelic football. Taken with the standards for Playing Pitches for the relevant authorities, the combined total exceeds the benchmark of 1.60 hectares per 1,000 population for All Outdoor Sport in *'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play'* (2008).

Designated Play Areas

9. 49% of respondents were able to provide data about their current designated equipped spaces for play, expressed as hectares per 1,000 population. The median level of provision was 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population. This is equal to the Fields in Trust benchmark standard for Designated Playing Space.
10. The median accessibility standard was 100m for LAPs, 400m for LEAPs, and 1,000m for NEAPs when considered individually. Accessibility standards were also more commonly expressed in terms of walking time, rather than distance.

The survey was able to analyse the standards of one third of local authorities in England and Wales



Other Outdoor Provision

11. 13% of respondents were able to provide data about their current provision for other outdoor provision, expressed as hectares per 1,000 population. Other outdoor provision comprised provision of natural and semi-natural green space, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), and wheeled sport (BMX track or Skate Park). A small number of respondents noted that 'other outdoor' provision was included as part of their requirements for open space for children and young people.

Parks and Amenity Green Space

12. 22% of the total number of respondents were able to provide data about parks and amenity green space as an overall standard, expressed as hectares per 1,000 population. For parks and amenity green space, where provided as an overall standard, the median level of provision sought was 1.0 hectare per 1,000 population.
13. For Parks on their own, 21% of respondents provided data which identified the median level of provision sought to be 0.8 hectares per 1,000 population.
14. For Amenity Green Space on its own, 21% of respondents provided data which identified the median level of provision sought to be 0.55 hectares per 1,000 population.

Other Open Space Standards

15. 42% of respondents were able to provide data about other standards for open space applied within their local authority area. 'Others' included an overall catch-all standard, allotments, community gardens, and urban farms, and natural and semi-natural greenspace.
16. The median overall standard of provision for 'others' was 1.59 hectares per 1,000 population.
17. The median level of provision for allotments, community gardens and urban farms was 0.3 hectares per 1,000 population.
18. For natural and semi-natural green space, the local standard of provision was 1.78 hectares per 1,000 population.

Quality

19. 59% of English and Welsh authorities identified that they had specific requirements regarding the quality of new open space provision. Of those respondents who specified their quality requirements, 18% apply a local assessment of quality (the most commonly used quality assessment by respondents). 10% apply the Green Flag standard to assess the quality of parks. 8% of respondents apply the Fields in Trust standards. 2% of authorities apply the Sport England standards in assessing the quality of sports pitches.

Appeals

20. A shortlist of 19 appeal decisions were reviewed relating to the disposal and reuse of open space, the replacement of open space or new provision. The decisions were specific to the particular circumstances of each case and no clear pattern regarding the use of Fields in Trust standards was apparent. However, a number of cases did make reference to Fields in Trust standards and used these as part of the decision-making process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

21. The survey work demonstrated clearly that the previous recommendations of 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' (2008) remain very relevant in the context of current provision in England and Wales. As provided by the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, there is a need for local assessment but the use of Fields in Trust recommendations as quantitative Benchmark Standards carry general value. As illustrated from the survey results, there are variations both below and above the Fields in Trust Benchmark standards.



Annexe C: Further planning context

Planning Policy in England

1. An overview of the influential planning policy relevant to the provision of outdoor space for sport, recreation and play focuses on that within England. This reflects the local planning authorities surveyed as part of the 2015 Survey for those countries where the response rate was sufficient to provide a representative sample of local planning authorities. **Localism Act**
2. The **Localism Act** of 2011, paved the way for planning powers to be passed down to local communities through the production of Neighbourhood Plans. **Neighbourhood planning legislation** came into effect in April 2012 and revised in recent legislation. Neighbourhood Plans are to be prepared by town and parish councils and community groups, guided by Local Planning Authorities, and plan for a range of land uses, including outdoor sports and recreation uses and designations. As such there is a need to respond to Neighbourhood Planning within the revised Benchmark Guidelines.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

3. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a method of collecting funds from development to pay for necessary delivery and maintenance of infrastructure. It came into force in April 2010 through the **Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010**. The latest amendments are set out in the **Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2015** which came into force in April 2015. Most new development which creates net additional floor space of 100 square metres or more, or creates a new dwelling, is potentially liable for the levy. Local authorities have the freedom to set their own priorities for what the money should be spent on.
4. A portion of the CIL funds (up to 25%) will be payable to local communities with Neighbourhood Plans in place, for the purpose of localised spending on priority projects. CIL funds are capable of being used to fund local sport and recreation facilities. The regulations set out controls to ensure the use of the levy and planning obligations does not overlap. **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
5. The **National Planning Policy Framework** (published 2012, revised 2018), forms the key national policy document and is a material consideration in planning decisions⁴. The previous guidance 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' (PDOSP) predates the NPPF and the Benchmark Guidelines in the revised guidance reflect the relevant requirements of the NPPF, and the revocation of Planning Policy Guidance 17: Sport and Recreation on which the PDOSP was based.
6. The NPPF advocates a presumption in favour of sustainable development and identifies the three dimensions of sustainable development as economic, social and environmental. Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation are highlighted as an important aspect of healthy communities.
7. One of the design principles set out under NPPF paragraph 127 states that policies should ensure that developments "places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users".
8. NPPF paragraph 96 states that "access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities ... and opportunities for new provision".

9. Benchmark Guidelines at the national level must therefore continue to be capable of adjusting to local circumstances.
10. The NPPF also promotes the protection of existing open space (paragraphs 97 & 99) which is a key aspect of Fields in Trusts' operations as a national charity that safeguards recreational spaces. Paragraph 180 also states that policies should "*identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason*".

Paragraph 141 promotes the use of Green Belt land for beneficial outdoor sport and recreation opportunities, where it preserves the openness of the Green Belt (paragraph 145), or in London 'Metropolitan Open Land', which is afforded the same level of protection as the Green Belt.

11. Paragraph 29 relates to community involvement in planning decisions, including through Neighbourhood Planning, and states that:
"The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities... To support this, local planning authorities should aim to involve all sections of the community in the development of Local Plans and in planning decisions, and should facilitate neighbourhood planning."

⁴ See paragraph 13 of the NPPF, DCLG (March 2012)

13. Land can be designated as ‘Local Green Space’ in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans, which provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF sets out the requirements for designation and comprise:
- ***“where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;***
 - ***Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and***
 - ***local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”***
14. Local Green Space designation exemplifies the importance to local communities of recreational space which is in close proximity to local people.
15. One of the three overarching objectives of the planning system, the social objective, states that the system should foster *“a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being”*.
16. Physical activity is fundamental to the overall health and wellbeing of the population, and therefore the provision of open space for sport, play and recreation is instrumental to this.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

17. **National Planning Practice Guidance** provides additional guidance to the NPPF in the form of a web-based resource which is updated on a regular basis to incorporate changes in planning legislation and policy. The NPPG provides guidance on a wide range of topics, including in relation to open space, sports and recreation.
18. As the online NPPG is periodically updated, and to avoid referencing out-of-date guidance, a written summary of guidance is not provided in this document. Up-to-date PG guidance can be found at: www.planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/
19. The following topic areas may be of particular relevance:
- Community Infrastructure Levy
 - Natural environment
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Neighbourhood Planning
 - Open space, sports and recreational facilities, public rights of way and Local Green Space

Annexe D: Other ways to use this guidance

1. Beyond the Six Acre Standard: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play provides a fresh expression of Fields in Trust benchmark policies for sports and play provision. This annexe sets out further advice on how the guidance can be employed.

How Fields in Trust can help

- * Guidance.
- * The benchmark and the ways to meet it.
- * Research of equivalent cases.
- * Implementation: legal and ownership mechanisms to protect land over the long term.

Alternative and multi-use ways of providing sport and recreation within planned developments

2. In certain locations it may be appropriate to consider the sharing of facilities or the provision of multi-use facilities.
3. The dual use of facilities covers all situations in which the community is granted authorised access to school facilities for outdoor sport and recreation irrespective of the detailed financial arrangements or original intentions which guided the planning and provision of the facilities.
4. Provided that community safety and school security issues, including insurance, can be satisfied it is recommended that school playing space is made available to the local community out of school hours and during holiday periods. Hard surfaced or synthetic pitches and courts have the ability to sustain intensive use and may usefully provide opportunities for community use when not in use by the school and changing facilities are available.

5. The ability of natural grass pitches to sustain additional community use outside school hours will depend on a number of factors, including weather conditions, the drainage characteristics of the site, and the frequencies of sports being played. To avoid difficulties for the school and a potential decline in the quality of facilities, there must be a clear understanding of any necessary physical alterations to the premises and proper management of the dual use.
6. Many groups besides local authorities provide opportunities for children's play. The shared use of a play area may be offered to the community as part of a Section 106 agreement related to a planning application, for use by different groups of children.
7. There is also the potential for the active recreational use of features such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) in major developments which can be used as linear play areas.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and Local Plans

8. The results of the [Phase 2 survey](#) demonstrate that the Fields in Trust benchmarks remain very relevant in the context of current provision in England and Wales. The Fields in Trust benchmarks provide a starting point for determining local standards of provision, accessibility and quality.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and Neighbourhood Plans

9. [Neighbourhood Plans](#) are prepared by neighbourhood planning groups (often Town or Parish Councils), guided by Local Planning Authorities, and plan for a range of land uses, including outdoor sports and recreation uses. Fields in Trust Benchmarks can be used in identifying an appropriate level of outdoor sport and play provision. Councils should consider working with Fields in Trust to protect their existing provision, particularly where they do not currently meet the benchmark.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and CIL

10. The [Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\)](#) allows local planning authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development. A portion of CIL funds will be payable to local communities close to the development location with Neighbourhood Plans in place for the purpose of localised spending on priority projects. These funds are capable of being used to fund local sport and recreation facilities, and local planning authorities and local communities should consider how these funds can be apportioned for the provision or improvements to such uses. Most new development which creates net additional floor space of 100 square metres or more, or creates a new dwelling, is potentially liable for the levy. CIL therefore presents a potential resource to allow smaller scale development to make an effective contribution to outdoor sport and play provision.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and Local Green Space

11. Land can be designated as '[Local Green Space](#)' in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans, which provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. Fields In Trust Benchmark guidelines can assist in defining the role of such spaces in meeting open space needs within the local community.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and Planning Applications

12. Planning applications must satisfy local policy requirements which include open space provision. Benchmark Guidelines and spatial requirements can be used to form the basis for determining locally derived standards based on need, accessibility and quality.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and Appeals

13. In the determination of appeal decisions where the disposal and reuse of open space, the replacement of open space or new provision is a material consideration, Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines can provide an appropriate method of assessment, providing a robust basis for decision-takers to assess the provision of open space.

Fields in Trust Benchmark Guidelines and Disposals

14. Fields in Trust benchmarks can be utilised to ensure an appropriate provision for outdoor sport and play is provided for, when considering the disposal of or alternative use for existing open spaces.

Annexe E: Useful resources

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Fields in Trust	www.fieldsintrust.org	Sport and Recreation Alliance	www.sportandrecreation.org.uk
Sport England	www.sportengland.org	Federation of Sports and Play Associations	www.sportsandplay.com
Sports and Play Construction Association	www.sapca.org.uk	Play England	www.playengland.org.uk
Grounds Maintenance Association	www.thegma.org.uk	Association of Play Industries	www.api-play.org
Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity	www.cimspa.co.uk	Register of Playground Inspectors International	www.playinspectors.com
Football Association	www.thefa.com	RoSPA Play Safety	www.rospace.com/playsafety
Football Foundation	www.footballfoundation.org.uk	Playlink	www.playlink.org.uk

Useful publications

- 'A plain English guide to the Localism Act'
Department for Communities and Local Government (2011)
- 'Design for Play: A Guide to creating successful play spaces'
Play England (2008)
- 'Localism Act 2011' The Stationery Office Limited
- 'National Planning Policy Framework'
Department for Communities and Local Government (2012)
- 'National Planning Practice Guidance'
Department for Communities and Local Government
- 'Plain English guide to the Planning System'
Department for Communities and Local Government (2015)
- 'The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010'
The Stationery Office Limited
- 'The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2013' The Stationery Office Limited
- 'The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2015' The Stationery Office Limited
- 'The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012'
The Stationery Office Limited
- 'The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended' The Stationery Office Limited
- 'Town and Country Planning Act 1990' The Stationery Office Limited

Annexe F: Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Steering Group

Dr. Ann Heywood is Consultant to Academic Partnerships International working with Cambridge and other universities to spread access to their educational offering globally, online. She is also a Trustee and Court Assistant of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Surveyors. She was formerly Principal of the College of Estate Management, the leading not for profit supported e-learning provider for the property and construction sector. Previously in private practice as Principal of sustainability consultancy (Principal Purpose) advising on best practice in sustainable development, construction and delivery. She was elected Green Surveyor of the year by RICS and chaired the RICS Presidential Commission on Sustainability (2004 – 2007), with a mission to increase sustainability awareness and good practice throughout the 120,000 members of the Institution, worldwide. She was also Special Adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee and a Non-executive Director, Salford Urban Regeneration Company (SURC) (2007 – 09) and has been an Executive Board Member of the Construction Industry Council (CIC) since 2009. Ann has been a Trustee of Fields in Trust since 2013.

Paul Garber is a qualified town planner with 48 years experience in development and construction. Prior to his retirement he was Group Planning Director of George Wimpey/Taylor Wimpey and a Director of GW/TW Strategic Land. His experience extends to master planning major developments throughout the UK, experience as an expert at over 600 Inquiries and providing advice to Government Agencies on design and the built environment. He was also a member of the Planning Committee of the HBF (Homebuilders Federation).

Outside his professional role he has had an extensive involvement in playing fields in the UK initially as a Trustee and Officer of the Surrey Playing Fields Association since 1978 and as a FIT Trustee since 2001. Paul also Chairs FIT's Land and Planning Committee. He was President of British Gymnastics and Vice President of European Gymnast (UEG). His other involvements in sport have included being Regional Chairman of the former Sports Council, Director of Sports Aid and a member of the Commonwealth Games Council for England. He has previously been a Team Manager for Team GB at Olympic Games.

With Thanks to **Tim Smith**, , former member of the Steering Group. Tim is a solicitor and partner at the city law firm Berwin Leighton Paisner. He was also a Trustee of Fields in Trust between 2010 -18. Tim is an acknowledged expert in Planning law with over 20 years' experience. He has been voted as one of the top ten planning solicitors nationally over several years. He has also been a member of the Law Society's Planning & Environment Committee since 2009. Tim has a wide-ranging practice acting for both private and public sector clients on all aspects of planning law.