



Stafford Borough Council
**PPG17 Assessment and
Open Space, Sport and Recreation
Facilities Strategy**

Final Report: March 2009



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1: Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

When people step outside their home, or place of work, they enter the public realm – the streets, squares and greenspaces that are an essential component of our towns and cities. If well designed and maintained, they contribute hugely to making somewhere an attractive place in which to live. This is something, which the Georgians, in particular, understood well, with their squares and crescents, all facing networks of attractive greenspaces.

Across the whole of the UK, however, greenspace planning has been much neglected since Georgian times, with a few exceptions including the great Victorian parks, the Garden City movement and of course the New Towns. Management and maintenance have also suffered as a result of the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering for grounds maintenance in the mid eighties. The effect has been sharply to reduce the cost of maintaining parks and greenspaces and too many are now maintained by operatives using machines rather than gardeners using knowledge and skill.

One result has been that the quality of the public realm has declined significantly just about everywhere in the last twenty or thirty years. But in the past 5 or so years, a greenspace movement has emerged in the UK which champions the value of networks of high quality greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities. Reversing the trend of the three decades will take some time, but the Government has recognised the problem and, with the publication in July 2002 of Planning Policy Guidance PPG17, *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, requires planning authorities to undertake assessment of needs and opportunities in their area.

The simple fact is that high quality, accessible greenspaces help to make somewhere an attractive place in which to live and work. There is ample (and growing) evidence that they help to boost land values for properties in their vicinity and this in turn helps to attract development and economic activity from which everyone can benefit.

This strategy is a great opportunity to reassert the

importance of providing high quality greenspaces within settlements and then ensuring that they remain of high quality by managing them properly. Effective provision and good management and maintenance are different sides of the same coin and one without the other is likely to waste resources. Almost all of the cost of managing and maintaining open spaces in the Stafford Borough is met from taxation. As there are many other competing priorities for resources, there is an obvious need to ensure value for money.

A second opportunity resulting from this strategy is to make better use of planning agreements. Indeed, Sport England actively encourages and even expects councils to use them to provide new sport and recreation facilities and improve existing ones. Its approach is a little simplistic in that it tends to ignore the fact that sport is only one of the many forms of provision that might be funded through planning agreements. The strategy nonetheless:

- Provides the Borough Council with a PPG17-compliant evidence basis to underpin its policy relating to open space, sport and recreation in its Local Development Framework and a Supplementary Planning Document setting out how it will apply its policy
- Sets locally determined provision standards for open space, sport and recreation facilities that the Council can use to determine the needs likely to arise from future developments and therefore what it can reasonably require developers to provide or fund
- Provides a way of bringing open space, sport and recreation planning and management together to help deliver the aims set out in the Borough's Community Strategy and ensure that the Borough is an attractive place in which to live, work and play or to visit
- Provides guidance to the Borough, Town and Parish Councils on the most effective way of using both developer contributions and their own resources

The Context for the Assessment

Not all strategies and plans are of equal importance. The most important, obviously, are international plans and targets, such as Local Agenda 21 and Kyoto Treaty, followed by UK Government, regional and then local ones. For obvious reasons, aims and objectives of higher level plans and strategies should "cascade" down to lower ones and set the context for them. If they do not, planning for the future is disjointed and no-one can be quite sure what their priorities should be.

This Strategy is very much a local one, of specific relevance to the Borough of Stafford. The local context for it is set primarily by the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council's Corporate Strategy, the Development Plan and its forthcoming replacement, the Local Development Framework.

The role of the Local Development Framework is to be a delivery mechanism for the land use elements of the Community Strategy and other relevant local strategies. Its policies have an important role in protecting those greenspaces and sports facilities that meet local needs and ensuring that development and community infrastructure, such as greenspaces, are in an appropriate balance.

The Content of the Assessment

In the planning cascade, this assessment sits immediately underneath the Council's Corporate Strategy and development plan, on a par with other Borough-wide plans such as those dealing with culture and housing. It:

- Reviews the amount, distribution and quality of existing provision
- Identifies where there is a need for more or better provision and the types of enhancements which will benefit existing facilities and spaces most
- Suggests appropriate provision standards for the Borough Council to use as part of the planning process
- Suggests how to tackle the key issues relating to open space, sport and recreation provision facing the Council and its partners

What is "Green Space"?

We have used the definition of "open space" given in PPG17 for this assessment. It is:

"... all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity".

The PPG17 definition covers three broad types of space:

- "Green" or vegetated spaces such as allotments, parks and playing fields
- "Grey" or hard surfaced civic and other spaces such as market squares
- "Blue" or water spaces, such as rivers and canals

Typology of Provision

PPG17 sets out a typology of provision of green spaces that planning authorities can either adopt or adapt. The typology we have used for this assessment is based on the greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities likely to be found within settlements :

- Allotments
- Artificial Turf Pitches
- Athletics tracks
- Bowling greens
- Indoor sports facilities – bowls halls, tennis halls,

- gymnastics halls, sports halls and swimming pools
- Multi-functional greenspaces, encompassing Cemeteries and churchyards; Amenity greenspaces (essentially informal recreation spaces, mainly in and around housing areas); Natural greenspaces (including woodland and all land with a nature conservation value or designation; and Parks and gardens
- Playing fields and grass pitches, including recreation grounds
- Play areas and playgrounds: equipped play areas intended for children up to the age of about 12
- Tennis and multi-sport courts: these facilities are broadly similar, but multi-sport courts are hard surfaced outdoor areas, preferably floodlit, designed for a range of sports including tennis, netball and 5-a-side football
- Teenage facilities – BMX/skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops and other informal areas intended primarily for teenagers

In the strategy, we also refer to the “Green Network”. This is the network of publicly accessible greenspaces in the Borough’s towns and villages that serve important secondary purposes such as providing visual amenity, supporting biodiversity and nature conservation and offering opportunities for informal recreation for people of all ages. In terms of the above typology, the Green Network consists of multi-functional greenspaces plus playing fields and recreation grounds. It therefore excludes those spaces and facilities with a highly specific use such as allotments, bowling greens and tennis courts.

Methodology

This strategy aims to provide a blueprint for the successful development of open space, sport and recreation provision in Stafford Borough. More specifically, it:

- Identifies the policy context
- Identifies local views and local needs
- Appraises existing provision in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility
- Derives appropriate provision standards for planning purposes
- Advises the Council on planning policy
- Sets a long term vision for the future of open space, sport and recreation provision across the Borough
- Puts forward an implementation plan designed to deliver the vision

The strategy does not cover informal countryside recreation as it is impossible to derive sensible provision standards for such things as the extent of rights of way or cyclepaths.

The Policy Context

As a preliminary to the main part of the Strategy

preparation, and in order to set it within a broad policy framework, we reviewed a number of existing national, regional and Borough-wide plans and strategies. We summarise the results in Chapters 3 and 4.

Assessing Local Views

The assessing local views part of the work took three main forms, which we report in Chapter 4:

- A survey of local residents
- A survey of the Borough's town and parish councils (reported in detail in Appendix E)
- Interviews with local sports clubs and other stakeholders

Distance Thresholds

In order to be able to undertake an accessibility analysis, we first derived distance thresholds from our local residents survey. Details of this process are also in Chapters 6-16. We then used the resulting distance thresholds to assess the accessibility of the various different forms of provision and give the results in Appendix H.

Quality Standards

Traditionally, the planning system has been more concerned with the quantity of greenspace than the quality of it. This has now changed, and PPG17 emphasises that quality and accessibility are every bit as important as quantity. Accordingly we derived quality standards for the future use of the Council from a variety of sources, including the Green Flag scheme and good practice advice from agencies such as Sport England, the governing bodies of sport and Natural England. We give the rationale for quality standards in Chapter 5 and set out the recommended standards in Appendix C.

Audit of Existing Provision

In order to assess supply, we undertook an audit of local provision throughout the Borough, using a suite of standard audit forms designed to evaluate the quality and value of different forms of provision in the above typology of provision, based on their "primary purpose". The long term objective of this approach is to try to ensure that spaces are as good as they can be for their main purpose, while at the same time recognising that many spaces can have one or more secondary purposes. For example, publicly accessible playing fields are used for their primary (sports) purpose for only a very limited proportion of the week. The rest of the time they are normally available for casual or informal use, such as walking, jogging or even sitting in the open air, and they probably also contribute

considerably to the amenity of the area in which they are set. In order to be suitable for sport, however, they must have large flat areas of short mown grass, almost inevitably lack many features of interest and have paths, if any, in positions which will not compromise their use for sport. Most playing fields also have very limited nature conservation or biodiversity value. This means they are less attractive for casual use and have significantly less amenity value than, say, parks with mature trees, paths which follow desire lines, public art, horticultural areas, shelters, areas of water or fountains and other features.

Our analysis of existing provision is therefore in two main parts. In the first, we analyse existing spaces purely in terms of their primary purpose and this part of the analysis reviews each typology in turn, ignoring secondary purposes or benefits. For example, what is the quality and value of the Borough's playing fields, purely as playing fields? The natural greenspaces, purely as natural greenspaces? The allotment sites, purely as allotments? We present this analysis in chapters 6-16, with each chapter reviewing a specific typology of provision.

This analysis is essential in order to derive quantitative provision standards, but it fails to reflect the multi-functional nature of most greenspaces. Even spaces which are not accessible to the general public (for example, independent school playing fields) can serve a secondary amenity or strategic purpose. In the second part of the analysis of existing provision, therefore, we review a number of characteristics of the Borough's green network as a whole in a "cross-cutting" manner in order to review issues such as amenity, biodiversity and nature conservation. We present this analysis in chapter 13.

In order to help identify the Borough's greenspace and sport and recreation resources, the Council provided a layer from its Geographical Information System (GIS) showing around 400 separate sites. We then subdivided some of these polygons where sites contained more than one type of space or facility (for example, Stonefield Park has tennis courts, a bowling green and a play area as well as landscaped areas) and added further polygons for additional spaces or facilities that came to light in the course of the audit. In all, we ended up with around 550 polygons.

We then visited and audited each of the resulting spaces and facilities. As a result, we were able to classify them as being of above average (high) or below average (low) quality and value in terms of their primary purpose. We summarise the audit process in Appendix D and the results in Appendix G. We have also provided the full results in electronic form on CD to the Council. They constitute a detailed database of local provision with information on factors such as the size and location of different spaces or

facilities, quality - and therefore the possible need for enhancement – and value to local people and wildlife.

Quantitative Analysis

In any strategy such as this, it is important to look at the Borough as a whole but also to consider the adequacy of provision in sub-areas that reflect, as much as possible, communities that share facilities so as to reflect “localness”. For the quantity analysis, therefore, we first analysed the audit results to identify the total quantity of existing provision for each element of the typology in each town or parish council area and six “planning areas” made up of the towns or parishes listed below. Those towns or parishes in bold responded to our survey of town and parish councils; the others did not.

North Area

- **Barlaston**
- **Sandon and Burston**
- **Stone**
- **Stone Rural**
- Swynnerton

North east area

- **Fulford**
- **Hilderstone**
- **Milwich**
- Fradswell

North west area

- Adbaston
- Chebsey
- **Eccleshall**
- **High Offley and Woodseaves**
- **Standon**
- Whitgreave

South east area

- **Colwich**
- Gayton
- **Ingestre with Tixall**
- **Stowe-by-Chartley**
- Weston

South west area

- Bradley
- **Church Eaton**
- Ellenhall
- Forton
- **Gnosall**
- **Haughton**
- **Norbury**
- Ranton

Stafford Town area

- **Berkswich**
- **Brocton**
- Castle Church
- Creswell
- **Hopton and Coton**
- Marston
- Salt and Enson
- **Seighford**
- Stafford (unparished)
- Tixall

The map at the end of this chapter presents this information graphically. We then compared local views on the adequacy of existing provision with the quantity of it across the Borough to establish the level of provision that local interests generally found adequate. We give details of this analysis, and the resulting quantity standards for each form of provision, in Chapters 6-16.

Local Consultations on the Draft Strategy

The Borough Council made the draft strategy available for comment on its website and alerted a wide range of local stakeholders to it, including the Borough's Town and Parish Council, national and local agencies, local sports bodies and others. Appendix A sets out the comments received and our response to them.

Acknowledgements

Consultants undertaking an assignment such as this have necessarily to depend on assistance from a wide range of people for information, guidance and support. We wish particularly to thank:

- From the Borough Council: Councillor Mike Smith, the portfolio holder for Leisure, and Adam Hill, Jim Arnold, Alex Yendole and Ben Williscroft, all of whom have guided the work
- From Staffordshire County Council Education Service: Clive Jones and Gina Wallace
- From the Borough's Town and Parish Councils: Lynne Hembrough, Barlaston PC; RE Jenkins, Berkswich PC; Mrs C Hammond, Brocton PC; DM Key, Church Eaton PC; John Coates, Colwich PC; Christine Ellis, Eccleshall PC; M Manley, Fulford PC; Mrs C Spencer, Gnosall PC; Mrs J Hill, Haughton PC; Miss D Fairbrother, High Offley and Woodseaves PC; Glyn Prach, Hilderstone PC; Alistair Mochrie, Hopton and Coton PC; Derek Jones, Hyde Lea PC; Dr A Andrews, Ingestre with Tixall PC; Brian Boughey, Milwich with Fradswell PC; Ron Bennington, Norbury PC; Brian Boughey, Sandon and Burston PC; Derek Jones, Seighford PC; David Wright, Standon PC; Mark Hatton, Stone TC; Alan Barnes, Stone Rural PC; and John Blount, Stowe by Chartley PC
- From Staffordshire governing bodies of sport: Chris Hawkesworth and Ruth Holdaway, British Canoe Union; Chris Newton and Paul Baker of the English Table Tennis Association; Jeremy Lemarchand of the Lawn Tennis Association; Carly Heney of the All England Netball Association; Tom Bartram and Simon Jones of the Rugby Football Union; Andy Weston of the Football Association
- Facility Managers at Beaconside Sports Centre, Blessed William Howard RC High School, Brooklands School, Castlechurch Primary School, Christ Church Middle School, Gnosall St Lawrence Primary School, King Edward VI High School, MoD Stafford, Sir Graham Balfour High School, St Dominic's Priory, Stafford Grammar School/Burton Manor Sports Association, Stafford Sports College, Walton High School, Walton Priory Middle School Stone, Weston Road High School, Stafford and Yarlet School
- From the Stafford Allotments Management Committee: Ken Kelsall
- From the Borough's sports clubs: Gary Denning of Cannock and Stafford Athletics Club; Peter Burns of Stafford Harriers; Rob Jones of Church Eaton Cricket

Club; Tim Fielding of Little Stoke Cricket Club; Pat Williams of Moddershall Cricket Club; Dennis Wall of Stafford Hockey Club; Dave Adams of AFC Doxey; Will Spencer of Dynamo Telegraph FC; R Marshall of Eccleshall FC; Bernard Perry of Highland Social FC; Roy Babb of Horns 2003 FC; Cleveland Angus of Nags Head FC; Jim Brown of Stafford Celtic FC; Gordon Ward of Stafford Rangers Juniors FC; Peter Fowler of the Stafford and District Sunday Football League; Gordon Evans of Stafford Town FC; Chris Haines of Stone Dominoes FC; Mrs JE Allan of TOPPS 2000 FC; Andrew Richardson of Riverway FC; Kenny Burton of Yarnfield College FC; Phil Holtom of Ecceshall RUFC; Amy Stevens of Gnosall RUFC; Graham Macdonald of Stafford RUFC

- All those who responded to the consultation draft of the strategy
- Most of all, the various local residents who took the time to complete our questionnaires or who gave up their time to help by answering our questions and supplying information.



2: Summary

Introduction

This chapter summarises the main findings and conclusions from the rest of the report.

The National and Regional Policy Context

The national policy agenda underpinning PPG17 and the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's "Cleaner, Safer, Greener" strap line for sustainable communities has come a long way in a very short time. The key points for the assessment are:

- The Government regards the state of local environments as increasingly important within the overall need to promote and deliver sustainable development against a background of climate change and growing obesity and health inequalities.
- Reliance on the NPFA Six Acre Standard (as used in the Borough's current Local Plan) is no longer acceptable.
- Local communities are becoming more aware of any shortcomings in the quality of their local environment and demanding action to overcome them. Like other Councils, Stafford needs to try to persuade local residents that development can be positive and that one of the Council's duties is to seek to harness the development process in the interests of local residents and visitors.
- The Council needs a forward-looking planning policy for open space, sport and recreation provision in order to provide adequate protection to existing spaces and facilities, where necessary; and help the Council and its partners deliver both the enhancement of existing spaces and facilities and new provision where it is needed

The Local Policy Context

It is clear from Borough Council plans and strategies that:

- The delivery of a "Cleaner, Safer, Greener" local environment is one of the Borough Council's main strategic priorities. High quality, accessible greenspace can also make a significant contribution to another of the Council's four key priorities, improving the health and well-being of citizens and communities
- It will be important to try to reverse the decline in biodiversity and do more to promote nature conservation

- The Council needs a new set of provision standards for greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities that will reflect local needs and aspirations and help to deliver a level of provision that will be both affordable and sustainable.
- Proposals and actions arising from the assessment will need to support regeneration
- The Borough faces a need to accommodate 10-13,00 new homes over the next 15-20 years, mainly in and around Stafford town, and it will be important to ensure that open space, sport and recreation provision keeps pace with population growth. At the same time, high quality open space, sport and recreation provision can both support regeneration and help to attract developers and new residents.

Provision Standards

The Council should adopt clear provision standards, with qualitative, quantitative and accessibility components in order to ensure that new spaces and facilities provided by developers are fit for purpose and identify deficiencies in provision and priorities for overcoming them.

Allotments

The Borough has 26 allotments sites with a total area of almost 32 hectares, or 2.64 sq m per person. However, there are no sites in the north east and south east areas. On average across the Borough there is one plot to approximately 170 residents, although this varies from one plot to 53 people in Barlaston to one to 316 people in Stone Urban parish.

The Quality of Provision

It will be desirable to give priority to enhancing the value of sites across the Borough. This can be achieved by:

- Rationalising provision (particularly in Stafford town) into fewer but larger sites
- Working with plot holders to enhance and manage biodiversity of sites
- Bringing disused or overgrown plots back into productive use

On some sites it will be desirable also to improve quality, for example by providing:

- Better facilities, particularly toilets, trading sheds and communal storage
- Better signage and security and improvements to boundary hedges and fences
- Better parking and disabled provision

Accessibility

39% of properties lie within the walking distance threshold of a least one allotment site; 72% within the cycling

threshold and 81% within the driving threshold.

On accessibility, quality and value grounds the priorities are for:

- More provision around the periphery of Stafford town and north Stone; these areas should be the top priority, if suitable sites can be found, because they contain concentrations of population
- Provision in the north east and south east areas of the Borough

Allotments Provision: Objectives

The Council should adopt three broad objectives relating to allotments:

- To protect the current **amount** of provision across the Borough, although not necessarily on all of the existing sites if it is possible to create new sites that will be of higher quality and value and accessible to a greater number of people on foot
- To allocate sites for and promote allotment provision in the rural parts of the Borough, with the priority given to the larger settlements as suggested above
- To enhance the quality and, to a lesser extent, the value of those sites with below average audit scores

Conclusions

The conventional way to deliver against these objectives would be to protect all the existing sites, seek to enhance those requiring enhancement and make additional provision where it is needed. However, it will be desirable to consider a more radical approach.

There are clusters of sites fairly close together in both the north and south areas of Stafford town. In order to improve the overall distribution of sites, and therefore the general accessibility of allotment provision, it will be desirable to consider the potential for “moving a limited number of sites around” – ie allowing the redevelopment of some existing sites within these clusters. It should then be possible to develop the new and better sites using capital receipts from the planned disposal of some existing ones for development, with the receipts ring-fenced for allotment site provision or enhancement.

This approach will obviously attract opposition from established ploholders on those sites to be “moved” as they will have invested considerable time and effort in their plots. It will therefore be essential to plan any changes in close consultation with existing plot-holders and any replacement sites must be developed to a higher standard than the sites that will be lost, with the ground already well prepared, before expecting them to move.

Artificial Turf Pitches

The Borough has three artificial turf pitches (ATPs) at Staffordshire University, Stone Hockey Club and Alleyne's School in Stone, giving a Borough-wide average of 0.16 sq m per person. All three pitches are in reasonable condition, apart from:

- The condition of the goals at all three sites
- The inadequate shelter from the wind at the Stone Hockey Club and University sites

Accessibility Assessment

Overall, the accessibility of ATPs is good and it is only in the sparsely populated areas of the Borough that local residents will have to travel more than 8 km to one. However, it will be desirable to have ATPs – not necessarily full size – in both Eccleshall and Gnosall as this will increase the overall 8 km accessibility closer to 100%.

Governing Body Views

Our governing body interviews established a perceived need for:

- At least one and ideally two or three third generation ATPs for football; however, whether they will be acceptable for matches is up to individual leagues
- Floodlit pitches for mini and mid training midweek, which could be on third generation ATPs because of the limited capacity of grass pitches to sustain wear

Trends

For some years, ATPs have been used for all non-school hockey matches, some football training and small-sided football games but not rugby. However, the available surfaces have not really been suitable for football until recently.

This situation is changing rapidly. The recently developed long pile and rubber crumb filled “third generation” (3G) surfaces are good for both football and rugby training. The Football Association is keen to encourage their provision, but the emphasis at the moment is primarily on their use for after-school clubs and midweek training.

For rugby, it will probably be some time before adult matches are played on artificial surfaces, although climate change probably means that much rugby will probably have to move to artificial surfaces eventually. The Rugby Football Union has published a specification for ATPs and draws no distinction between the acceptability of grass and artificial surfaces meeting this specification for matches. In the short term, however, rugby use is likely to be confined to training and mini-rugby.

ATP Objectives

The Council should adopt the following objectives for ATP provision:

- To protect the current pattern of ATPs from development
- To work with the County Council to develop new ATPs on at least four of the Stafford town secondary schools, or alternatively, to work with the University to develop an additional ATP at Beaconside
- To identify and allocate sites for potential ATPs, which need not be full size, in the north east, north west, south east and south west parts of the Borough

Athletics Facilities

The Borough has only one athletics track, Rowley Park in Stafford town. It is in excellent condition and the track was resurfaced only a couple of years or so ago. However, the Stadium will be unable to attract anything more than school and club competitions for as long as it has only a very low spectator capacity. In addition, its ancillary accommodation is fairly dated and limited.

It will be desirable for Stafford to retain a track. In addition, it will be desirable to upgrade the spectator and other ancillary facilities at Rowley Park in order to be able to attract more events. However, this will require significant capital investment in facilities. As the Cannock Chase athletics stadium has closed, there may be an opportunity for the Borough Council to work with Cannock Chase District Council to upgrade Rowley Park or develop a replacement athletics facility that will serve the two council areas.

Bowling Greens

The Borough has 16 crown greens, all of them in either the north or Stafford area. This equates to just over 7,500 people per green.

Accessibility Assessment

In the Borough as a whole, 34% and 81% respectively of properties lie within a 15 minutes walk or drive of at least one green.

Quality and Value

As in other areas of the country, the quality of greens and pavilions is high: bowlers tend to look after their facilities and they are normally secured when not in use. The criticisms we have of the Borough's bowling facilities are very minor and relate in the main to fairly easily resolved issues such as the condition of banks and ditches, the adequacy of shelter planting or the condition of paths around the green.

Quality, Value and Accessibility

The sites with the lowest quality scores are concentrated in Stafford town while the eastern and western sides of the Borough have no provision. The obvious locations for potential additional greens are Eccleshall and Gnosall.

It seems that the current overall Borough-wide level of bowls provision is probably about right, but the distribution of greens could be improved by having fewer greens in Stafford town and providing a green in each of the planning areas without one.

Although participation in bowls has generally declined across England in the past few years, the rising number of older people in the Borough's population suggests that this may be a short term trend. Accordingly the Council should:

- Investigate the potential for persuading the Burton Manor Club members either to join existing clubs with spare capacity or consider transferring responsibility for one of the Borough Council greens to the Club, with appropriate safeguards for casual use by non-members
- Protect all of the other existing facilities in the town for say the next five years, but then review the position and, if one or more greens are poorly used, consider rationalising the provision into fewer but better facilities

Provision for Children

The Borough has 79 equipped play sites occupying a total land area of just under 42 ha. Of the 79 sites, 54 contain equipment suitable for younger children and 67 equipment designed for older children. This equates to an average of some 0.34 sq m per person, with a range from 0.15 sq m per person in the south eastern part of the Borough to 0.37 sq m per person in the north west. This is significantly less than the Local Plan standard of 6-8 sq m per person. However, as it would be unrealistic for the Borough to plan on a twenty-fold increase in play provision, this obviously calls into question the Local Plan standard.

Accessibility

Children of different ages walk at different speeds, so we have adopted two distance thresholds: 300 m for young children up to the age of about 8 and 450 m for those who are up to about 12. Across the Borough as a whole, 41% of properties lie within the 300 m threshold of a site with equipment for young children and 58% within the 450m threshold of at least one site for older children. The accessibility of play areas is very variable and the most obvious areas in which provision is desirable are Blythe Bridge, Hilderstone and Haughton areas, plus a possible need for more provision in the Eccleshall, Gnosall, Colwich

and Hixon areas. There are also some areas of Stafford town and Stone in which it will be desirable to provide play facilities.

There are also some areas in which it will be desirable to rationalise provision by combining sites where there are two or more play areas close together and serving essentially the same catchment area.

Quality and Value

The average quality and value scores of the 79 equipped play facilities in the audit are 81% and 55% respectively – higher scores than we have found in many other areas. The high quality scores indicate more than anything that the Borough Council is doing a very good job of maintaining its play areas. However, some improvements are nonetheless desirable, including:

- Additional play equipment
- Improving accessibility, for example by improving disabled access or providing surfaced paths to the entrance to play areas and also within them.
- Enhancing safety: some sites are not enclosed, making it possible for dogs to use and possibly foul them.
- Better facilities for parents and carers
- Slightly better maintenance
- Better signage

Trends

There are significant trends in thinking on play provision:

- Increasing recognition that more or less standard play areas are a very poor way of providing for children
- Significant concern that the design of children’s play is driven too much by fear of litigation in the event of accidents rather than the needs of children
- Growing interest in “environmental play” or “Child friendly local environments”

This new approach to play is based on a mix of fewer but significantly larger and more stimulating equipped play areas, at key locations such as parks, plus local greenspaces designed with rocks, logs, and other features that stimulate children’s imagination and promote and facilitate “natural play”. The more local natural provision, the less the need for expensive play equipment. We recommend that the Council and its Town and Parish Council partners should do two things:

- Plan and progressively develop a “strategic network” of large and exciting equipped play areas in Stafford town and Stone, preferably in high profile, major greenspaces such as parks or park-like spaces.

- Retain the present equipped play areas for the moment but move to a new approach whenever new development, or the need to replace an existing play area, creates the opportunity to do so and the strategic network is in place.

If the Council agrees this approach, LDF policy should allocate suitable sites and require the developers of all residential projects in Stafford town and Stone to contribute to the creation of the nearest strategic site as well as either:

- Creatively designed on-site natural play greenspaces;
or
- The enhancement of the play value of nearby greenspaces

In addition, whenever the Borough Council or a Town or Parish Council concludes that the equipment within a play area has reached the end of its useful life, they should remove the equipment and re-landscape the site to make it more interesting with a range of natural features that make the site more attractive to people of all ages, but especially children.

Golf Courses

The Borough has a total of 109 golf holes (this total does not divide by 9 because one course has 10 holes), all of them attractively laid out and offering high quality, high value facilities to golfers. In addition, practically the whole of the Borough lies within 10 km of a course, although some are outside it.

Trends

In recent years, many golf clubs have seen a significant decline in membership, although not necessarily a commensurate decline in usage, as those members who have played only occasionally have decided that it would be cheaper to “pay and play” rather than purchase an annual membership at the equivalent of a higher cost per round. There are two main consequences of this move to “nomadic” golfers:

- None of the clubs within the Borough currently has a waiting list, although waiting lists were common only a few years ago. Several are actively seeking more members.
- Clubs have lost income and are having to increase their “pay and play” charges which can of course be self-defeating if players start to think they are too high.

Conclusions

Before allocating any additional land for golf, or requiring developers to contribute to additional golf provision, the Borough Council should check the current position with

local clubs. For the moment, however, there is no need for any additional provision and existing clubs will probably be able to accommodate most of the additional demand that will arise from new housing development planned for the Borough.

Grass Pitches

Our analysis of the demand for grass pitches for cricket, football, hockey and rugby is based primarily on the Sport England Playing Pitch Model and a telephone survey we undertook of a sample of pitch sport clubs across the Borough. Across the four sports, it is clear that the main constraints on pitch sport participation relate to issues such as the lack of volunteers and match officials or meeting running costs rather than the number or quality of pitches.

The Sport England Playing Pitch Model

The Sport England playing pitch model (PPM) uses a standard methodology for each of the pitch sports to compare the number of teams and pitches on the peak match days each week – almost inevitably Saturday and Sundays. We have estimated the number of teams in the Borough by sport, and by gender and age group, using a variety of sources including league and club websites and contact with club officials. In addition, to estimate the number of pitches, we have used information from our audit of local provision. This has led to the following findings:

- **Cricket:** the Borough has around 19 cricket clubs fielding 48 men's teams, 3 women's teams and 10 boys' teams but no girls' teams; and it has at least 16 club or other publicly accessible pitches plus 2 joint use pitches. Remarkably, over half of the Borough's adult cricket teams are based in the north area although it contains only around 20% of the population.
- **Football:** the Borough has around 56 men's teams, 4 women's teams, 49 boys' teams, 1 girls' team and 75 mini teams; it also has at least 61 adult pitches with community use, 21 junior pitches and 7 mini pitches. Most of the football teams are based in and around Stafford.
- **Hockey:** the Borough has five hockey clubs fielding 12 men's and 11 women's teams plus a varying number of junior and mini teams; and it has three artificial turf pitches that are suitable for hockey. All of the hockey teams are based in the Stafford and north areas.
- **Rugby Union:** the Borough has five rugby clubs fielding 11 men's teams, 2 women's teams and 11 boys' teams; it also has 13 adult rugby pitches, 4 junior pitches with community use and 1 mini-pitch. The adult rugby teams are based mainly in the north and Stafford areas of the Borough.

There is therefore a clear geographical difference in pitch sport demand across the Borough: cricket is particularly popular in the northern half and football in the southern half.

Team Generation Rates

Team generation rates (TGRs) are the number of people in a specified age group, defined by Sport England, required to “generate” one team in each of the pitch sports. In the Borough it appears that:

- **Cricket:** participation in men’s and women’s cricket in the Borough is significantly higher than the median for England, but lower for boys’ cricket. This probably reflects the fact that many of the junior cricket teams in the Borough do not play in any league and therefore are not included in our PPM calculations.
- **Football:** participation in men’s football is around the England average, but women’s football is significantly above the England median and average. Girls’ football, and mini-soccer, however, are significantly more popular than the English average although the Team Generation Rate for boys’ football is only slightly above the median for England.
- **Hockey:** both men’s and women’s hockey are significantly more popular in the Borough than in England as a whole
- **Rugby:** men’s women’s and boys’ rugby are all significantly more popular than the average and median for England

Accessibility

It is necessary to consider the accessibility of pitches in two ways:

- As local facilities for predominantly casual use, which should therefore be within walking distance of where potential users live
- As facilities used for matches, for which a high level of accessibility on foot or by bicycle is not particularly important:
 - In any match, half of the players are playing for the “away” team and therefore will almost certainly have had to travel to the match venue
 - Players choose the club or team they will play for more by the standard of play on offer rather than the location of the club’s home ground. Moreover, players often retain a loyalty to a club after moving house and can then end up travelling a significant distance to train and play
 - The higher the league in which players compete, the wider the area from which the league they play in draws its teams

This said, the proportion of properties in the Borough within a 15-minute distance threshold of at least one pitch is:

		Walking	Cycling	Driving
Cricket	All	30%	71%	99%
	HQHV	12%	23%	36%
Football	All	70%	88%	99%
	HQHV	39%	76%	88%
Rugby	All	47%	74%	96%
	HQHV	19%	59%	84%

The accessibility of cricket pitches is best in the north area of the Borough but football and rugby in the Stafford town area.

Cricket

The average quality and value audit scores for all the sites were 86% and 72% respectively. The improvements that will be desirable are relatively minor and include:

- General levelling
- Better or more changing
- Provision of showers
- Better disabled access
- Umpires changing
- Provision of practice nets
- More artificial wickets
- Longer boundary distances
- Better sightscreens

Football Pitches

The average quality and value scores for football pitch sites were 75% and 13% respectively. The main improvements required to sites include:

- Provision or upgrading of changing
- Levelling of pitches
- Provision of sand slits
- Provision of floodlights
- New goalposts
- Better pitch maintenance
- Shelter planting

Rugby Pitches

The average quality and value scores for rugby pitch sites were 77% and 25% respectively. The main improvements desirable to rugby sites include:

- Better drainage
- New goalposts
- Better maintenance
- Floodlighting

Quality, Value and Accessibility

Cricket

- There is a concentration of cricket pitches in the northern half of the Borough, most of them of both high quality and high value
- The pitches in Stafford town and the southern half of the Borough are of relatively poor value
- There is a lack of cricket provision in Gnosall: the Sports and Social Club there had a cricket team at one time but it disbanded.
- There is a fairly good match between the location of pitches and the density of development
- Almost all of the Borough is within the driving threshold of at least one pitch

Football

- There is a concentration of pitches in Stafford town, but most are of relatively poor quality and/or value
- There is a lack of pitches in the north east area of the Borough
- Almost all of the Borough is within the driving threshold of at least one pitch, although not quite as much as for the smaller number of cricket pitches

Rugby

- There is a concentration of rugby pitches in the Stafford area, although some of them are school pitches that are not available for community use and therefore low value
- Almost all of the Borough is within the driving threshold of at least one pitch, although not quite as much as for cricket or football

The main constraints on the development of rugby therefore appear to relate to people and changing facilities rather than pitches.

Conclusions

Cricket

- In the Borough as a whole, there are enough cricket pitches to accommodate all of the demand arising in the Borough, with some limited spare capacity. However, this masks a shortfall of around three pitches

in the Stafford town area.

- The first priority should be to increase the capacity of grounds to accommodate midweek use, particularly by junior teams. This can best be achieved by the provision of artificial wickets, which adult teams will also be able to use for net practice.
- The second priority is to improve the changing accommodation at a number of grounds

Football

- Overall, there seems to be an approximate balance between the supply of adult pitches and demand for them, but a need to upgrade some pitches and changing. However, there are significant shortfalls in junior and mini pitches. This means that junior and mini teams have to use some adult pitches, reducing the availability of adult pitches for adult teams and leagues, most noticeably on Sunday mornings.
- The first priority is therefore to provide more facilities for mini-soccer, particularly in the north east and Stafford town areas. However, a much better solution will be to move mini-soccer onto artificial turf pitches, as suggested in Chapter 7. If the new ATPs are on school sites this will not require any additional land.
- The second priority is to provide more junior pitches in the Stafford town area. Again, it will be sensible to try to move at least some junior matches onto artificial turf pitches and the more that schools have ATPs, and therefore their pupils get used to playing on them, the better.
- The third priority is to improve the quality of facilities for adult football, primarily by upgrading drainage and changing accommodation. However, the Council should seek first to persuade local leagues to accept that they will move to artificial turf pitches in the future. If this can be achieved, any investment in upgrading grass pitch sites should be confined to as few sites as possible. There is a strong case for taking a strategic policy decision progressively to move football onto artificial surfaces as suggested in Chapter 7 above.

Rugby

- There appear to be a more than adequate number of adult rugby pitches in the Borough so the fact that junior and midi teams use adult pitches does not significantly reduce the availability of pitches for adult teams. However, it will be desirable to have more junior pitches, particularly in the north and Stafford town areas.
- The first priority is to ensure that Stafford Rugby Club finds a suitable new home, sufficiently large to accommodate all of its current teams while also having

spare capacity for the club to develop additional teams roughly in proportion to any increase in the town's population.

- The second priority is to find ways of helping some of the other rugby clubs, such as Eccleshall, enhance their changing facilities or provide floodlit training areas
- The third priority is to develop floodlit artificial turf pitches that rugby clubs can use for training

The Green Network

The Borough's "green network" is its overall provision of accessible multi-functional greenspaces (MFGS). Our audit encompassed almost 300 multi-functional spaces as follows:

• Amenity greenspaces	180
• Churchyards and cemeteries	46
• Green Corridors	11
• Natural greenspaces	30
• Parks and Gardens	9
• Open access playing fields	18
• Total	294

Accessibility

All of the Borough's residents should be able to access at least one greenspace within only a few minutes walk of home so we have assessed the proportion of properties in the Borough and each of its planning areas within a 5 minute/300 m walk of at least one accessible multi-functional greenspace.

People are obviously willing to travel further to larger or better spaces such as parks or a sport pitch. Accordingly we have adopted the following additional distance thresholds:

• Churchyards and cemeteries	10 minutes travel
• Natural greenspaces	10 minutes travel
• Open access playing fields	15 minutes travel
• Parks and Gardens	15 minutes travel

On a Borough-wide basis, the proportions of properties within the walking distance thresholds are:

<i>5 minutes/300 m walking</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>HQHV</i>
• MFGS	77%	65%
• Amenity greenspaces	69%	29%
<i>10 minutes/600 m walking</i>		
• Churchyards and Cemeteries	35%	12%
• Natural greenspaces	50%	34%
<i>15 minutes/900 m walking</i>		
• Open access playing fields	56%	22%
• Parks and Gardens	25%	17%

Parks and Gardens

It is inevitable that parks and gardens will exist only in larger settlements and therefore not particularly surprising that across the Borough there are only two main parks – Victoria Park in Stafford town and Stonefield Park in Stone. The former has a Green Flag award and the Borough should be seeking to increase its number of such awards. In the course of the audit, we also classed several other spaces in Stafford town as parks because of their nature, specifically:

- Broadeye, Stafford
- Bull Hill Gardens, Stafford
- Tithe Barn Road Recreation Ground, Stafford
- Water Street, Stafford
- Wildwood Park, Stafford

Quality and Value

In summary, the average audit scores for the various types of space were:

	Quality	Value
• Amenity greenspaces	76%	43%
• Churchyards and cemeteries	85%	74%
• Green corridors	69%	73%
• Natural greenspaces	80%	78%
• Parks and Gardens	90%	53%
• Outdoor access playing fields	82%	44%
• All forms of provision	78%	53%

Amenity Greenspaces

The main improvements that will be generally desirable to amenity greenspaces in the Borough include:

- Better signage to and within in larger spaces
- Better disabled access, including designated disabled parking bays in appropriate locations
- Changes to promote biodiversity and nature conservation and make spaces more attractive to children for play

Churchyards and Cemeteries

The main improvements that will be desirable include:

- Making headstones safe in old churchyards (not a job for volunteers)
- Doing more to promote nature conservation
- More interpretation at historic churches
- Better maintenance of grassed areas
- Better maintenance of gates and fences

- Lighting of paths – needed for evening services in winter
- Better disabled provision

Natural Greenspaces

The Borough has relatively few natural greenspaces within its towns and villages, although many residents have good access to attractive countryside (including Local Nature Reserves and other sites with a nature conservation designation) and there are a few attractive and well kept village ponds. The main improvements required to natural greenspaces include:

- Better signage
- Better interpretation
- Better parking and disabled provision

Open Access Playing Fields

Playing fields perform an important amenity purpose, but it is almost inevitable that they are large flat areas of short mown grass with little visual interest or biodiversity value. However, it can often be possible to provide structure planting in a way which both helps to shield them from the wind, so making them better places for sport, and enhances their visual amenity.

Parks and Gardens

Parks and gardens should be the Borough's "Green Flagships" and the good scores indicate that they generally are. However, there are some changes that will be generally desirable:

- Greater attention paid to the needs of people with disabilities, especially designated parking spaces
- Better and more welcoming signage
- More horticultural interest
- The incorporation of public art
- Enhanced biodiversity and nature conservation, coupled with interpretive material

Trends

There are three trends worth noting:

- A growing number of councils are coming to the view that they have been too much concerned with the quantity of provision and too little with its quality over the past twenty or thirty years. As it is not easy with limited and often declining budgets to drive up the overall greenspace quality across a council area, many have taken advantage of the funds available from the National Lottery to enhance their major urban parks.

- Some councils are beginning to think the unthinkable – selling off poorly located and poorly used spaces in order to generate the capital needed to enhance others.
- Broadly speaking, councils are seeing the development industry as a key source of capital funding for the enhancement of parks and greenspaces through planning obligations

The main trends are therefore qualitative rather than quantitative and CABE Space, the open space arm of the government-funded Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, has also published considerable evidence to indicate that high quality greenspaces are effective in terms of:

- Boosting land values in their vicinity and therefore promoting economic development
- Helping to absorb atmospheric pollution and particulates
- Absorbing rainfall and therefore helping to avoid or minimise flooding
- Providing opportunities for relaxation and recreation and helping individuals to reduce their stress levels

Overview

Our analysis suggests a surplus of provision in the south east and Stafford areas of the Borough and a deficit in the other areas in terms of the total amount of amenity greenspace, parks and gardens and churchyards and cemeteries. If those playing fields that also serve an amenity purpose are included the deficit in the north area is reduced slightly and the surpluses in the south east and Stafford areas increased. In addition, as natural greenspaces also serve an amenity purpose, the total amount of greenspace in the north area is sufficiently large to remove any deficit.

The large apparent surplus in the Stafford area arises primarily because of very large spaces such as the Fairway Wetland (which the Council should obviously continue to protect) and the large spaces in the Baswich area. In reality, therefore, purely local provision is only slightly in surplus.

Secondary Purposes

Multi-functional greenspaces, as their name implies, serve more than one purpose. They can have a significant amenity function for those people who live or work around the periphery and many parks support biodiversity and nature conservation as well as being of high amenity value. In addition, linked networks of greenspaces are increasingly important as walking and cycling routes.

Conclusions

These assessments point to two inescapable conclusions:

- The Borough's priority should be to work with the town and parish councils to enhance the main spaces in its settlements, but particularly in those most likely to expand through new housing developments
- The main emphasis should be on making spaces more valuable to local communities and boosting their nature conservation value

Major Indoor Sports Facilities

Fitness Facilities

Health and fitness training is served by a "mixed market" of public, private and voluntary sector providers.

Fitness centres in the Borough provide around 530 publicly accessible stations, only slightly less than our demand estimate of around 570 stations. However, provision is concentrated in Stafford town and there is a lack of provision in the western part of the Borough and on its eastern fringe. Overall 43% of properties lie within a 20-minute walk of a fitness centre and 96% within a 20-minute drive.

There appears to be demand for reasonably small fitness facilities in the North east, north west, south east and south west parts of the Borough.

Ice Rinks

Across the country, many ice rinks are struggling financially, not least because of recent significant rises in energy costs. Because of their net revenue costs, and especially high maintenance requirements, the UK is likely to lose a number of its rinks in the next decade. This can be interpreted in two ways: an opportunity for Stafford Borough to develop a facility that has the potential to attract users from a fairly wide area, thanks to its good rail and road links north and south, or something that would be extremely risky. We take the latter view.

Indoor Bowls Halls

Sport England has developed a Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) that local authorities and others can use to help them determine the appropriate level of provision of pools, sports halls and indoor bowls rinks for their area. The Calculator suggests that the Borough could sustain around 8 indoor rinks (ie the equivalent of one full size green, but this is for flat rather than crown green bowls). We believe that there is only a single indoor crown green club in the UK, in Scarborough. Accordingly it seems clear that the demand for indoor crown greens is very limited and no need for a provision standard for indoor greens.

Indoor Sports Halls

The Sport England SFC estimates the need for sports halls in Stafford Borough as equivalent to around 34 badminton courts, which converts to a quantity standard of 1 court to around 3,500 people.

The Borough has a good level of indoor sports hall provision, ranging from the 8-court hall at the Stafford Sports Arena to various local village and community halls, some of which are used for badminton. Most of the existing provision is in good condition and readily available to the local community, although some of the school halls are available only to clubs and other organised groups. Overall, we calculate there are 11 commercial badminton equivalents, 29 school badminton court equivalents and 4 public badminton court equivalents across the Borough in halls with at least three courts.

Accordingly it seems that there is sufficient hall provision overall unless there is a need for any sport-specific hall provision such as for netball (see Chapter 17 for further discussion of this point).

However, the distribution of halls does not match the distribution of the population and there are likely to be deficits in provision in the rural areas, offset to some extent by badminton courts in village halls.

Across the Borough as a whole, 90% of properties lie within a 15-minute drive time of at least one hall. It would be unrealistically expensive to increase the proportion of properties within the driving threshold to be 100%. In a sizeable rural area such as Stafford Borough it is very good that over 90% of properties lie within a 20 minute drive of a hall with three or more courts. However, it will be desirable to consider providing a hall in Gnosall, possibly on the tennis courts at the St Lawrence Primary School as it will then be possible for it to be used by both the school and local community.

Trends

The overall demand for hall sports has been fairly steady for a number of years, although individual activities rise and fall in popularity. One important trend, however, is for 5-a-side soccer to move out of halls and to specialist outdoor 5-a-side centres and this is freeing time in existing halls for other activities.

Indoor Swimming Pools

There are currently nine pools in the Borough, ranging from the 25 m/8 lane competition pool at the Stafford Leisure Centre to the tiny pool in the Stone House Hotel.

Overall, they have a combined water area of approximately 1,530 sq m. However, not all of the current water area is available for public use all of the time and the smaller hotel pools will have only very limited public use. Discounting the size of the commercial and joint use to allow for restricted public access results in the equivalent of only about 1,060 sq m.

We calculate that there is a small deficit in provision for swimming which will obviously increase with population growth or if participation in swimming rises.

Swimming pools have the same general distance thresholds as public leisure centres and so a 20-minute threshold is appropriate. Across the Borough, 87% of properties lie within a 20-minute drive of at least one pool.

As with sports halls, this is a very good level of accessibility. The only sizeable area of the Borough outwith the distance threshold of at least one pool is most of the sparsely populated north-western area, although Eccleshall is right on the edge of the distance threshold from pools in Stafford town, Stone and Gnosall.

Trends

Swimming has risen in popularity in recent years, primarily amongst adults as a result of rising interest in health and fitness. With the government seeking to drive up levels of physical activity some limited further rise in participation is likely, provide councils and other pool owners maintain their pools to a high standard. There is ample evidence of poor quality pools suffering from declining levels of use.

Conclusions

There will be a need for more water area in the Borough as the population increases with the greatest need in Stafford town and this need will obviously increase with new residential developments.

Indoor Tennis Halls

The Borough's tennis clubs have a total membership of around 650 and this figure has been fairly steady for a number of years. There is no guidance available on the percentage of regular players who play indoors, although the development of indoor centres generally attracts new players to the game. Overall, therefore, it appears as though there could be a significant market for indoor tennis in the Borough. The capacity of indoor tennis is fairly low – as the maximum usage is four players per court and bookings last for at least an hour a four court centre operating on the basis of 35 peak hours per week can accommodate a maximum of only 560 players per week.

There are two indoor tennis facilities in the Borough at present, at St Dominic's Priory School in Stone. The school built them about 20 years ago with the help of some funding from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and they were at one time used by the Staffordshire County squad for training and practice. However, the LTA no longer runs County squads and the agreement between the school and LTA has expired.

The courts have a fairly low profile as they have been squeezed in at the back of the site, half hidden by a smaller school hall. Use is also fairly limited as they are on a school site.

The nearest indoor courts outside the Borough are at the Draycott Sports Centre, with two indoor courts 11 miles from Stafford town and 6 miles from Stone, and in Wolverhampton.

There are at least three sets of aspirations for indoor tennis provision in the Borough, namely:

- Stafford Sports College, Rising Brook, which has good outdoor tennis provision but a very constrained site
- Stone Lawn Tennis and Squash Club, which would like to cover two or three of its six outdoor courts. However, the club probably has more pressing needs in terms of keeping its existing clubhouse in a reasonable condition.
- The Staffordshire Lawn Tennis Association, which would like to see a four court indoor centre in Stafford Borough. The LTA has had some discussions with the Council in relation to a centre at Rowley Park but we understand it has some reservations over the proposed siting.

Tennis and Multi-sport Courts

The Borough has:

- 32 "public", 10 joint use and 5 tennis courts with no community use
- 39 "public" multi-courts, 24 joint use courts and 25 courts with no community use

Overall, 34% and 37% of properties respectively are within the walking distance threshold of at least one tennis or multi-court. However, 95% and 86% are within the driving threshold.

Most of the Borough's multi-courts scored poorly in the audit, primarily as a result of: poor surround netting, poor line markings, poor condition of playing surfaces, the position of goals (5-a-side goals should be recessed rather than stand-alone), lack of shelter from the wind, lack of changing, playing surfaces that are not particularly good to play on (especially tarmac/Bitmac), limited number of courts, lack of community access and lack of floodlighting.

Because multi-courts can be used for a range of sports, it is obviously desirable that as many people as possible should have ready access to at least one. Many function primarily as teenage facilities and this also emphasises the importance of good accessibility. Accordingly there is a need for more multi-courts across the Borough, with the most obvious locations for additional courts being:

- Barlaston
- Colwich
- Eccleshall
- Gnosall
- Meir Heath
- Yarnfield

In addition there are obvious opportunities to create additional multi-courts at the Westbridge Sports Centre in Stone and Rowley Park in Stafford town and possibly Great Bridgford and Church Eaton. In all of these locations there are hard tennis courts that could be converted to multi-courts fairly easily. The addition of floodlights at Westbridge Park (where half the pylons that would be needed are already available to support car park lighting) and Alleyne's High School in Stone and Church Eaton Tennis Club will also benefit tennis and increase the availability of floodlit facilities across the Borough.

Conclusions

Apart from Burton Manor, the only tennis club in the Borough with declining membership is Church Eaton. This suggests that there may be scope to convert at least one of the two Church Eaton courts to a multi-court. As noted later in this report, there are no teenage facilities in Church Eaton so this could give local young people something to do at low cost.

Multi-courts

Floodlit multi-courts are a relatively cheap form of local sports provision that doubles up as a teenage facility. Accordingly it is desirable for there to be a network of courts across the Borough in locations where there is currently a lack of both local sports and teenage facilities. Ideally, there should be a court in each parish, provided it has enough residents to make provision sensible.

There is no consistent or clear evidence on the demand for multi-courts; as noted above, some are popular and others are not. This suggests that a pragmatic approach will therefore be to develop a programme of providing at least one court in each of the main settlements in the Borough. The parishes with a population of over 1,000 and no tennis or multi-court provision are Fulford, Colwich, Swynnerton, Barlaston, Stone Rural, Seighford, Brocton and Haughton.

Teenage Facilities

Teenage facilities can contain one or more of the following: a shelter, a skateboard area, a BMX track, basketball hoops, an open access ball court (or ball rebound wall) or an aerial runway. Good teenage provision is desirable in its own right, but it can also help to reduce anti-social behaviour and reduce the social and economic costs of vandalism. The 19 teenage sites across the Borough appear to have an aggregate area of around 12,269 sq m, or just less than 1.3 ha, although it is not possible to identify the area of teenage provision definitively because many are not enclosed in any way. This equates to an average of 0.1 sq m per person and the average size of a single teenage area is around 650 sq m. However, the north east and north west areas have no teenage provision.

Across the Borough, the proportions of properties with the 15 minute distance threshold of at least one teenage area are:

	All sites	HQHV sites
15 minutes/900 m walking	51%	14%
15 minutes/2250 m cycling	75%	37%

Note: HQHV = High Quality, High Value

The average quality and value scores across the Borough were 79% and 20% respectively. Most of the teenage facilities are very limited and we classed only four of the 19 as above average quality and value on the basis of the audit scores. The main improvements required to sites include:

- More and better equipment
- Lighting
- Better safety features
- Better accessibility, including for young people with disabilities
- Better signage
- Better maintenance
- Better ancillary facilities, such as seats and bicycle racks

It is clear the Borough needs significantly more and better teenage provision throughout its area. As a first step, we suggest that the Borough, Town and Parish Councils should aim to plug the obvious gaps in walking accessibility to at least one teenage area in each of the main settlements and then follow up with further provision in those other settlements with a significant number of teenagers. Initially, this will require additional teenage areas at least as follows:

- Barlaston
- Colwich
- East Stafford

- Eccleshall
- North Stone
- South-east Stafford/Walton on the Hill
- South-east Stone
- West Stafford

Strategic Issues and Recommendations

In the course of this review it has become clear that there are a range of issues that the Borough Council needs to tackle that are not primarily related to planning issues, although they generally have some land use implications. They are discussed in detail in Chapter 17, but the main recommendations are:

Cross-cutting Issue 1: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

The Council and its partners need actively to continue to implement the Local Agenda 21 Strategy and see greenspace provision, management and maintenance as a major opportunity to promote biodiversity and nature conservation because of their fundamental importance to the future quality of life in the Borough. The Council also needs to embed the promotion of biodiversity and nature conservation more fully into the work of Leisure Services and in particular the grounds maintenance service. It will also be desirable to encourage the town and parish councils to do the same.

Cross-cutting Issue 2: Choice and Opportunity

The Council should:

- Adopt a settlement hierarchy in its Local Development Framework and identify a limited number of service centres in the rural areas which will have provision intended to serve a wide area around them. The obvious candidates are Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon and the Haywoods.
- Seek to negotiate joint use agreements with the main schools in the rural areas and work with the County Council to invest in them to make them into bases for local community clubs
- Foster the development of multi-sport clubs wherever possible so as to make the best use of voluntary effort and encourage them to achieve quality accreditations such as Clubmark or Quest.

Cross-cutting Issue 3: Climate Change

The Council should:

- Actively monitor the impact of climate change and adjust its approach to landscape design and maintenance as a result
- Seek to reduce the dependence of the pitch sports on

grass areas

- Include a policy in its Local Development Framework requiring all new significant housing developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems within greenspaces
- Increase the number of trees across the Borough, but particularly in the developed areas, as a way of providing additional shade from the sun and mitigating the “heat island” effect and pollution
- Require developers to locate and design greenspaces and vegetation where they will have the greatest effect in terms of ameliorating the negative impacts of climate change, for example in terms of providing shade, absorbing or holding rainfall

Cross-cutting Issue 4: Community Involvement

Local communities can be a valuable resource, not least in terms of reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour – although the Borough suffers less from this than many other areas and acting as “ginger groups”. However, there are areas in which levels of vandalism appear to be higher than in other areas of the Borough. The Council needs to concentrate on these areas and on working with a limited number of key groups that can have a Borough-wide role such as Sport Stafford and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. It should also seek to foster further Borough-wide or local groups where they can serve a useful purpose and will have a clear role. However, it also needs to beware of overloading volunteers: most of the sports clubs we have consulted in the course of undertaking this assessment have identified a lack of volunteers as one of the factors causing them real concern for their future.

Cross-cutting Issue 5: Creative Thinking

The Council needs:

- To work positively and creatively with developers to initiate positive change in broadly the same way as it did with the new Stafford Leisure Centre and deliver revenue savings that can be retained within Leisure to drive other service improvements. More specifically, it should see Council-owned greenspaces as potential opportunities rather than land that should necessarily be protected. It should use the PPG17 assessment, and particularly the provision maps, to identify opportunities to “move spaces around” in order to retain high levels of accessibility but drive up quality and value. As a broad principle it will be better to have a slightly smaller network of high quality, accessible spaces than a slightly larger network of poor value spaces.
- To review its approach to the negotiation and use of planning obligations to ensure it is compatible with government policy guidance and best practice and the

Government's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy, once introduced.

- To allocate the resources needed to ensure that developer contributions will be spent in ways that will best mitigate the impact of new developments
- To review its willingness to adopt new spaces and facilities provided by developers

Cross-cutting Issue 6: Green Infrastructure

The Borough has to allocate land for a significant number of new dwellings over the next 15-20 years, much of it in and around Stafford town. This will obviously place additional demand pressures on infrastructure such as roads and utility networks – the things that make it possible for us to live in towns and villages. However, green infrastructure – the networks of green and blue spaces and the biodiversity that make it possible for us to live on Planet Earth – is even more important.

Cross-cutting Issue 7: Joined-up Thinking

The Council needs:

- To ensure that it works in a “joined up way” so that different initiatives and programmes support each other. For example, this strategy links directly with the work of the Council and some of its key partners in relation to walking and cycling, health, biodiversity, regeneration and air quality.
- To work positively and creatively with developers to initiate positive change in broadly the same way as it did with the new Stafford Leisure Centre and deliver revenue savings that can be retained within Leisure to drive other service improvements. More specifically, it should see Council-owned greenspaces as potential opportunities rather than land that should necessarily be protected. Therefore the Council must make clear to local residents that it will re-invest the proceeds of any disposals in better local spaces or facilities and if possible augment them by external funding. At the same time, it must take a balanced view and not dispose of sites simply in order to generate capital receipts. As a broad principle it will be better to have a slightly smaller network of high quality, accessible spaces than a slightly larger network of poor value spaces.
- To review its approach to the negotiation and use of planning obligations to ensure it is compatible with government policy guidance and best practice and the Government's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy, once introduced.
- To allocate the resources needed to ensure that developer contributions will be spent in ways that will best mitigate the impact of new developments

- To review its willingness to adopt new spaces and facilities provided by developers

Cross-cutting Issue 8: Regeneration

The Council needs to embrace change if the Borough is to be successful in future. To do this it needs:

- To ensure that new development results in an appropriate level of local greenspace and sport and recreation provision
- To increase the quality and capacity of the Borough's existing green and sporting infrastructure in order to help promote the integration of new residents and ensure equity between new and existing residents

Greenspace Issue 1: Children's play

The Council should concentrate on developing a limited number of strategic play areas and plan a rolling programme of works to convert those play areas coming to the end of their useful life into landscaped natural areas with high play value.

Greenspace Issue 2: Formal Parks

The Borough Council should:

- Replace the existing play areas in Victoria Park with a major facility for children and teenagers, designed for year-round use
- Review the condition and use of each of the buildings in Victoria Park and take appropriate action to conserve or replace them as appropriate. However, it should not take piecemeal action but revive its Heritage Lottery Fund application for a major upgrading of the whole of the park.
- Set an objective of retaining a Green Flag Award for Victoria Park
- Set an objective of gaining and then retaining a Green Flag for Stonefield Park
- Consider enhancing the area close to the Westbridge Park Fitness Centre in order to make it more "park-like" and attractive for informal activities. It will also be desirable to open up greater access to the river and canal, particularly if the proposed marina proceeds, and link the park to the Stone Meadows Local Nature Reserve to the north and other land to the south.

Greenspace Issue 3: Providing for Teenagers

The Council needs to develop an approach that provides attractive facilities that teenagers will want to use. This is easier said than done as teenage fashion is fickle and in the time it can take to respond to local teenagers' requests

for something, by the time it is built they may well have moved on to other interests. It is also the case that many more teenage boys than teenage girls want to take part in physical activities, but most public facilities that attract teenage boys also attract teenage girls.

The Council needs to strike a balance between two types of provision:

- Local facilities, that teenagers can walk to within a few minutes of home; because of the potential number of such facilities, it is almost inevitable that they have to be fairly small
- Strategic facilities that will attract teenagers from a wide area and may use public transport to use

Greenspace Issue 4: Quality versus quantity

The Council should:

- Require developers to comply with the quality standards set out in Section 5 and related Appendix C of this report in relation to all new spaces of facilities and use them as an aspiration for the spaces and facilities it owns and maintains itself
- Encourage the Town and Parish Councils also to adopt the quality standards
- Make greater use of planning obligations to generate developer contributions to be used to enhance existing spaces and facilities in the vicinity of a development. In principle there is no reason why single dwelling developments should not contribute to the enhancement of local space, including the enhancement of biodiversity.

Greenspace Issue 5: The Urban Fringe

The Council should actively consider the potential for a country park and if thought appropriate allocate land for it in its Local Development Framework.

Greenspace Issue 6: Walking and Cycling

The Council should identify opportunities to create a linked network of walking and cycling routes through greenspaces as a significant contribution to the work of its walking and cycling partnerships. Four broad types of route are particularly desirable:

- Routes that link suburban areas with the urban fringe and town centres, separated from roads as much as possible
- Routes that go round the perimeter of towns and settlements and link to rights of way in the surrounding countryside

- Routes that link settlements to Sustrans national cycle routes 5 and 81
- Routes beside the rivers and canals in the Borough

Outdoor Sports Facility Issue 1: Adult and Junior Football Pitch Provision

The Borough Council should seek to allocate land for at least two multi-pitch sites at accessible locations, ideally to the north and south of Stafford town, to be developed using the capital receipts from the disposal of smaller pitch sites. In addition it should identify those sites that it will be acceptable to sell for development from the following list of sites in the Stafford area:

- Charnley Road/Henry Street, Stafford town
- Greensome, Doxey (currently 1 adult pitch)
- Meadow Road, Stafford town (currently 1 pitch)
- The Drive, Doxey (currently 1 pitch)
- Torrington Road, Stafford town (currently 1 adult pitch plus 1 mini pitch)
- Western Downs, Stafford town (currently 1 adult pitch)
- Woodlands Road, Stafford town (currently 2 junior pitches plus one mini pitch)
- Wootton Drive, Stafford town (currently 1 pitch)

Stafford Common is an obvious location for a football centre in the Stafford town area and, as it is just off Beaconside, it will be accessible from a wide area. Although owned by Trustees and therefore not under the direct control of the Borough Council, creating a pitches centre will help to preserve the open aspect of the site for the future.

Depending on the future of Westbridge Park in Stone, it may be sensible also to develop a pitch complex for the town if a suitable site can be identified and allocated in the Local Development Framework.

Outdoor Sports Facility Issue 2: Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) Provision

- The Borough Council should work actively to persuade football interests of the benefits of third generation artificial surfaces and develop a rolling programme of artificial turf pitch provision across the Borough, concentrating initially on creating sites that can be used for adult training and floodlit games during the week and as central venues for mini-soccer and possibly mini-rugby at the weekend. In order to maximise the use of these pitches, they should be located on secondary school sites as much as possible, although the County Council's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in the Borough is unclear at present. Accordingly this argues for the first such

pitch being located at the Sir Graham Balfour High School as it has already been built under the BSF programme. Accordingly the Borough Council should work with the school and County Football Association to develop a joint approach to the Football Foundation and other funding agencies. Given that the school is managed by a contractor on behalf of the County, it will be necessary to negotiate an extension to the contract.

- The second priority will be a similar pitch in the southern part of the town. The obvious potential locations for this are the Stafford Sports College, King Edward VI High School, Blessed William Howard RC High School or Rowley Park. Of these, the order of preference should be Blessed William Howard High School followed by Rowley Park (subject to the comments below), Stafford Sports College and King Edward VI High School.
- The third priority should be to provide floodlit ATPs on suitable sites in Eccleshall and Gnosall. Ideally on or as close as possible to the local schools. These pitches need not be full size but must be large enough for mini-soccer, for example around 60 x 40 m.
- In the longer term, the Borough Council should work with the County Council to seek to ensure that all new schools built under the BSF programme gave at least one floodlit artificial turf pitch with full community use. It should then be possible to move a significant amount of local football league matches onto artificial surfaces.
- The Borough Council should investigate the potential for an additional ATP to be shared by the University and Weston Road High School. This will also provide an accessible ATP on the eastern edge of Stafford town with good road links to some of the villages in the eastern part of the Borough.

Outdoor Sports Facility Issue 3: Central Venues for Mini-soccer

- The Borough Council should seek to negotiate joint use agreements with the larger schools to allow their sites to be used as central venues for mini-soccer until such time as it is possible to develop sufficient ATP capacity to accommodate the local demand.
- The Borough Council should investigate the potential for a 5-a-side centre that will also function as a central venue for mini-soccer. This may be a viable alternative to a full size artificial turf pitch on a secondary school site.

Outdoor Sports Facility Issue 4: The Future of Rowley Park

- The Council should take a long hard and objective look at Rowley Park, estimate the likely capital receipt from disposing of part of it and consider using it partly to create a smaller but better park partly to create better replacement sports facilities elsewhere. This might include a new 8-lane athletics stadium developed jointly with Cannock Chase District Council.

If the Council is not willing to consider disposing of part of Rowley Park, it should develop a comprehensive master plan for its future development, after deciding on the standard of athletics competitions it wishes to be able to attract.

Indoor Sports Provision Issue 1: Building Schools for the Future

The Council should seek to work closely with the County Council to help plan the sports elements of proposed BFSP schools to ensure that they include suitably located and designed joint use sports facilities.

In addition the Council should seek to agree a general joint use agreement with the County Council that it can subsequently incorporate into management contracts for new BSFP schools.

Indoor Sports Provision Issue 3: The Needs of New Residents

- The Council should use all of the sports facility provision standards in this report to make provisional allocations of land for new sports provision to meet the needs of new housing allocations, but undertake a specific investigation of the need for bowling greens, outdoor tennis courts and golf facilities when development proposals come forward.

Indoor Sports Provision Issue 4: Westbridge Sports Centre

- The Borough Council should consider consolidating the fitness facilities at the Westbridge Park Sports Centre at the Alleyne's Sports Centre in order to achieve economies of scale, subject of course to the conclusion of a satisfactory joint use agreement.

Target Sports Facility Issues 1: Canoeing

Whatever the future of Westbridge Park and Crown Meadow, the Borough Council should do what it can to support the Stafford and Stone Canoe Club. Canoeing will

be an attractive feature for visitors to the area and will complement the marina proposal with an additional water-based activity.

Target Sports Facility Issues 2: Cricket

The Council should:

- Encourage the cricket clubs to develop artificial wickets, primarily for junior use, plus practice nets if they do not have them already, by offering small grants
- Work with local clubs to attract County matches to the Borough
- Work with local schools and clubs to promote junior coaching
- Come to an early view on the acceptability in planning terms of the proposed Little Stoke indoor centre and if it is acceptable work with the club to ensure that cricket clubs and teams throughout the Borough will benefit from the facility when it opens

Target Sports Facility Issues 3: Indoor Tennis

The development of an indoor tennis centre in the Borough, irrespective of its location, will not be without financial risk in terms of revenue costs. The Borough's clubs have an aggregate membership of around 650, but only a proportion of them are likely to play indoors. Against this, there is considerable evidence that indoor centres attract new players to the game. However, while an indoor tennis centre is obviously desirable in Stafford town, the Council will obviously want to minimise the financial risk inherent in setting one up. Accordingly we recommend that it should be designed to accommodate two main sports, tennis and netball.

Target Sports Facility Issues 4: Netball

If the Borough Council manages to develop an indoor tennis centre it should allocate some programme time to netball. For example, the centre could function as a central venue for netball one night each week during the season. The Council should therefore select a floor surface that will be suitable for netball as well as tennis.

Target Sports Facility Issues 5: Rugby

The Borough Council should:

- Do all it can to help the Stafford Rugby Club find a new site
- Look as sympathetically as possible on planning applications from clubs for floodlights
- Ensure that rugby clubs get appropriate opportunities to use any third generation artificial turf pitches in the

Borough for training

Consequential Issue 1: Providing for the Pitch Sports

The above discussion suggests a number of mutually exclusive possibilities in relation to the future pattern of pitch provision in the Borough. Therefore the approach the Council should take is:

- Try to reach agreements with local football interests on the future use of ATPs for mini-soccer, junior and adult football. It will probably be sensible to wait a year or so, until there are more third generation ATPs, and then arrange a visit by a number of club and league representatives to two or three examples of third generation pitches and give them an opportunity to use them for a while. If they agree to the development of an “artificial future” over a number of years the Council should develop a rolling programme of ATP provision based as much as possible around the BSF programme, while keeping its existing grass pitches in as good condition as possible.
- The second option is to try to get agreement to move all mini-soccer onto ATPs.
- If football interests are adamant that they will not agree to an artificial future, the Council will have an interesting decision to make. It can accept football’s views and concentrate on developing suitable multi-grass pitch sites and central venues for mini-soccer based on grass pitches, in the knowledge that sooner or later football will almost certainly embrace artificial surfaces. By then the Council will probably have incurred significant expenditure which may turn out to be wasted. Alternatively, as football is largely dependent on public pitches, it could go ahead with the construction of ATPs and force clubs and teams to use them by withholding permission for them to use Council owned grass pitches. The downside of this is that the clubs will make it as difficult as they can for the Council to get the planning consents it will need to allow the development of existing grass pitch sites to generate the capital receipts for ATPs. A better approach, therefore, will be to try to reach agreement with football interests that certain leagues will use only artificial turf pitches for one or two seasons and then review their acceptability. In addition, during trial period, the Council should guarantee not to sell any grass pitches so that football can move back to grass if it insists on doing so.

Consequential Issue 2: The Use of Sports Halls

If one consequence of developing an indoor tennis centre is to free time and space in existing halls this will be

positive in the sense that there will then be a lesser need to construct additional halls to meet the demand that will be generated by the residents of new housing developments. Alternatively – and this will probably be the better option – the Council will be able to work with the hall owners to develop them into specialist facilities for specific sports. For example, one school might become a central venue for table tennis; another concentrate on martial arts; and another badminton or volleyball. It will then be possible to operate school halls in a very simple and cheap manner with block bookings done through leagues, governing bodies or coaches.

Planning Policy

Planning policy has the potential to be a critically important delivery mechanism for the recommendations in this assessment and strategy.

Suggested Broad Approach to Policy

Core Policies in Local Development Frameworks should be as short and “strategic” as possible. It will probably be sensible to have two policies each with a related SPD, the first dealing with open space, sport and recreation within settlements and the second relating to developments in the countryside. They can most easily be classed as a “settlement” and “countryside” policies. To describe them as “urban” and “rural” would create a need to define the respective area of the Borough to which they will apply. The “countryside” policies can be a reworked and abbreviated version of existing Local Plan policies.

Settlement Policy Principles

The following principles should underpin the settlement policy:

- A general presumption in favour of the protection of all existing open spaces and sport and recreation provision unless the development of a space will lead to greater benefits to the community in the vicinity of the site than retention of the space or facility; with “greater benefit” to be interpreted in terms of the amount, quality and/or accessibility of provision
- All new developments which will result in a net increase of one or more residential units will increase the need for access to open space and sport and recreation provision within the distance thresholds defined in this report
- However, this does not automatically mean that the Council will require all new developments to provide or contribute to additional provision; in the interest of sustainability, and the best use of land, there will be many instances where it will be better for new developments to contribute to the enhancement of existing spaces or facilities within the distance threshold in order to increase their capacity to

accommodate use or reduce an identified qualitative deficiency

- Where there is a quantitative deficiency in provision, or where such a deficiency will arise as a result of the development, the Council will require developers to provide or contribute to the amount of new provision required by application of the appropriate quantity standard(s), after taking account of any existing surplus of provision there may be within the distance threshold.
- Where there is no quantitative deficiency, and one will not be created by the development, but there is a qualitative deficiency in provision within the distance threshold, the Council will require the developer to contribute to the enhancement of an amount of provision equivalent to the size of the development multiplied by the appropriate quantity standard(s).
- Commercial developments in town centres will increase the need for town centre greenspaces such as parks because workers will be likely to use these spaces during lunch breaks. It is clearly impractical to make additional park provision in town centres, so the Council will require developers to contribute to the enhancement of the nearest park or similar greenspace on the basis of the net increase in floorspace.
- Where developers make or fund on-site or other provision that is intended primarily for the benefit of the occupants or users of a development, the Council will impose a condition requiring them to make arrangements for management and maintenance in perpetuity that will be acceptable to the Council. This will normally include payment of a commuted establishment sum to fund the replacement of trees and other plants that die within five years of the completion of the development.
- Where developers make or contribute to off-site provision, or contribute to the enhancement of off-site provision, that is not intended primarily for the benefit of the occupants or users of the related development, the Council will expect the agency or body in whom the land is vested to make arrangements for long term management and maintenance that are acceptable to the Council. It will also seek to negotiate a commuted establishment sum to fund the replacement of trees and other plants that die within five years of the completion of the development. Where necessary, the Council will secure these arrangements through a planning agreement.

Management and Maintenance Issues

There is no point in providing high quality, well located open spaces and sport and recreation facilities if they will be badly managed and maintained. The Council's current policy of adopting new open spaces provided by developers is storing up long term problems for its

maintenance budgets. The main options open to the Council are:

- A section 106 planning agreement plus bond when maintenance is to be by someone other than the Council
- For the Council to impose a condition requiring developers to include a clause in title deeds requiring householders to create and fund, on an equitable basis, a management company or committee that will oversee the maintenance of the common areas of a development.

The first of these possible arrangements is fraught with difficulty. Most developers do not wish to retain any interest in a development after it is complete and sold. While any Section 106 agreement will run with the land, it is unlikely that developers will be willing to fund a bond that may be called upon in the event of a third party over whom the developers have no control, such as the householders in a completed development, defaulting on maintenance. This also gives householders an incentive to default.

- The second approach has much more to offer, although some householders will no doubt claim that it amounts to double taxation: their Council Tax will include an amount for general grounds maintenance across the Council area while they will also have to pay an additional sum each year for the maintenance of the open spaces in the development in which they happen to live.

Vision, Aims and Objectives

The Borough Council is an important provider and manager of open space, sport and recreation provision, as are a range of other agencies across the Borough including the town and parish council, the County Council and local schools, the University, Stafford College, local clubs, land owners and a few commercial providers and operators such as some of the larger hotels and the Stafford Sports Arena in Stafford town. All of them serve the same basic market – primarily the Borough’s residents, but also visitors. For obvious reasons, therefore, it is desirable that they should all work together as much as possible. This creates the need for the Borough Council to have a clear strategy for the future of open space, sport and recreation provision across the Borough.

Any strategy starts with a clear long term vision of a desirable and deliverable future, backed by clear aims and objectives and delivery plans. This creates a “policy cascade”.

Long Term Vision

For obvious reasons, the vision for open space, sport and

recreation provision must relate directly the Local Strategic Partnership's wider vision and the principles set out in the Council's Corporate Plan - the universal starting point for the local policy cascade, irrespective of the service area under consideration.

We therefore suggest the following vision:

Stafford will be a Borough with a safe and accessible network of high quality greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities that offer residents and visitors a comprehensive and stimulating choice of leisure opportunities, support sport and physical activity and therefore physical and mental well-being, nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainability, help to boost land values, support regeneration and contribute significantly to making the Borough the area with the best quality of life in the West Midlands

The Council can use this vision to "test" any proposals or ideas that will affect the future of open space, sport and recreation provision anywhere in the Borough. The test is simple: will implementing the idea or proposal be a cost-effective way of delivering the long term vision? If it will, the idea will be worth pursuing; if not, it won't.

Aims and Objectives

The next step in the "policy cascade" is to develop a small number of broad aims that set out in more detail the areas on which the Council will concentrate. Ideally, its main partners should also sign up to them. Wherever possible, they should reflect the aims of other strategies so as to promote "joined up" thinking and, more importantly, joined up delivery. We suggest four such aims, each with related shorter term objectives:

Strategic Aim 1: A greener, safer and more sustainable Borough

- Use greenspace provision to support regeneration and promote local distinctiveness, effective placemaking and local pride across the Borough
- Drive up the quality, value and inclusiveness of greenspace provision across the Borough for people, wildlife and bio-diversity and achieve a progressively more equitable distribution of high quality, high value spaces, with local parks, or park-like spaces, in as many of the main neighbourhoods of the larger settlements as possible
- Plan and develop strategic networks of high profile, stimulating equipped play and informal recreation opportunities for children and young people
- Develop a secondary network of locally accessible, high

quality informal opportunities for play and informal recreation that will complement the strategic network and meet the local needs and aspirations of the Borough's children and young people

Strategic Aim 2: A more active and healthier Borough

- Develop walking and cycling routes that combine to create networks of sustainable and healthy transport routes that make the maximum possible use of the Borough's canals, rivers and greenspaces to link residential areas to community facilities and work opportunities and, by encouraging "busyness", make them appear safer and more welcoming
- Increase access to the urban fringe and link the Borough's main settlements to the rights of way network better
- Work with the Town and Parish Councils to maximise opportunities for participation in sport and active recreation in the rural areas of the Borough
- Work with the County Council to ensure that the Building Schools for the Future Programme delivers a sustainable network of joint use sports facilities that will have a high profile in both their local areas and the Borough as a whole, cater for participants from beginners to County level in as wide a range of sports as possible, be designed for community as well as school use and well managed and maintained
- Plan and develop specialist indoor facilities for tennis and netball

Strategic Aim 3: An involved and proud Borough

- Promote greater community involvement in local greenspace management and the development and organisation of local social and cultural events
- Promote greater community involvement in the planning and delivery of play and teenage provision
- Support the development of the Borough's sports clubs

Strategic Aim 4: A forward-looking Borough that makes the best use of its resources

- Draw up and implement a long term master plan for the development of the Westbridge Park site
- In the short term, rationalise the Borough's grass football pitches onto a small number of major sites, with better playing and ancillary facilities than currently available, in order to provide better facilities for players, support the development of community clubs and reduce the revenue costs associated with pitch maintenance
- In the longer term, develop a network of floodlit artificial turf pitches across the Borough and progressively increase the extent to which football teams in the Borough use artificial surfaces for

coaching, training and matches in order to maximise opportunities for participation by people from juniors to veterans and both sexes while also minimising revenue costs

- Review the use, potential and future of Rowley Park and then, as appropriate:
- Draw up and implement a long term master plan for the site; or
- Draw up and implement a long term plan for the relocation of the Rowley Park track and other facilities to one or more alternative sites, to be funded by the disposal of not more than about two thirds of Rowley Park for development, plus the enhancement of the remainder as a local park for the Highfields area
- Draw up and implement a long term masterplan for the development of the Riverway site



3: The National and Regional Policy Context

Introduction

The national policy agenda underpinning PPG17 or relating to sport and recreation has come a long way in a very short time. This chapter summarises the key national and regional policy and other documents that set the context for the assessment and strategy. It gives a brief summary of the key points from:

National Policy Documents

- Town and Country Parks, the Best and ...
- Towards an Urban Renaissance
- Our Towns and Cities: the Future
- Public Park Assessment
- The Role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance
- Green Spaces, Better Places
- PPG17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation
- Living Places
- Circular 5/2005, Planning Obligations
- Local Development Framework Monitoring
- PPS1, Delivering Sustainable Development, and its supplement, Planning and Climate Change
- The Community Infrastructure Levy
- Playing to Win – A New Era for Sport
- Grow, Sustain, Excel – The Sport England Strategy 2008-11

Regional Policy Documents

- West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- Sign up for Sport in the West Midlands
- West Midlands Regional Sports Facility Strategy (2007 draft)

The Development of National Policy

Town and Country Parks, the Best and ...

Twentieth report of Session 1998-99 of the Environment, Transport, and Regions Committee of the House of Commons

This hard-hitting report, necessarily based on largely

anecdotal evidence, was critically important in highlighting the decline of Britain's parks. For example: "We are shocked at the weight of evidence, far beyond our expectations, about the extent of the problems parks have faced in the last 30 years. It is clear that if nothing is done many of them will become albatrosses around the necks of local authorities. Un-used, derelict havens for crime and vandalism, it would be better to close them and re-use the land than to leave them to decay further."

The Committee's identification of the lack of current factual information about parks (which it described as a "statistical vacuum") led directly to the Public Parks Assessment (see below).

Towards an Urban Renaissance 1999

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

This important report led to the creation of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the growing recognition of the need for greater urban design input to planning in order to promote "place-making". Its weakness was that it took the view that design can solve almost any problem and largely ignored social issues.

Our Towns and Cities: the Future

DETR, November 2000

The Urban White Paper can be summed up as aiming to make towns and cities places where people with choices will choose to live. It therefore builds on *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. It calls for denser, more compact towns and cities and more development on brownfield land and provided the rationale for much of PPG3 on Housing. One less desirable has been creeping densification as householders with large gardens take the opportunity to sell up to developers who then replace their former houses with flats or town houses, so changing the character of the "leafy suburbs".

Public Park Assessment

Urban Parks Forum (2001) and published by the Heritage Lottery Fund (www.hlf.org.uk)

This important report sought to fill the "statistical vacuum" identified in *Town and Country Parks* (see above). It has attracted considerable media interest with its evaluation of the condition of parks and whether they are improving or failing. Key points from the report include:

- The UK's 27,000 parks cover around 143,000 ha and receive around 1.5 billion visits a year by all sectors of

the community. They currently cost local authorities the equivalent of around 42p per visit. The assessment estimated the aggregate cut in parks revenue expenditure over the 20 years to 2001 as around £1.3 billion.

- Parks are polarising, with good parks getting better and poor parks getting worse; the rate of decline is highest in deprived areas.
- Around 13% of local authorities consider their parks to be in poor condition and the condition of around 40% of parks and open spaces is declining.
- Many parks have lost features such as cafes, toilets, bowling greens and tennis courts.
- There is a clear correlation between good condition and the existence of parks strategies

While the report is generally regarded as clear evidence of serious decline, its value is easily over-stated. Many of the questions asked were extremely vague while key terms such as "poor condition" were not defined. It is also the case that the original need for some traditional elements of parks has disappeared: for example, the development of radio and recording reduced the need for bandstands dramatically. Before them all music had necessarily to be "live". Just because expenditure is lower now than some years ago does not necessarily imply that resources are inadequate, although looking at almost any park supports the findings of the research. What is certain is that CCT, in particular, has resulted in the de-skilling of park staff: "on-site gardeners" have become travelling maintenance contractors. In turn, this has led to the simplification of parks and other open spaces to make them more suitable for machine maintenance. Increasingly there is a view that parks and open spaces are designed for maintenance machines rather than people and it is time to reverse this.

The Role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance

Third report of session 2001-02 of the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee of the House of Commons

This report relates to the Select Committee Inquiry into the draft revision of PPG17 (published by the Government in March 2001) in autumn 2001. It identifies the central importance of green space quality to the urban renaissance and makes a number of recommendations that have since been reflected in PPG17. Again, the Memoranda submitted to the Committee and its minutes of evidence provide a wealth of information. They can be downloaded from the same website as the main report.

Green Spaces, Better Places

*Published by the DTLR in May 2002 as the final report of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force (UGSTF) with six accompanying Working Group reports and a major research report by the University of Sheffield entitled *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces*.*

The Urban White Paper called for a "vision for the future of our parks, play areas and green spaces". The job of the UGSTF, chaired by a Minister, was to develop that vision. Its final report identifies the importance of green spaces to urban life and outlines current concerns about parks and other green spaces, together with proposals for overcoming them. It argues for a strategic policy framework and additional resources for planning, design and management and that green spaces are fundamental to liveable, sustainable towns and cities.

Related Sheffield University research examined how parks and open spaces are used and by whom, what users want from them, what they currently provide and their wider benefits to urban environments.

PPG17: Open Space, Sport and Recreation

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, July 2002

This new guidance represents a considerable policy shift from the original 1991 version and is a huge step forward that relates strongly to the whole of the Government's "liveability" and urban renaissance agendas. The key changes include:

- Putting open space at the heart of the document. In the 1991 version, *Sport and Recreation*, open space was fairly peripheral, while many took the view that open space had been shoe-horned into the March 2001 draft revision, almost on an opportunistic basis.
- Promotion of a clear typology of open spaces
- A clear statement that planning authorities should undertake local assessments and audits, with both qualitative and quantitative components, to set local standards and not continue to rely on national standards.
- A welcome emphasis on quality and accessibility - interestingly, including charges, which is not a land use issue
- Clear recognition of the importance of enhancing existing open spaces and facilities and clear guidance that planning obligations can be used to remedy both qualitative and quantitative deficiencies in provision
- Recognition of the importance of linking the "planning system" to the "management system", with local

assessments providing the starting point for open space strategies

- A clear policy statement that before an open space can be redeveloped for some other purpose, it must be “surplus to requirements” in terms of the full open space typology and not just its existing use
- Making clear that planning authorities can require commercial and industrial developers to provide or contribute to open space or sport and recreation facilities; this opens up the possibility, for example, of requiring office and retail developers to contribute to parks that might be used by their workers or shoppers. The only problem with this is finding a defensible way of calculating the required contributions.
- Planning authorities are expected to seek to enhance the rights of way network – hitherto this had usually been seen as primarily a highways matter
- A greater role for local communities

Living Places

ODPM and other Government Departments, October 2002

Living Places should be seen in the context of the Government's stated desire to enhance the “liveability” of urban areas and promote an urban renaissance. It includes an interesting definition of public spaces: “everywhere between the places we live and work”, and includes “internal public places such as libraries and town halls”.

The main theoretical underpinning for *Living Places* is that “liveability” depends on a sustainable high quality public realm which is clean and green and in which individuals feel safe. It has two main thrusts:

- Reducing some forms of anti-social behaviour and improving the public sector's response to the most obvious consequences of it: for example, litter, graffiti, fly-tipping, joy-riding, abandoned cars and dog fouling and chewing gum – a big issue for everyone who has noticed that most pavements are so covered in discarded gum that they seem to have a form of measles. The Prime Minister's championing of “Respect” is obviously a continuation of this agenda.
- Promoting better “joined up thinking”, and more importantly joined up action, amongst the various public agencies responsible for the design and maintenance of the public realm.

Living Places therefore builds on themes first set out in the Urban White Paper and developed (albeit to an agenda limited to green space) through the work of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce. When taken together with other policy statements, such as PPG17, it is clear there has been a revolution in Government thinking, with a determination

to promote enhanced community involvement in issues affecting local environments and to push quality of life issues up the agenda.

Living Places acknowledges that there have been too many attempts in the past at "short-term fixes", often little more than cosmetic, and the real need is for long term main stream resourcing. However, it fails to recognise that the Government-created framework of endless initiatives and the "bid culture" is partly to blame for this.

Local Development Framework Monitoring

(ODPM March 2005, with updated guidance on Core Output Indicators in October 2005)

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Planning Policy Statement 12 and various regulations require local planning authorities to submit an annual monitoring report to the ODPM on progress with implementing their local development schemes and the extent to which policies in Local Development Documents are being implemented successfully. Part of this report is to provide details on a number of core indicators specified by the Government. One of them is the amount and percentage of total open space managed to Green Flag Award Standards (indicator 4c). Councils are expected to include details of spaces managed to this standard, but not necessarily in receipt of a Green Flag award. The spaces to be included are all those without any undue restrictions on access and no charge and can be publicly or privately owned.

Circular 5/2005, Planning Obligations

(ODPM, July 2005)

The Government intended Circular 5 to clarify the earlier Circular 1/97 on Planning Obligations and put in place some relatively minor reforms to the planning obligations system that do not require primary legislation. It is doubtful whether it has achieved the first of these objectives (the new circular is much longer than the one it replaces). In terms of reform, the new circular:

- Reinforces the policy tests in Circular 1/97 for the reasonableness of planning obligations - but then undermines them by stating that planning obligations "should not be used solely to resolve existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision" (paragraph B9). The application of the tests indicates clearly that obligations should be used only to mitigate the impacts of proposed developments.
- Indicates that where councils "do not have existing high level policies specifically relating to planning obligations in their adopted local plan ... they should set out the implications for planning obligations of the relevant topic-based Development Plan Document policies (eg

transport or open space) in a Supplementary Planning Document, based on the policies in this Circular” (paragraph B27). In the past, Supplementary Planning Guidance had to be related directly to one or more development plan policies rather than rely wholly on Government circulars.

- Makes clear that obligations can be used to prescribe the nature of a development in order to achieve planning objectives; mitigate the impact of a development; or compensate for loss or damage caused by development.
- Makes clear that planning authorities can require developers to make arrangements for the maintenance of provision secured through an obligation “in perpetuity” (an obviously misleading phrase), provided it is primarily for the benefit of the users of the associated development.

PPS1, Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS1 sets out the Government’s overall objectives for the planning system:

- Social cohesion and inclusion
- Protection and enhancement of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources
- Sustainable economic development

Tackling climate change is a key priority Government priority of the planning system. The *Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS1* notes that

The evidence that climate change is happening ... is strong and indisputable ... in the UK, we are likely to see more extreme weather events, including hotter and drier summers, flooding and rising sea-levels increasing the risk of coastal erosion. There will be permanent changes to the natural environment ... the Government believes that climate change is the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (DCLG, August 2008)

The Government has announced that it will introduce Regulations that will allow planning authorities to require housing and other developers to pay a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) towards various forms of infrastructure (including open space and sport and recreation provision), but not before Spring 2009. However, only councils with both an up to date development plan and a “charging schedule” will be able to charge the levy. The Charging Schedule will be yet another type of document within the Local Development Framework and will have to be subject to independent examination, most

probably by a Planning Inspector, before it can be brought into use. This means that it will be some time before most councils are able to start charging the levy and in the meantime they will continue to be able to seek planning obligations. In addition, Councils will be able to choose whether to impose only the CIL; or to introduce requirements relating to the CIL while also seeking planning obligations; or to continue to rely only on planning obligations. Affordable housing, however, will continue to be secured through planning obligations.

Playing to Win – A New Era for Sport (DCMS 2008)

Playing to Win sets a vision of giving more people of all ages the opportunity to participate in high quality competitive sport. Related to this, it three main aims:

- To engage a million more people in regular sports
- To produce a seamless ladder of talent development from school to the elite level, with opportunities for more competition and more coaching at each level
- To ensure every member of the sporting family, and every part of Government, plays it part

It also identifies key roles of DCMS, the Youth Sport Trust, Sport England and UK Sport:

- The DCMS sets the overall policy context
- The Youth Sports Trust supports the delivery of the PE and Sport Strategy for Young People
- Sport England leads the development of community sport
- UK Sport focuses on the development of world class sporting talent

Grow, Sustain, Excel *Sport England, 2008*

Sport England's strategy commits it to delivering against a series of challenging targets through the creation of a world leading community sport system:

- One million more people taking part in sport by 2012-13
- A 25% reduction in the number of 16-18 year olds who drop out in at least five sports by 2012-13
- Improved talent development systems in at least 25 sports
- A measurable increase in people's satisfaction with their experience of sport
- A major contribution to the delivery of the five hour sports offer for children and young people

National governing bodies of sport will largely be

responsible delivering these outcomes, in effect under contract to Sport England. In order to access the funding they will need, they will produce “Whole Sport Plans” to set out what they plan to do over a four year period, focusing on:

- Coach education, training and deployment
- Attracting, training and retaining volunteers
- Modernising club structures and the development of multi-sport clubs
- Promoting inclusiveness
- Reducing bureaucracy

These approaches, apart from the “contracting” of governing bodies, have been included one way or another in all of the various strategies and plans produced by the Sports Council/Sport England since its creation in 1972 and its predecessor, the Central Council of Physical Recreation before that.

The successful London Olympics Bid underpins much of the DCMS and Sport England strategies. However, there is no evidence from anywhere in the world that the staging of an Olympic Games leads to a sustained increase in sports participation in the host country. Moreover, in spite of the massive investment of public and private funds in sports provision, coach development and other initiatives, overall levels of participation have hardly changed in the past 30 years.

Stafford is unlikely to see any direct benefit from the Games in terms of funding, sports provision or sports participation. However, it may generate some indirect benefits if a significant number of volunteers from the Borough become involved in help to deliver the Games. They will bring some expertise, and hopefully considerable enthusiasm, back to the Borough, although the benefits to be gained will obviously depend on the nature of their work for the Games.

Regional Plans and Strategies

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy

The regional spatial strategy pays little attention to open space, sport and recreation except in:

- Policy PA10, Tourism and Culture, which requires development plans to promote new or enhanced sports provision
- Policy QE4, Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces, requires local authorities to undertake PPG17 assessments and improve the quality of the urban environment and sports facilities of all kinds. It also requires local authorities to create and enhance urban greenspace networks.
- The Environment Monitoring Section, which sets a

target of 100% of authorities having a greenspace strategy which takes account of English Nature's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

Paragraph 8.15 of the strategy also requires local authorities to have regard to English Nature's guidelines that people should have access to a natural greenspace within 300 m of home.

As a designated growth point, Stafford is required by the Government to prepare a Green Infrastructure Strategy, partly to help guide future development.

Sign Up for Sport in the West Midlands

Sign Up for Sport in the West Midlands was driven by an earlier Government sports strategy, *Game Plan*, which had two main aims: increasing and widening participation and achieving more international success. In relation to the former, *Game Plan* called for a 1% increase in participation in every year to 2020. Given that participation in many sports is at best static, and others are in decline, this was a hugely ambitious and probably unrealistic target. Over the past few decades much of the claimed increase in "sports participation" has been the results of higher levels of participation in walking. In addition, voluntary sports clubs are becoming increasingly "fragile" with many likely to dissolve in the next decade.

Sign Up for Sport, has seven strategic priorities:

- Increasing participation in club and community sport
- Improving levels of sports performance
- Widening access to sport
- Improving the health and well-being of people through sport
- Creating safer and stronger communities through sport
- Improving education through PE and sport
- Benefiting the economy through sport

Accordingly only three of the seven aims relate directly to sport and the other four seek to use sport primarily as mechanisms to help deliver wider government agendas. However, in *Playing to Win*, the Government made clear that it expects Sport England to concentrate on sport and not physical activity so it is likely that the West Midlands Regional office of Sport England will be revising its strategy in the near future.

West Midlands Regional Sports Facilities Framework (RSFF)

Sport England West Midlands, 2007 (draft)

The RSFF seeks to identify priorities for investment in sports facilities across the West Midlands to 2021. It seeks

to assess the impact of population change and the facilities that will be needed if the targets for sports participation set in *Sign Up for Sport in the West Midlands* are to be met and support given to the highest levels of elite sport.

The RSFF was prepared in 2007 so obviously could not take account of the designation of Stafford as a growth point in 2008. Accordingly the analysis in it is out of date insofar as Stafford is concerned. It has been drawn up mainly at county level and makes only three specific mentions of Stafford Borough – a reference to the replacement of the Riverside Recreation Centre; support for the Stone Canoe Club; and the desire of the Stafford Rugby Club to move to a new site. In all other respects it subsumes Stafford into “Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent”.

The facilities that the Framework identifies as required in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, without identifying any specific location, are:

- 3G ATP match pitch in each County Sports Partnership (CSP) area
- 1000 extra fitness stations
- Indoor athletics training area
- Additional six lane track
- 4-court high performance badminton hall in each CSP area
- Relocation of Stafford RUFC
- 13 indoor tennis courts

Active People

Active People is a survey of sports participation across England undertaken on behalf of Sport England. There have been two such surveys to date, known as Active People 1 and Active People 2. Nationally, Active Places 2 found that 21.3% of respondents took part in sports and active recreation at least three times in a week for at least 30 minutes. In the West Midlands, the comparable figure was 19.1% and in Stafford 22.8%. However, in Active Places 1, the Stafford figure 25.6%.

It is unlikely that participation sport and recreation in the Borough declined by just under 11% from 2005-6 to 2007-8 and two participation rates like this do not constitute a trend. The next survey could easily generate a higher or lower participation rate. Therefore all that can be taken from the results is that Stafford residents are more active than the average for the West Midlands.

Conclusions

This brief review highlights a number of points that are significant for the Borough:

- The state of local environments is seen as increasingly important by the Government as part of delivering

sustainable development against a background of climate change, growing obesity and health inequalities. It is requiring local authorities to take effective action to deliver what these days is known as “liveability”. Moreover, it is beginning to measure the performance of local authorities in terms of the quality of environment they deliver for their residents and visitors. Stafford Borough residents are lucky in that they live in a predominantly rural area, with a high quality landscape and attractive towns and villages. However, the Council cannot afford to rest on its laurels. The Government view is very clearly that any council which does not deliver demonstrable “continuous improvement” in indicators such as the area of Green Flag standard space is failing.

- Reliance on the National Playing Fields Association (now Fields in Trust) Six Acre Standard is no longer acceptable.
- The Government’s “Safer, Cleaner, Greener” strapline is resulting in local communities becoming more aware of any shortcomings in the quality of their local environment and demanding action to overcome them. However, this is also encouraging opposition to any development which may affect established greenspaces. Like other Councils, Stafford needs to try to persuade local residents that development can be positive and that one of the Council’s duties is to seek to harness the development process in the interests of local residents and visitors.
- The assessment and greenspace strategy needs to provide the Council with a tool it can use to monitor the amount and proportion of green space which meets Green Flag Award standard
- The Council needs a forward-looking planning policy for open space, sport and recreation provision, and a related Supplementary Planning Document, in order to provide adequate protection to existing spaces and facilities, where necessary; and help the Council and its partners deliver both the enhancement of existing spaces and facilities and new provision where it is needed
- The Government has set targets relating to increased participation in sport and Sport England will be contracting governing bodies to deliver them at the local level. However, increased participation has been a key policy objective of successive governments and the Sports Council/Sport England for the last 37 years but any increases have been very limited and not always sustained.

4: The Local Policy Context

Introduction

This chapter reviews the local policy context – the plans and strategies that apply specifically to the Borough and are relevant to this assessment. They are:

- Stafford Borough Sustainable Community Plan 2006-2020
- Local Agenda 21 Strategy, 2001
- Stafford Borough Biodiversity Strategy, 2000
- The Council's Corporate Plan
- The Stafford Local Plan 2001
- Stafford Borough Local Cultural Strategy 2001-6
- Playing Pitch Assessment, October 2002
- Play Strategy (updated May 2007)
- Open Space Provision and Commuted Sum Payments (2006)
- Local Development Framework: Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough – Issues and Options (2009)

Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-20

The Sustainable Community Plan, *Shaping Our Borough for the Future*, is the most important local strategy relating to the Borough and has been approved by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and endorsed by the Borough Council. It is in three main sections:

- Profile and Baseline
- Sustainability Objectives
- Vision and Themes for 2020

Profile and Baseline

Relevant facts highlighted about the Borough include:

- The population was 123,400 in 2006. Of this total, 21,300 were aged 0-15 years; 75,600 between 16 and 64; and 26,400 were classed as older people. By 2026 the over 60s population is forecast to increase by 23%. There is also a declining birth rate and by 2021 there is forecast to be a decline of 21% in the number of under 16s. This suggests a significant decline in participation in those sports that appeal most to people in this age group, primarily football, rugby, swimming and gymnastics.

- The Borough' population has an average age of 40.4 years, above the national average of 38.8 years. With the forecast increase in the older age groups, the average age is expected to rise further.
- The Borough is fairly prosperous and (just) in the top half of council areas in England when measured by multiple deprivation. Average household incomes are slightly higher than for England and Wales.
- Levels of crime are around the British average
- The Borough has two national nature reserves (NNRs); 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); 7 local nature reserves (LNRs); and 256 sites of biological importance (SBIs). However, the preceding Sustainable Community Strategy highlighted that between 1980 and 2006 the Borough lost 37% of its SBIs, the biggest casualty being over 50% of the wet grasslands.
- Tackling climate change preserving the Borough for future generations is a high priority and 78% of residents are concerned about climate change

Visions for 2020

The LSP vision is of

Improving the quality of life for our communities by making the Borough a safer, healthier, cleaner and more sustainable place for all to live, learn, work and invest in

By 2020, the LSP wants the Borough:

- To have a vibrant, prosperous, sustainable economy and environment, which it aims to achieve by
 - Securing the conditions for a thriving economy, where all businesses are supported in their development and long term sustainability
 - Promoting innovation and nurturing enterprise so that new businesses are given every opportunity to develop and grow
 - Being a place where the environment is protected and enhanced and a sustainable way of life is promoted, supported and delivered
- To be a Borough where are members of the community are safe and feel safe, which it aims to achieve by
 - Being an area where all members of the community are secure and free from fear of crime in their homes, places of work or study, in the street, town centres and the countryside
- To have a protected and enhance environment, which it will achieve by

- Proactively preparing for and adapting to climate change
- Increasing the understanding and awareness of sustainable development so that everyone is able to contribute to it
- To be a Borough in which people feel included in society and live longer, healthier and more contented lives, which it will achieve by
 - The promotion of healthy lifestyles and general wellbeing
 - Being a place where a strong sense of inclusion within the community, is promoted - one that enhances the quality of life for all and enables everyone to actively participate in society

The strategy includes an action plan in which the LSP sets out its priority projects and initiatives for the period from 2008-2020. Those that implementation of this strategy can best help deliver are:

- **Project PE 1.3:** Biodiversity conservation, measured by the number of actively managed sites
- **Project PE 1.4:** Increasing the amount of washlands, measured by the number of actively managed sites, the areas of additional wet grassland created and the length of river bank re-profiled
- **Project HWB 1.1:** Promoting health and wellbeing, measured by participation in regular volunteering and adult participation in sport
- **Project HWB 1.4:** Integrating sustainable development and health, measured by access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling, the number of people registered on the Walking for Health programme and the number of number of voluntary walk-leaders trained
- **Project HWB 3.5:** Children and young people provided with good access to high quality, leisure and cultural sport experience, measured by the number of young people aged 16 and under participation in local authority organised sports development programmes and active recreation programmes

Local Agenda 21 Strategy, 2001

The Council's Local Agenda 21 Strategy aims to make the Borough a better place to live and in which:

- The needs of everyone in the community are met and people feel safe, healthy and ultimately happy
- The environment is appreciated, protected and enhanced and damage to the environment is avoided
- The economy is vibrant, employment opportunities are improved and out working lives are more rewarding

In order to deliver against these aims, the strategy

identifies a dozen broad themes that the Council and its partners will seek to develop. Those most relevant to this assessment are:

- Food for life, including the promotion of allotment gardening
- Promoting good health, including the promotion of physical activity
- Wildlife conservation and biodiversity, including work to enhance the quality and quantity of meadow woodland in the Borough and the designation of additional Local Nature Reserves
- Countryside and open space, including the protection and enhancement of existing greenspaces and sports facilities and promotion of community involvement in local greenspace management
- Community and where we live, including the promotion of high quality design in new developments and participate in the national “Bloom” campaign
- Cultural life in Stafford Borough, including the promotion of a range of cultural events that bring people together
- Sustainable transport, particularly the promotion of walking and cycling

Biodiversity Strategy, 2000

The biodiversity strategy aims to conserve and enhance the characteristic biodiversity of Stafford Borough for present and future generations. It draws particular attention to the loss of marshy grassland and flower rich meadows; the degeneration of many areas of woodland; the loss of species such as the red squirrel and Marsh Helliborine; and the threat to species such as the water vole.

The strategy seeks actively to encourage local communities to play a major role in promoting biodiversity and nature conservation every bit as much as “official bodies”.

Council Corporate Plan 2008-14

The Council’s corporate plan, *Improving Stafford Borough*, has four broad priorities:

- Prosperity for all: to promote economic and social regeneration to improve the quality of life for our community
- Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities: to create an attractive environment in which our community feels safe
- Health and Wellbeing: to improve the health and wellbeing of citizens and communities
- Leading and Delivering for our Community: to be considered a high performing Council which champions the needs and aspirations of its Community in a local, regional and national setting

The second of these priorities provides the key policy justification for this assessment. In more detail, the



Council's objectives in relation to the second of its priorities are:

- To work towards zero landfill
- To enhance and maintain clean public spaces
- To make Stafford Borough a safer place
- To promote sustainable development
- To enhance the built environment

The areas of work on which the Council will focus that are most relevant to this strategy include:

- Renovate and enhance Victoria Park
- Obtain a Green Flag Award for Victoria Park and investigate getting one for Stonefield Park
- Enhance existing and develop additional local nature reserves
- Implement the Borough Biodiversity Strategy
- Encourage local sustainability of health and fitness initiatives
- Increase usage of leisure facilities
- Secure funding for an expansion of Groundwork in the Borough
- Review under used land

Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001

Chapter 6 of the adopted Local Plan, Recreation, Leisure and Tourism, aims to achieve a balance between encouraging development in appropriate locations and protecting the environment. Related to this it has the following objectives:

- To improve the provision of recreation, leisure and tourist facilities for the benefit of local residents and visitors to the Borough
- To support new proposals for viable and diverse recreation, leisure and tourism facilities
- To encourage the location of recreation, leisure and tourism facilities where they can be adequately served by modes of transport other than the private car
- To encourage the expansion of tourist accommodation
- To achieve a minimum standard of 2.43 ha (6 acres) of formal outdoor playing space per thousand population
- To protect open spaces within settlements which are considered to be of significant recreational value
- To protect areas of high landscape quality and nature conservation importance from inappropriate leisure, recreation or tourist development
- To assist in the improved accessibility to public and private facilities within the Borough for all members of the local community and including people with disabilities

The Staffordshire Structure Plan states that the desired level of open space provision in urban areas should be seven acres per thousand population. This standard is

often known as the “NPFA Six Acre Standard plus one for luck” as it makes the arbitrary assumption that 1 acre per thousand is sufficient to cover all forms of open space other than the NPFA’s “playing space”. The Borough Council, on the other hand, sought to adopt the basic NPFA Standard in the Local Plan, although the Local Plan misquotes it by assuming that the children’s play component of the Standard (0.6-0.8 ha/1000 people) should all be in the form of Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped areas for Play (NEAPs).

At present the Borough has a total of around 4 ha of children’s equipped play provision plus a little over 1 ha of teenage provision. The application of the Local Plan standard across the Borough would require this to be increased by a massive amount to a total of some 72-96 ha of play provision, most of which should be equipped play areas. The children’s play component of the NPFA Six Acre Standard actually includes “casual or informal playing space within housing areas” as well as LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs.

Policies RLT1 and RLT2 in the Plan both seek to protect recreational land, although the latter policy allows for some exceptions to this general presumption. In addition:

- Policy RLT3 protects allotments gardens
- Policy RLT4 indicates that the Council will generally support the development of recreational and tourist facilities in the countryside, subject to certain exceptions
- Policy RLT5 limits development associated with recreational activities to necessary ancillary facilities
- Policy RLT 6 sets out the main criteria the Council will consider when determining any planning applications relating to golf
- Policy RLT7 generally supports equestrian developments
- Policy RLT8 generally supports water based recreation
- Policy RLT9 generally supports canal-related development
- Policy RLT10 sets out the criteria the Council will consider when determining planning applications for activities that will cause noise or other nuisance

Local Cultural Strategy 2001-6

The vision underpinning the Borough’s Cultural Strategy is:

“To offer a better quality of life for individuals and communities by building partnerships which:

- Provide more choices and opportunities for people to enjoy their leisure time
- Promote prosperity and healthy living
- Attract support (money, skills, facilities) from as many

- sources as possible
- Encourage local innovation, creativity and excellence”

The strategy has five main themes:

- Accessibility and equality of opportunity
- Social and economic regeneration
- Healthy lifestyles and high quality environment
- Lifelong learning
- Communication and awareness

The Council is currently revising the strategy and it is due for re-publication in autumn 2009.

Playing Pitch Assessment, 2002

The main purpose of this assessment was to assess the adequacy of pitch provision in the Borough in terms of the needs of existing and future users. At that time the Borough had the following pitches and other outdoor facilities:

• Adult football	56
• Junior football	15
• Mini-soccer	12
• ATPs	2
• Grass hockey	14
• Senior rugby	12
• Junior rugby	2
• Mini-rugby	3
• Cricket	21
• Bowling greens	23
• Athletics tracks	1
• Tennis courts	48

Key points from the assessment include:

Athletics

- Rowley Park was the main venue for athletics but not suitable for international competitions

Bowls

- There had been some reduction in participation in bowls although some clubs had full memberships. There was however a concern that several privately owned greens in the Borough might be lost.

Cricket

- Cricket was relatively strong with good junior development, creating a need for more artificial wickets.

Football

- There was a need for investment to upgrade a number of pitch sites
- There had been a move away from Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning adult football, but growth in mini-soccer and girls' football

Hockey

- The Stone Hockey Club pitch was more or less at the end of its useful life and a concern that ATP provision in the Borough could reduce to a single pitch at the University

Lawn Tennis

- Both Stafford town and Stone had facilities for “pay and play” but the main tennis in the Borough was organised through six clubs

Netball

- The Stafford and District Netball League used two “central venues” – Blessed William Howard and King Edward Schools

Rugby

- Both of the main rugby clubs – Stafford and Stoke – had strong junior development programmes, but both were looking to relocate.

The Council should seek:

- To develop a multi-pitch complex to the north of Stafford town, primarily for adult football
- To negotiate access to school sites for junior football
- To develop one or more central venues for mini-soccer
- To improve the quality and capacity of a number of existing pitch sites
- To maintain the current quantity of outdoor provision
- To improve accessibility to and opportunities at existing outdoor facilities
- Provide usable, accessible and viable facilities in the context of the Local Plan
- Increase the demand for and participation in outdoor sport
- Improve health and well-being by providing high quality opportunities for sport
- To support the development of local clubs

Play Strategy

The Play Strategy (as updated in 2007) has a vision of

“working in partnership to ensure all children in Stafford Borough have fair access to quality play opportunities”. Its general aims are:

- To enable the provision of an integrated range of high quality informal opportunities for play that is sufficient to meet the needs and aspirations of the Borough’s children and young people
- To ensure that such provision is effectively planned and co-ordinated
- To ensure that the strategy supports the aims of the Stafford Community Plan, Cultural Strategy and the Staffordshire Children and Young People’s Plan

In terms of play provision, the strategy is based very much on a slightly amended version of the children’s play element of the NPFA Six Acre Standard with inconsistent distance thresholds. For example, it includes a two-minute/120 m threshold for accompanied 4-6 year olds, but a 20 minutes/800 m threshold for 12-16 year olds.

The NPFA Standard is largely discredited amongst play professionals as a formulaic approach to providing for children’s play which results in sanitised spaces of limited play value with which many children can rapidly become bored. It will also be very expensive for the Borough, Town and Parish Councils if they seek to promote the level of play provision suggested in the strategy, which calls for equipped provision in communities as small as 100 people.

Open Space Provision and Commuted Sums

This document sets out how the Council will seek to secure the provision of “playing space” (as defined by the NPFA) and “accessible natural greenspace” (as defined by English Nature in its Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard, or ANGSt) in association with new housing developments. The Council’s broad approach is to require developers to provide or fund 3.4 ha of open space per 1,000 new residents, made up of 2.4 ha per thousand from the NPFA Standard and 1.0 ha per thousand for local nature reserves from ANGSt. However, neither of these standards has any empirical basis.

The document also sets out the circumstances in which the Council will accept a contribution towards off-site in lieu of on-site provision, and the amount of commuted maintenance sums it will require when it agrees to adopt and maintain on-site provision.

Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough

In July 2008 the Government designated Stafford as a growth point. The Borough has to accommodate between about 10,000 and 13,000 new homes by 2026, the majority of them in the Stafford town area. Delivering the Plan for Stafford Borough - Issues and Options (February 2009) identifies a range of possible locations for various numbers of new dwellings, mainly on the periphery of existing settlements, in particular Stafford town. It sets a

vision to guide the plan, which includes:

By 2026 Stafford Borough will have retained and enhanced its high quality unique character made up of the County Town of Stafford, the market town of Stone and extensive rural area containing smaller towns and historic villages whilst providing development to meet the local needs of all communities in the area including affordable and quality housing.

The Borough will have a rich natural environment which is resilient to the effects of climate change, is well maintained and enhanced with more people enjoying the area through a greater sense of health and well being. A high quality strategic network of accessible green space will have been developed in and around Stafford, Stone and other areas as well as an enhanced and managed built and natural resources providing a clean, safe and fun place to live.

The rural areas will have been protected, conserved and enhanced to provide an exceptionally high quality of environmental and landscape character supported through biodiversity enhancement schemes.

The report suggest a range of key objectives, including:

- Provision for significant new green infrastructure including green links from the surrounding open countryside and the Cannock Chase Area of outstanding Natural Beauty into the heart of Stafford to encourage healthy living for sport, recreation and leisure time activities
- A new country park south of Stafford provided as sub-regional open space and recreational facility to meet the needs of an increasing population in the area
- Enhance the role of the Trent Valley corridor through Stone in terms of biodiversity, accessibility, recreate and community uses together with exploring the opportunity for marina and commercial developments
- Support enhanced habitat creation and the encouragement of a diverse range of species through Biodiversity Enhancement Zones across the Stafford Borough

It also highlights that the Borough will have to accommodate an additional 10,100-12,100 homes (net).

Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment

The report notes that “A green infrastructure study for Stafford is currently taking place, with the results feeding into subsequent Plan stages. It is anticipated that a Green

Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document will be produced in due course, which will build on principles set out in the Plan for Stafford Borough.”

It also highlights the significant loss of the wildlife assets in the Borough over the past 2-3 decades. For example, between 1979 and 1999 slightly over 50% of the Borough’s marshy grassland was lost and around 15% of its neutral grassland. In addition, most of the flower rich meadow has been destroyed since 1950 and many areas of woodland have degenerated as a result of a lack of management and the decline of coppicing. The report suggests that a Green Infrastructure policy should aim to deliver the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan and promote biodiversity enhancement.

Implications for the Assessment

This brief review has the following implications for the assessment:

- The delivery of a “Cleaner, Safer, Greener” local environment is one of the Borough Council main strategic priorities and obviously worthwhile for its own sake. However, it has the potential also to generate significant wider benefits, not least in terms of local pride and the attraction of investment in the Borough. High quality, accessible greenspace can also make a significant contribution to another of the Council’s four key priorities, improving the health and well-being of citizens and communities
- The Council needs guidance on the levels of open space, sport and recreation provision that will be required as a result of the anticipated population growth
- It will be important to try to reverse the decline in biodiversity and do more to promote nature conservation
- The Council needs a new set of provision standards for greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities that will reflect local needs and aspirations and help to deliver a level of provision that will be both affordable and sustainable. The current provision standard for play is none of these things.
- The assessment needs to determine the extent to which access to greenspaces and sports facilities across the Borough is equitable and suggest ways of enhancing equitable access
- Proposals and actions arising from the assessment will need to support regeneration
- It will be important to ensure that open space, sport and recreation provision keeps pace with population growth. At the same time, high quality open space, sport and recreation provision can both support regeneration and help to attract both developers and new residents.



5: Quality Standards

Introduction

Appendix C sets out a number of general requirements plus draft quality and suggested minimum size standards for:

Greenspaces	Allotments Amenity greenspaces Bowling greens Play provision Natural greenspaces Parks and Gardens Sports pitches Teenage Facilities Tennis and multi-courts
Indoor provision	Indoor sports halls Indoor swimming pools

Each of the quality standards is derived from examples of best practice, such as the Green Flag Award criteria for parks, or published guidance, for example from English Nature or Sport England, and links directly to the KCA audit forms. We recommend that all new spaces and facilities created by the Council or developers should accord with these standards and that the Council should regard them as an aspiration for existing spaces and facilities in its ownership.

For the sake of concision, we have also included the accessibility standards/distance thresholds quantity standards identified in other parts of this report.



6: Allotments

Introduction

This chapter reviews the provision of allotments, based on our audit of 26 sites across the Borough, and derives and then applies suitable provision standards. In Stafford town allotments sites are managed by the Stafford Allotments Association and in other areas by a mix of town and parish councils and trusts.

The Quality of Provision

Allotments Map 6.1 shows the location of the various allotment sites in the six planning areas across the Borough. It also provides an overview of the quality and value of the various sites. We calculated the overall quality score for each site as the average of the scores for:

- The range of facilities available
- General characteristics, such as signage, security and condition
- Accessibility, such as the availability of parking and accessibility for people with disabilities

The value of a site depends on a range of characteristics such as its size (a large site is generally more valuable to potential plot holders than a small one, not least because of the opportunities for socialising), how productive the site is, whether there is a range of different plot sizes (not everyone wants a large plot) and biodiversity. We calculated the overall value score for each site by ascribing an overall score based on site size (1 for sites with more than 75 plots, 0.8 for sites with 50-74 plots and 0.6 for sites with fewer than 50 plots) and then multiplying this by the average of the scores for the contribution of the site to local amenity, recreation and wildlife.

On this basis, the average quality and value scores for the 26 sites were 72% and 46% respectively. The number of sites with quality and value scores above and below these averages (which we have classed as high and low quality and value respectively) are:

- | | |
|----------------------|----|
| • High quality sites | 17 |
| • Low quality sites | 9 |
| • High value sites | 6 |

- Low value sites 20

We then combined the quality and value ranking for each site to give an overall high/low quality and value rating with the following results:

- High quality, high value sites 5
- Low quality, high value sites 1
- High quality, low value sites 12
- Low quality, low value sites 8

In broad terms, therefore, it will be desirable to give priority to enhancing the value of sites across the Borough. The audit results suggest that can be achieved by:

- Rationalising provision (particularly in Stafford town) into fewer but larger sites: larger sites can generally sustain better infrastructure, create opportunities for bulk purchasing of seeds and other materials and also create greater opportunities for social activities such as barbecues
- Working with plot holders to enhance and manage biodiversity of sites
- Bringing disused or overgrown plots back into productive use

On some sites it will be desirable also to improve quality, for example by:

- Better facilities, particularly toilets, trading sheds and communal storage
- Better signage and security and improvements to boundary hedges and fences
- Better parking and disabled provision

Map 6.1 also shows the composite quality and value ratings for each of the sites, from which it is clear that:

- Most sites in Stafford town are of limited quality and value, but those on the periphery tend to be better than those within the main developed area. There are clusters of fairly poor sites in both the north and south of the town.
- The three sites in Stone are all of limited quality and value
- The sites in the rural areas of the Borough are generally good

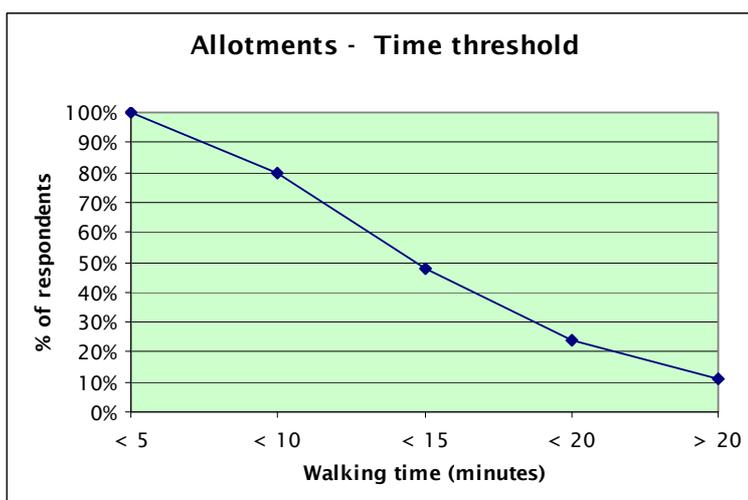
Appendix C sets out a recommended quality standard for allotment sites.

Accessibility

Accessibility Standard

The lengths of time for which respondents to our residents' survey indicated they were willing to travel to an

allotment site are given in the chart below:



We have analysed the results of the survey in such a way as to give the total percentage of respondents willing to walk for each of the various five-minute time bands. For example, anyone willing to travel for say 20 minutes is obviously willing to travel for any lesser time and so on, but not vice versa. As the effective catchment of any community facility is normally taken as the time or distance for which around 75% of people are willing to travel, the effective catchment of Stafford town's allotment sites is around 10 minutes travel. As a typical walking speed is around 80 metres per minute, it follows that the total on the ground walking distance catchment is around 800 m. However, people rarely travel from point A to point B in a straight line. We have found that the straight line distance walked by someone is usually around 60-75% of the on the ground distance so the realistic straight line distance threshold is only 75% of 800 m ie **600 m**.

It is reasonable to assume that people are willing to take roughly the same length of time to travel to local facilities by different modes of transport. In tests in various areas, we have found that the total distance travelled in any given time by bicycle is about two and a half times the distance travelled on foot; and the distance travelled by car is around two and half times the distance travelled by bicycle. Obviously these figures vary with the amount of traffic and are different in urban and rural areas, but they provide a reasonable guide. This gives three distance thresholds for allotments:

- Walking 10 minutes/600 m
- Cycling 10 minutes/1500 m
- Driving 10 minutes/3750 m

Accessibility Assessment

Map 6.1 also identifies the areas of the Borough that lie within 600 m, 1500 m and 3750 m “as the crow flies” catchments of the various allotment sites. Within the Borough’s main settlements of Stafford and Stone:

- There are a number of walking accessibility deficiencies around the periphery of Stafford town, the most significant of which is in the Queensville and Walton-on-the-Hill area in the south-east
- There are walking deficiencies in the northern and eastern areas of Stone

In summary, the percentage of properties in each planning area within the distance threshold of at least one site, or one high quality, high value (HQHV) site, is:

Planning area	Sites	% of properties within 10 minutes walk	% of properties within 10 minutes cycling	% of properties within 10 minutes driving
North	All	33%	76%	90%
	HQHV	0%	0%	0%
North east	All	0%	0%	0%
	HQHV	0%	0%	0%
North west	All	6%	41%	56%
	HQHV	6%	41%	54%
South east	All	0%	0%	0%
	HQHV	0%	0%	0%
South west	All	34%	51%	66%
	HQHV	34%	51%	66%
Stafford	All	53%	90%	99%
	HQHV	19%	70%	98%
Borough	All	39%	72%	81%
	HQHV	13%	45%	63%

Overall, therefore, just under two in every five properties across the Borough lie within a 10-minute walk of at least one allotment site, but only about one in eight within this distance of at least one high quality, high value site.

In relation to the different planning areas, by far the best overall accessibility to sites is in Stafford town and the northern area. There is no provision at all serving residents in the north eastern and south eastern areas and only very limited provision in the north west. This means that on accessibility, quality and value grounds the priorities are for:

- More provision around the periphery of Stafford town and north Stone; these areas should be the top priority, if suitable sites can be found, because they contain concentrations of population

- Provision in the north east and south east areas of the Borough

The Quantity of Provision

We have calculated the total area of the 26 allotments sites in the Borough as some 32 hectares. The quantity of provision in each of the six planning areas is:

	Plots	Area (sq m)
• North area	96	49,527
• North east area	0	0
• North west area	73	13,110
• South east area	0	0
• South west area	90	21,430
• Stafford area	593	234,929
• Total	852	318,996

Note: the Stafford total excludes the two abandoned Exeter Street sites

Appendix J1 calculates the quantity of provision on a per person basis together with the average number of people per plot and average plot size. Across the Borough as a whole, there is approximately 2.64 sq m of allotment per person, although this rises to 3.00 sq m if those parishes with no provision are excluded. In terms of single parishes or towns, the average level of provision ranges from 2.85 sq m per person in Eccleshall to 4.26 sq m per person in Gnosall. On average across the Borough there is one plot to approximately 170 residents, although this varies from one plot to 53 people in Barlaston to one to 316 people in Stone Urban parish.

The average plot size across the Borough, including the common areas of sites, varies from 180 sq m in Barlaston to 876 sq m in Stone Urban parish. A traditional 10-rod plot has an area of around 250 sq m so it seems that many of the plots in the Borough are smaller than this.

There are nearly always some vacant plots in any area, even where there is a waiting list, because empty sites may not be acceptable to prospective tenants. The most common reasons for this are site size (the site is seen as too small or too large) or because it has been neglected and is overgrown. However, there seem to be only a handful of people on a waiting list for a plot in the Borough, suggesting that there is currently a good balance between supply and demand.

Town and Parish Council Views

The Town or Parish Council for each of the areas with at least one site (with the exception of Stafford town, where there is no town council) regards the amount of provision in their area as “about right”. This confirms that there is sufficient provision in these areas at least, but begs the question of potential or latent demand in those areas with no provision. The parish councils that identified a need for

allotments where there are currently none were:

- North area Stone rural
- North east area Fulford
- North west area High Offley
- South east area Colwich
- South west area Haughton
Norbury

Residents' Views

The table below summarises the views of those local residents that expressed an opinion on the adequacy of the current quantity of allotment provision in our residents' survey and shows that just under two fifths of respondents saw a need for more allotment provision.

Residents' Attitudes to the Quantity of Allotment Provision

	Percentage	Cumulative
A lot more is needed	16.2%	16.2%
Slightly more is needed	22.1%	38.2%
It's about right	55.9%	94.1%
There is more than enough	5.9%	100.0%
Total	100.0%	

Combining the views of the town and parish councils with those of residents, it seems that there is likely to be a need for more provision in some parts of the Borough. However, the disparities between the levels of provision in different areas and local views as to the adequacy of provision make it difficult to draw a clear conclusion as to an appropriate Borough-wide quantity standard.

Trends

National Trends

The following national trends are affecting the demand for allotments:

- Rising general interest in gardening and growing produce, fuelled by television programmes, early retirement and environmental concerns
- Consequential slowly rising demand for allotments, partly as a result of increasing housing densities coupled with smaller gardens, but more importantly by a widening in the range of people wanting to take up allotment gardening. Traditionally, plot holders were predominantly male manual workers, often retired, but more and more plot holders are middle class and women. This has in turn led to a demand for smaller plots and additional facilities on sites.
- New plot holders wanting "instantly workable" plots. This often results in a combination of a waiting list and vacant plots, with those on waiting lists not being willing to take on neglected sites that require clearance

and double digging. Such plots are an irritation to established plot holders as they become covered in weeds which then spread to adjoining plots.

- A need for facilities such as toilets on sites, driven particularly by the rising number of women plot holders. There is also greater potential for trading sheds and communal purchasing and storage of tools such as rotovators that are best shared by a number of plot holders as a result of higher average disposable income amongst plot holders. Finally, there is greater need than in the past for parking and disabled access.
- A reduction in the average size of a plot. Traditionally, plots have been 10 rods (around 253 sq m) but many have been subdivided into 5 or even 2.5 rod plots. This makes it possible to accommodate more plot-holders without increasing the total area of land used for allotments.

Local Trends

Within the Borough, the main trends over the past few years have been:

- Rising demand for allotments amongst young professionals and women
- An increase in lettings
- A increasing need for better site infrastructure such as storage facilities

Implications

Given that there appears to be a rough balance between supply and demand at present, at least in those areas with some plots, there is something of a disincentive for allotment site owners to promote allotment gardening: all they would do is to create waiting lists. Together with the Parish Council and residents' views, and the trends noted above, this means that there is almost certainly a need for more plots than exist at present.

Quantity Standard

Some of the additional plots required will be in Stafford town and others in the rural parts of the Borough. However, it is unlikely that there will ever be the same level of demand in the rural areas as in the main towns, simply because gardens tend to be smaller in urban areas and therefore residents have less chance to grow their own produce at home. This suggests a need for separate quantity standards for the Borough's urban and rural areas.

At present, all of the allotment provision is in the main settlements – Barlaston (3.5 sq m per person), Eccleshall (2.9 sq m per person), Gnosall (4.4 sq m per person), Stafford town (3.8 sq m per person) and Stone (2.8 sq m per person). Although there is no guarantee that all of the plots in these settlements are tenanted by residents of

them, in each of these areas, other than Stafford town, the Town or Parish Council believes the current level of provision is “about right”. This suggests an “urban” quantity standard of at least 3.8 sq m per person (the level of provision in Stafford town, where there is a small waiting list. Allowing for some growth in the popularity of allotment gardening, and for some provision in rural parishes to ease the pressure on provision in Gnosall and Stafford town, this suggests an urban quantity standard of around **4.0 sq m per person**.

As there are no allotments in the Borough’s rural areas, there is no firm basis to help determine an appropriate quantity standard. Accordingly we suggest a standard derived from the average number of people per plot, which at present is approximately:

- Barlaston 59
- Eccleshall 66
- Gnosall 66
- Stafford 119
- Stone 275
- Average 117

The level of provision per person in Stone is obviously significantly lower than in the other areas, even though the average plot size is larger. If it is excluded, the average level of provision is one plot to around 75 people. In order to allow for the lower need for allotments in rural areas, we suggest a quantity standard of 1 plot to 100 people, with a minimum site size of 10 plots and catchment population of 1,000 people. Based on 5-rod (say 125 sq m) plots, and allowing an additional 25-30% for paths and communal areas, this gives a total site area of around 1,600 sq m and therefore a quantity standard of **1.6 sq m per person**.

Application of the Quantity Standard

Appendix J1 applies these quantity standards, and the minimum size standard, to the various planning areas of the Borough with the results set out in the table below:

Area	Parish	Existing provision (sq m)	Required provision (sq m)	Surplus (+ve) or deficit (-ve), sq m
North	Barlaston	9,232	10,636	-1,404
	Sandon	0	581	-581
	Stone Rural	0	2,462	-2,462
	Stone Urban	40,295	58,220	-17,925
	Swynnerton	0	6,773	-6,773
North east	Fradswell	0	278	-278
	Fulford	0	8,926	-8,926
	Hilderstone	0	944	-944
	Milwich	0	611	-611

North west	Adbaston	0	890	-890
	Chebsey	0	770	-770
	Eccleshall	13,110	17,812	-4,702
	High Offley	0	1,408	-1,408
	Standon	0	1,317	-1,317
	Whitgreave	0	301	-301
South east	Colwich	0	7,334	-7,334
	Gayton	0	267	-267
	Ingestre	0	178	-178
	Stowe by Chartley	0	570	-570
	Tixall	0	307	-307
	Weston	0	1,358	-1,358
South west	Bradley	0	632	-632
	Church Eaton	0	1,005	-1,005
	Ellenhall	0	202	-202
	Forton	0	426	-426
	Gnosall	21,430	19,508	1,922
	Haughton	0	1,614	-1,614
	Norbury	0	517	-517
	Ranton	0	616	-616
Stafford	Berkswich	0	2,445	-2,445
	Brocton	0	1,683	-1,683
	Creswell	0	574	-574
	Hopton & Coton	0	1,808	-1,808
	Hyde Lea	0	642	-642
	Marston	0	267	-267
	Salt/Enson	0	566	-566
	Seighford	0	2,800	-2,800
	Stafford	234,929	248,824	-13,895
	Totals	318,996	430,744	-111,748

Allotments Provision: Objectives

This analysis suggests that the Council should adopt three broad objectives relating to allotment provision:

- To protect the current **amount** of provision across the Borough, although not necessarily on all of the existing sites if it is possible to create new sites that will be of higher quality and value and accessible to a greater number of people on foot
- To allocate sites for and promote allotment provision in the rural parts of the Borough, with the priority given to the larger settlements as suggested above
- To enhance the quality and, to a lesser extent, the value of those sites with below average audit scores

Conclusions

The conventional way to deliver against these objectives would be to protect all the existing sites, seek to enhance those requiring enhancement and make additional provision where it is needed. However, this will depend on the availability of funding from developer contributions, the Borough Council or the Town and Parish Councils at a time when they face considerable financial pressures. Accordingly it will be desirable to consider a more radical alternative approach.

There are clusters of sites fairly close together in both the north and south areas of Stafford town. In order to improve the overall distribution of sites, and therefore the general accessibility of allotment provision, it will be desirable to consider the potential for “moving a limited number of sites around” – ie allowing the redevelopment of some existing sites within these clusters. Map 6.2 identifies the areas in which it will be desirable to try to allocate suitable sites. This will be especially appropriate for low quality and/or value facilities if it is possible to identify replacement sites that will increase the overall accessibility of sites to potential plottolders. It should then be possible to develop the new and better sites using capital receipts from the planned disposal of some existing ones for development (assuming this is acceptable in terms of wider planning policies), with the receipts ring-fenced for allotment site provision or enhancement.

This approach will obviously attract opposition from established plottolders on those sites to be “moved” as they will have invested considerable time and effort in their plots. It will therefore be essential to plan any changes in close consultation with existing plot-holders and any replacement sites must be developed to a higher standard than the sites that will be lost, with the ground already well prepared, before expecting them to move. They should therefore have excellent infrastructure in the form of parking, provision for people with disabilities, toilets, water supplies, composting arrangements, communal storage and “added value” features such as a communal area with a barbecue.

7: Artificial Turf Pitches

Introduction

This chapter reviews the provision of artificial turf pitches (ATPs) across the Borough and derives and then applies suitable provision standards. ATPs are also sometimes referred to as Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs).

The Quality of Provision

Map 7.1 shows the location of the three ATPs in the Borough – Alleyne’s School, Stone Hockey Club and Staffordshire University. The first two are sand-filled and the University site is sand dressed. As a result the Borough lacks specialised artificial turf provision for hockey (which ideally requires a water-based surface) or football/rugby (which ideally requires a third generation surface). All three pitches are in good or reasonable condition, apart from:

- The condition of the goals at all three sites
- The inadequate shelter from the wind at the Stone Hockey Club and University sites

However, the Stone Hockey Club pitch is approaching the time when it will be necessary to replace the playing carpet.

Accessibility

The table below, taken from the Sport England and sportscotland *Synthetic Turf Pitch Study* (2006) summarise the distances that ATP users had travelled:

	Football%	Football Cumulative %	Hockey %	Hockey Cumulative %
< 1 mile	19%	100%	9%	100%
1-2 miles	20%	81%	14%	92%
2-5 miles	33%	61%	32%	78%
5-10 miles	18%	28%	18%	46%
10-20 miles	6%	10%	12%	28%
> 20 miles	4%	4%	16%	16%

Accordingly around 75% of football players travelled for a little less than 5 miles and 75% of hockey players for a little over 5 miles, suggesting that the normal effective catchment area of an ATP can be taken as around 5 miles (8 km). The average distances travelled by footballers and hockey players, however, were around 5 and 11 miles

respectively (8 and 17 km), with hockey players on average travelling around 16 miles (25 km) to water-based pitches.

Accessibility Assessment

Map 7.1 also shows the areas of the Borough that lie within the typical 8 km effective catchment of at least one ATP. In summary, the percentage of properties lying within the effective catchment of at last one ATP is:

Planning area	% of properties within 8 km
North	100%
North east	98%
North west	23%
South east	96%
South west	12%
Stafford	100%
Borough	90%

Overall, therefore, the accessibility of ATPs is good and it is only in the sparsely populated areas of the Borough that local residents will have to travel more than 8 km to one. This said, from Map 7.1 it seems desirable to have ATPs in both Eccleshall and Gnosall as this will increase the overall 8 km accessibility closer to 100%.

The Quantity of Provision

The size of each of the ATPs varies slightly. However, taking a standard carpet size of 102 x 63 m, or 6,426 sq m, Appendix J2 demonstrates that the current provision equates to approximately 19,278 sq m or an average of 0.16 sq m per person. However, at present there are ATPs only in the north and Stafford planning areas. In the north area there is an average of 0.52 sq m per person and the Stafford area 0.09 sq m per person, giving a Borough-wide average of 0.16 sq m per person.

Town and Parish Council Views

The town and parish councils that identified a need for a floodlit ATP in their areas were:

- Eccleshall
- Norbury
- Stone

Governing Body Views

Our governing body interviews established a perceived need for:

- At least one and ideally two or three third generation ATPs for football; however, whether they will be acceptable for matches is up to individual leagues
- Floodlit pitches for mini and midi rugby training midweek, which could be on third generation ATPs

because of the limited capacity of grass pitches to sustain wear

Trends

For some years, ATPs have been used for all non-school hockey matches, some football training and small-sided football games but not rugby. However, the available surfaces have not really been suitable for football until recently. As a result there is some residual hostility to ATPs amongst many footballers.

This situation is changing rapidly. The recently developed long pile and rubber crumb filled “third generation” (3G) surfaces are good for both football and rugby training. The Football Association is keen to encourage their provision, although the emphasis at the moment is primarily on their use for after-school clubs and midweek training. The Rugby Football Union view is that a “good” grass pitch remains the best surface for rugby matches, but that not all grass pitches are of “good” quality, especially as the season progresses. It has adopted a rule that a team cannot refuse to play on an ATP it has confirmed as meeting its specification.

Climate change is also beginning to have a noticeable impact on the condition and availability of grass pitches. Warmer, wetter winters are resulting in pitches being waterlogged and unplayable significantly more often, and for longer periods, leading to a backlog of fixtures. When this results in fixtures having to be played after the end of the traditional season there is a knock-on impact on cricket.

In the short term, the main need for ATPs for football and rugby is for after-school clubs and training; in the longer term, it should be increasingly acceptable for teams to play matches on them. Because of football’s historical rejection of artificial surfaces, the likelihood is that once local leagues endorse their use for matches, demand will grow rapidly as players come to realise their advantages over grass pitches of hugely variable quality. However, in the short term it is unrealistic to expect that all matches will be played on artificial surfaces, not least because of the large number of football fixtures on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. At 1430 on a Saturday afternoon, a grass pitch and an artificial one have exactly the same capacity – one match.

There is no reason in principle why football should not take a leaf out of hockey’s book and move away from fixed starting times for league matches. There are two historical reasons for them: the lack of floodlit pitches, making it essential to get matches played in daylight, and league concerns that teams may play tactically towards the end of the season if they can start a game knowing the results of matches involving key rivals for promotion or relegation played earlier in the day.

For rugby, it will probably be some time before adult matches are played on artificial surfaces, although climate change probably means that much rugby will probably have to move to artificial surfaces eventually. The Rugby Football Union has published a specification for ATPs and draws no distinction between the acceptability of grass and artificial surfaces meeting this specification for match use. In the short term, however, rugby use is likely to be confined to training, mini-and midi-rugby.

Quantity Standard

The Council should aim to achieve at least one ATP with community use at each of the secondary schools in the Borough, in partnership with the County Council and Building Schools for the Future programme. If ATPs on school sites are funded through public-private partnerships (PPPs), it should seek to ensure that adequate arrangements for community use are enshrined in management contracts from the start. However, it will be some time before the County Council starts the detailed planning of new secondary schools in the Borough.

The Borough has seven secondary schools, of which only one - Alleyne's High School in Stone - has an ATP at present. This implies a need for up to an additional six ATPs on school sites in addition to the existing three sites. Adding half size pitches at Eccleshall and Gnosall in order to provide high quality facilities for training and small-sided games gives the equivalent of ten full size pitches, equivalent to 0.53 sq m per person.

Application of the Quantity Standard

Appendix J2 gives the results of applying this standard to the six planning areas and identifies the following surpluses (+ve) or deficits (-ve):

- North + 0.14 pitches
- North east - 0.55 pitches
- North west - 0.62 pitches
- South east - 0.63 pitches
- South west - 0.67 pitches
- Stafford - 4.66 pitches
- Borough - 7.00 pitches

ATP Provision: Objectives

The Council should adopt the following objectives for ATP provision:

- To protect the current pattern of ATPs from development
- To work with the County Council to develop new ATPs on at least four of the Stafford town secondary schools, or alternatively, to work with the University to develop and additional ATP at Beaconside
- To identify and allocate sites for potential ATPs, which need not be full size, in the north east, north west, south east and south west parts of the Borough

Conclusions

The Council should work with the County Council in the first instance to identify the secondary school sites on which it will be most desirable to develop additional ATPs over the next decade, bearing in mind the likely Building Schools for the Future programme. It should also investigate the potential for another pitch at the University seek to identify potential sites in the four rural areas.



8: Athletics Facilities

Introduction

The Borough has only one athletics track, Rowley Park in Stafford town. The section briefly reviews its condition and use, comments on alternative facilities in the sub-region and considers the track's future.

Quality and Value

The Stafford track and field facilities are in excellent condition and the track was resurfaced only a couple of years or so ago. However, the Stadium will remain primarily a training track and be unable to attract anything more than school and club competitions for as long as it has only a very low spectator capacity. In addition, its ancillary accommodation is fairly dated and limited, with inadequate drug testing and officials accommodation.

Use of the Track

The main use of the track, which has 8 lanes, is floodlit and has 100 uncovered spectator seats, is for training and school PE lessons. The Cannock and Staffordshire Athletics Club, with around 300 members from the Borough and Cannock Chase District, uses it two nights each week for training all year round, although the club's main base has traditionally been in Cannock. The Stafford Harriers, with around 250 members, also uses it on the same two nights a week.

The Stafford track's status is very clearly that of a training track with very limited use for events of mainly club significance, although it is also used for Staffordshire Schools competitions.

Competing Facilities

The nearest alternative public synthetic tracks are in:

- Wolverhampton (14 miles): 6 lanes plus 8 lane straight; floodlit; 100 covered seats
- Telford (15 miles): 8 lanes; floodlit; 250 covered seats
- Stoke-on-Trent (16 miles): 8 lanes; floodlit; 750 covered seats

Until recently there was also a track in Cannock (8 miles from Stafford town) with 8 lanes plus a 10-lane straight; floodlit; 260 covered seats plus 500 uncovered. However, Cannock Chase District Council has sold the site for development.

This means that Stafford currently has to compete for major events with Telford and Stoke, both of which have better spectator accommodation.

The Future of the Stafford Track

Athletics Facilities – Planning and Delivery 2007-2012 (UK Athletics, undated) suggests a “firm, but not strict” provision standard for athletics facilities of

- One synthetic track (6 or 8 lanes) per 250,000 people living within 20 minutes drive time (45 minutes in rural areas)
- One indoor training centre per 500,00 people living within 30 minutes drive time (45 minutes in rural areas)

Staffordshire, with a population of around 410,000 and synthetic tracks in Stafford, East Staffordshire and Tamworth, comfortably exceeds this guideline.

However, it will clearly be desirable for Stafford to retain a track. In addition, given the recent loss of the Cannock track, it will be desirable to upgrade the spectator and other ancillary facilities at Rowley Park in order to be able to attract more events. However, this will require significant capital investment. A significantly cheaper alternative, that will be better for the clubs that currently use the track, will be to develop some social accommodation. Alternatively, there may be an opportunity for the Borough Council to work in partnership with Cannock Chase District Council in order to upgrade Rowley Park or create a new athletics stadium in a location that will be convenient for athletes from both the Borough and Cannock Chase.

Quantity Standard

If this is not done, the Stafford track has a higher capacity for training than the present use made of it. Therefore there will be no need to increase the amount of athletics provision in order to accommodate more residents in the Borough and therefore there is no need for a provision standard.

9: Bowling Greens

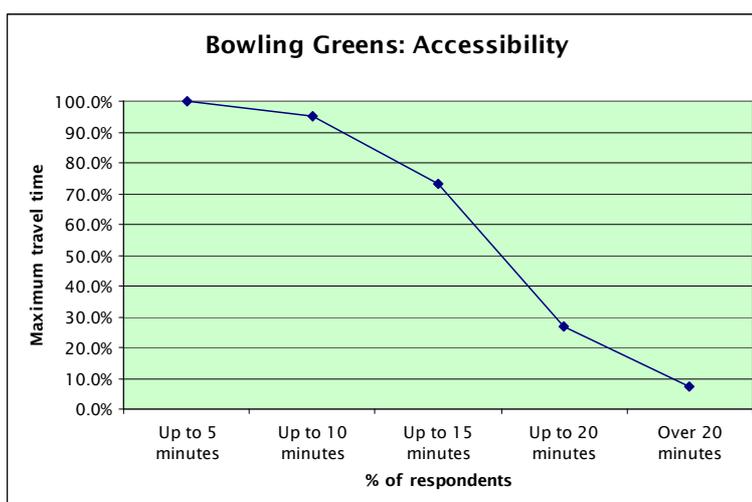
Introduction

This chapter reviews the provision of bowling greens across the Borough and then derives and applies suitable provision standards.

Accessibility

Accessibility Standard

The chart below, based on the results of our survey of local residents, identifies the percentage of people willing to walk for various times to use a bowling green. It makes clear that a sensible accessibility standard will be 15 minutes as around 75% of respondents indicated that they were willing to walk for this length of time.



Accessibility Assessment

In the Borough as a whole, the percentage of properties within 15 minutes travel of at least one green is:

	Properties	Walking	Driving
North	11,903	28%	99%
North east	2,735	0%	42%
North west	3,558	0%	13%
South east	3,628	0%	13%
South west	3,545	0%	20%
Stafford	32,709	50%	100%
Borough	58,078	34%	81%

Note: we have not included a cycling threshold as practically no bowlers cycle to greens

Accordingly, accessibility to bowling greens in all parts of the Borough other than the north and Stafford areas is quite poor. Given that the number and proportion of older people in the population is increasing, and forecast to increase further, it is likely that there will be a need for greens in those areas with no current provision. In all we have identified fourteen outdoor bowling greens in the Borough (two of them, at Riverway in Stafford town and Little Stoke Cricket Club on the southern edge of Stone, were under construction at the time of the audit) of which ten are in Stafford town. This means that there is one green to around 3,200 properties in the town, suggesting a need for at least one green in each of the four planning areas with no provision.

Quality and Value Audit Findings

As in other areas of the country, the quality of greens and pavilions is high: bowlers tend to look after their facilities and they are normally secured when not in use. The sites with the lowest scores were:

- Corporation Street, Stafford, which lacks a pavilion
- Riverway, Stafford, which was under construction at the time of the audit but is now complete and of high quality and value
- Burton Manor, Stafford, where the banks, ditches and paths around the green are in poor condition

The chart below gives the quality and value scores for the sites; it appears to have only eleven rather than fourteen sites because some sites have the same scores.



The quality and value scores are based on:

- **Quality:** the extent to which there is a need for better maintenance or upgrading of *general characteristics* (eg the availability of parking or shelter planting and freedom from overhanging deciduous trees), *playability* (eg the size and conformity of the size of the playing area, ditches and banks with the laws of the game), *management and maintenance* (eg the condition of the green, ditches and banks or whether there is an automatic watering system) and the *pavilion* (eg the range of accommodation and its condition)
- **Value:** the extent of bowling facilities on the site, whether there is public (or club) use, and whether the facility has a changing pavilion.

The criticisms we have of the Borough's bowling facilities are very minor and relate in the main to fairly easily resolved issues such as the condition of banks and ditches, the adequacy of shelter planting or the condition of paths around the green.

Quality, Value and Accessibility

Map 9.1 shows the location, quality and value of bowling greens in the Borough. It shows that the sites with the lowest quality scores are concentrated in Stafford town and also that there are sizeable areas of both Stone and Stafford town that are outwith the walking threshold of a green. However, the new greens at and adjacent to Little Stoke Cricket Club will significantly improve the walking accessibility of greens in Stone. In addition, and as with some other forms of provision, the eastern and western sides of the Borough have no provision, with the most obvious locations for potential additional greens being Eccleshall and Gnosall, both of which are concentrations of population and outwith the driving threshold for a green.

Quality Standard

Appendix C sets out the proposed quality standard.

Trends

Many areas of the country are reporting a decline in bowls participation, which seems to be the result of:

- Middle-aged people being much more active than in the relatively recent past, with the result that they are retaining their other sports interests for longer and so not taking up bowls. This results in many clubs failing to attract sufficient new members to replace those who retire from the game or die.
- Reducing club membership and increasing costs, which together mean that bowls is becoming more expensive and possibly unaffordable for players on the basic pension

Against this, the UK population is generally ageing and the number of people of retirement age rising rapidly. This means that the current decline in participation may reverse over the next decade.

Local Views

In our survey of Town and Parish Councils, the following councils indicated a need for a bowling green:

- North area Fulford
- North east area Hilderstone
- North west area Eccleshall
- Stafford area Berkswich
 Hopton and Coton

In addition, the Burton Manor Club is considering moving to a new location to allow the redevelopment of its present site.

Quantity Standard

Existing Provision

Appendix J3 calculates the amount of bowls provision in relation to the estimated 2001 population of each parish in the Borough plus Stafford town. In summary, the results are:

Area of the Borough	Greens	Population (2001)	People/green
North	3	22,489	7,496
North east	0	6,693	N/a
North west	0	7,475	N/a
South east	0	7,584	N/a
South west	0	8,132	N/a
Stafford area	13	68,280	5,252
Totals	16	120,653	7,541

Note: we have not included the Burton Manor green on the edge of Stafford town in this calculation because it likely to be closed shortly.

Potential Demand

The Government's General Household Survey identifies typical participation rates in various sports across the country. For bowls, the most recent reported survey was in 2002 which found the following participation rates:

<i>Age</i>	<i>Participation rate</i>
45-59	4%
60-69	3%
70 and over	1%

Obviously participation rates vary slightly across the country, but these rounded figures give a useful guide for planning purposes. Applying them to the Borough's population gives the following estimated number of bowlers:

Area of the Borough	Population 45 and over	Potential bowlers
North	10,771	288
North east	3,627	97
North west	3,596	100
South east	2,997	88
South west	3,757	106
Stafford area	38,205	957
Totals	62,953	1,637

A typical bowling club will have around 100-125 active playing members. While not all bowlers are members of clubs, this provides a basis for estimating the number of greens required to serve any given number of bowlers and gives the following results for the Borough:

Area of the Borough	Potential bowlers	Greens required at 100 players/green	Greens required at 125 players/green
North	288	2.9	2.30
North east	97	1.0	0.78
North west	100	1.0	0.80
South east	88	0.9	0.71
South west	106	1.1	0.85
Stafford area	957	9.6	7.66
Totals	1,637	16.4	13.09

The table below compares these results with the current level of provision:

Area of the Borough	Greens available	Greens required at 100 players/green	Greens required at 125 players/green
North	3	2.9	2.30
North east	0	1.0	0.78
North west	0	1.0	0.80
South east	0	0.9	0.71
South west	0	1.1	0.85
Stafford area	13	9.6	7.66

Accordingly it seems that the current overall Borough-wide level of bowls provision is probably about right, but the distribution of greens could be improved by having fewer greens in Stafford town and providing a green in each of the planning areas without one. This is borne out by evidence from the Stafford area that some of the greens in the town have spare capacity.

Quantity Standard

The minimum size for a crown green is 25 m square with no maximum size. However, the recommended size is 37 m square, or 1,369 sq m. Sixteen greens therefore equate to 21,904 sq m of bowls surface or 0.18 sq m per person.

Conclusions

The Borough Council should adopt a quantity standard of 0.18 sq m of bowls surface per person. However, there will be no need to apply this standard in either Stafford town or Stone for the foreseeable future as there appears to be more than enough provision; the shortages in provision are in the rural parts of the Borough. Accordingly the Borough Council should seek to identify suitable locations for greens in the main settlements in the rural areas. The areas with the greatest concentrations of potential bowlers are:

- North east area Fulford
- North west area Eccleshall
- South east area Colwich
- South west area Gnosall

The Hilderstone, Berkswich and Hopton and Coton Parish Councils also identified a possible need for a green in their areas. However:

- Hilderstone is likely to have only around 8% of the demand for a green that exists in the north east area, compared with around 80% in Fulford
- Berkswich and Hopton and Coton are within fairly easy travelling distance of greens in Stafford town and the creation of greens in these areas will probably simply divert some current demand from greens in the town, making them less viable. The level of potential demand in both areas is also insufficient to support a green.

Although participation in bowls has generally declined across England in the past few years, the rising number of older people in the Borough's population suggests that this may be a short term trend. Accordingly the Council should:

- Investigate the potential for persuading the Burton Manor Club members either to join existing clubs with spare capacity or consider transferring responsibility for one of the Borough Council greens to the Club, with appropriate safeguards for casual use by non-members
- Protect all of the other existing facilities in the town for say the next five years, but then review the position and, if one or more greens are poorly used, consider rationalising the provision into fewer but better facilities

10: Provision for Children

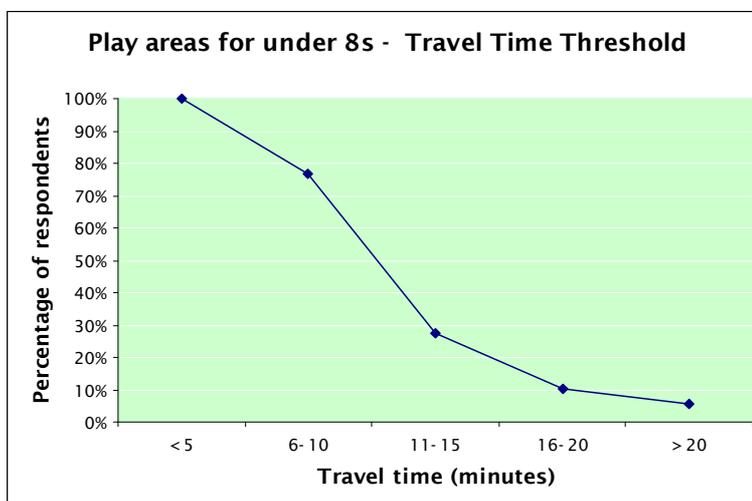
Introduction

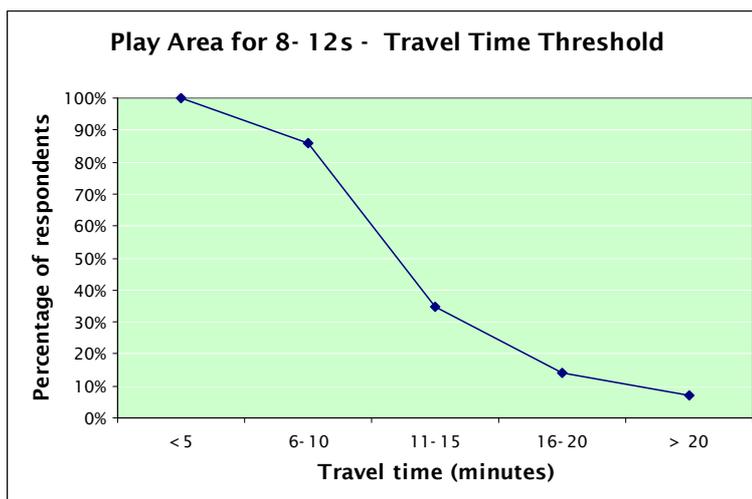
This chapter reviews the provision of equipped play areas for children up to the age of about 11 or 12 across the Borough. It covers accessibility, quality, value and quantity and also suggests a new approach to provision for play in the future.

Accessibility

Accessibility Standard

The two charts below, based on the results of the residents' survey, identify the percentage of people willing to walk for various times to use play areas for children aged up to about 8 and 8-12. They make clear that a sensible accessibility standard will be around 8 minutes for both types of play area as around 75% of respondents indicated that they were willing to walk for this length of time to these facilities.





Children of different ages walk at different speeds. However, it would not be sensible to over-complicate the analysis by having several distance thresholds that relate to children of various ages. What we have done, therefore, is to use an average speed of 50 m per minute for the younger children and 75 metres per minute for the older ones, an 8-minute walk equates to a total distance of around 400 m for young children and 600 m for older ones. Allowing for the straight line distance from A to B being around 75% of the total distance walked gives “as the crow flies” distance thresholds of 300 and 450 m respectively.

There is no need for cycling or driving thresholds as all play facilities should be accessible on foot.

Accessibility Assessment –Play for up to 8s

The audit identified a total of 79 play areas with equipment. Of these, 54 contain equipment suitable for younger children and 67 equipment designed for older children. Across the Borough as a whole, 41% of properties are within 300 m of at least one of them:

- North area 49%
- North east area 12%
- North west area 19%
- South east area 27%
- South west area 16%
- Stafford area 47%
- Borough 41%

Accessibility Deficiencies

Map 10.1-10.3 show the location of the various play areas in the Borough with equipment designed for young children, together with buffers representing the 300 m distance threshold. Map 10.1 identifies fairly widespread

accessibility deficiencies across most of the Borough, although it would be unrealistic to set an objective of having no accessibility deficiencies in the rural areas because of the scattered population. Map 10.2 highlights areas of Stafford town outwith the distance threshold of a play area for young children - although some of them have few residents - while Map 10.3 does the same for Stone and Walton. They are mainly:

In Stafford town:

- Part of Highfields
- Part of the Parkside area
- Part of the Littleworth area
- Part of Weeping Cross
- Part of Wildwood

In Stone and Walton:

- North west Stone
- North west Walton
- Oulton and Oultoncross
- South west Walton Heath
- The southern part of Stone centred on the Lichfield Road

Accessibility Assessment – Older Children

Map 10.4 shows the location and accessibility of play areas with equipment designed for older children. Across the Borough, the proportion of properties within the 450 m distance threshold of at least one of these play areas is:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----|
| • North area | 64% |
| • North east area | 13% |
| • North west area | 35% |
| • South east area | 28% |
| • South west area | 17% |
| • Stafford area | 70% |
| • Borough | 58% |

Accordingly, the accessibility of play facilities for older children is much better than for toddlers. In spite of this, there are still some significant areas in which there is an accessibility deficiency, although the same comment as above in relation to the rural areas of the Borough applies. This said, they highlight a possible need for provision in the Blythe Bridge, Hilderstone and Haughton areas, plus a possible need for more provision in the Eccleshall, Gnosall, Colwich and Hixon areas.

Maps 10.5 and 10.6 show Stafford and Stone in more detail and suggest a need for provision:

In Stafford town

- In the Holmcroft area
- In north-west Baswich

In Stone:

- West of Little Stoke
- In north-west Walton

Resolving Accessibility Deficiencies

There are three main ways in which the Council can reduce these deficiencies:

- By providing a significant number of additional play areas, especially for younger children
- By creating a small number of carefully located “super play areas” that will be so attractive to parents and children that they will be willing to travel for longer than 8 minutes to use them
- By making local greenspaces in housing areas more attractive for local play in those areas where there are accessibility deficiencies. Chapter 13 highlights that Stafford town, in particular, has a number of greenspaces that are good for play.

Opportunities to Rationalise Provision

The maps also highlight one or two potential opportunities to rationalise provision where there are two or more play areas close together and serving essentially the same catchment area. The main opportunities for this appear to be in Stafford town:

- Garrod Square/Ellington Avenue/Melbourne Crescent
- Parkside Avenue/Beton Way
- Prospect Road/Sandyford Street
- Rosehill/Mayock Crescent
- Weston Road/Longhirst Drive
- Whittingham Drive/Torrige Drive

Quality and Value Audit Findings

Across the Borough the audit encompassed a total of 79 equipped play areas, with an average of 4.01 equipment items. Of these:

- 50 have 1-4 items of equipment
- 28 have 5-7 items of equipment
- 1 has 8 items of equipment

The play areas also range considerably in land area, from a minimum of 23 to a maximum of 3,060 sq m, with an average of 512 sq m. Forty nine have an area of less than 400 sq m; twenty eight have an area of between 400 and 1,000 sq m; and twelve have an area of at least 1,000 sq

m. Paragraph 6.4.7 of the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 states that the Council will use the NPFA Six Acre Standard in Stafford town and Stone as its standard for “formal recreational open space for adult and children’s use”, of which children’s play space is 0.6-0.8 ha per thousand people. Paragraph 6.4.9 notes that this 0.6-0.8 ha can be one or more of:

- Local areas for play, or LAPs, with a site area of at least 100 sq m
- Local Equipped Areas for Play, or LEAPs, with a site area of at least 400 sq m (note: although not stated in the Local Plan, the NPFA specifies that LEAPs should have at least five items of play equipment)
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play, or NEAPs, with a site area of at least 1,000 sq m (note: although not stated in the Local Plan, the NPFA specifies that NEAPs should have at least five items of play equipment)

Note: the Local Plan misquotes the NPFA Standard in relation to children’s play space. The 0.6-0.8 ha in the Six Acre Standard includes not only the three types of play space highlighted in the Local Plan, but also “casual or informal playing space within housing areas”. Many Councils assume that around half of the total allocation for children’s playing space should be in the form of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs, and the remainder simply informal space, although the NPFA does not specifically suggest this.

In Stafford town and Stone:

- Stafford has 38 equipped play areas, of which 22 have an area of less than 400 sq m and five an area of more than 1,000 sq m; and 21 have fewer than five pieces of equipment
- Stone has 14 play areas, of which nine have an area of less than 400 sq m and one an area of greater than 1000 sq m; and 11 have fewer than five pieces of play equipment

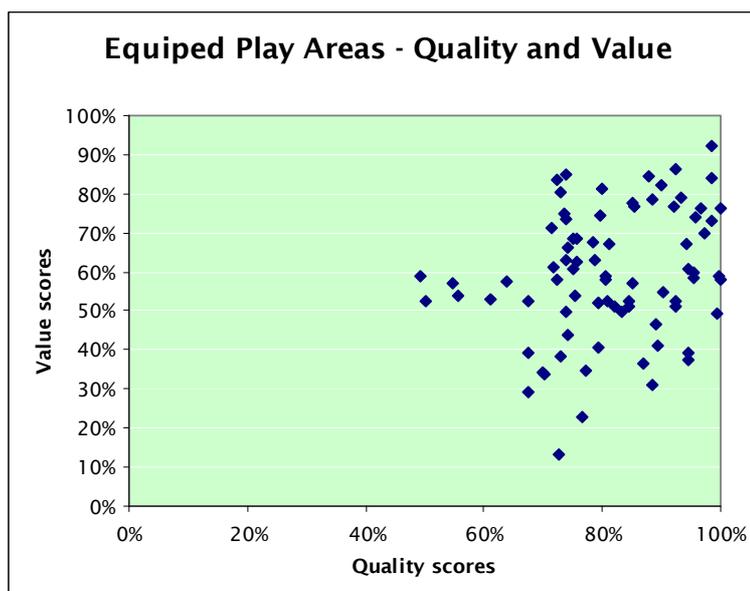
Accordingly a clear majority of the play areas in the two main settlements do not meet the standards set out in the Local Plan.

Quality and Value

The average quality and value scores of the 79 equipped play facilities in the audit are 81% and 55% respectively – higher scores than we have found in many other areas. On the basis of the audit scores, we have classed:

- 18 as being of above average quality and play value
- 16 as being of below average quality but above average play value
- 18 as being of above average quality but below average play value
- 25 as being below average quality and play value

The chart below summarises the quality and value scores of the equipped areas of play sites:



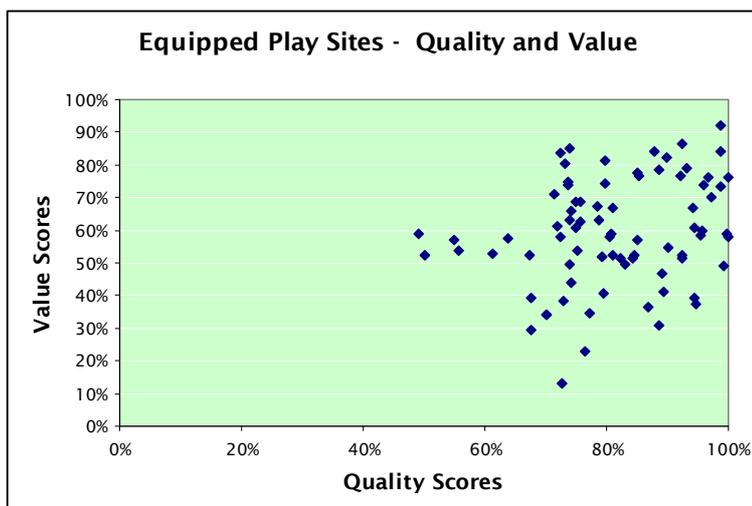
We based the quality and value scores for the equipped parts of play areas on:

- **Quality:** general characteristics (eg the distance to the nearest dwelling window, signage and separation of equipment for children of different ages); pedestrian accessibility (eg for people with disabilities or maintenance equipment); safety and security (eg the type and condition of any safety surface and dog-proof fencing); the condition of play equipment, surfaces and facilities for parents/carers; and management and maintenance
- **Value:** children often have a low attention span and so the wider the range of equipment types on a site the higher the play value

Most play areas do not consist solely of equipment items but also contain areas in which children can run around, watch birds and insects, sit or whatever. Accordingly the audit also assessed the play value of the non-equipped parts of play sites, using the following criteria:

- Visual stimulation/attractiveness
- Opportunities to run around
- Opportunities to see plants, birds, animals and insects
- Opportunities to sit quietly with adults or friends
- Opportunities to hide
- Opportunities to climb

Combining the scores for equipment and the non-equipped areas of sites raised the average value score slightly to 59%. The detailed scores are shown in the chart below:



While the average scores are good, therefore, they mask considerable variation in the quality and value of sites across the Borough. Ideally, all of the scores should be clustered in the top right hand quadrant of the charts. In the interests of offering provision of consistent quality and value across the Borough, it will be desirable to aim to narrow the range of both quality and value scores by upgrading the worst sites, particularly those which are below average quality and value. This will also raise the average quality and value scores. The best sites are:

- In terms of **quality**: Pembroke Drive, Exeter Street, Inglemire Drive (all in Stafford town)
- In terms of **play value**: Jupiter Way (also in Stafford town)

The high quality scores indicate more than anything that the Borough Council is doing a very good job of maintaining its play areas. However, some improvements are nonetheless desirable, including:

- **Additional play equipment** or replacement of existing equipment at some sites
- **Improving accessibility**, for example by improving disabled access or providing surfaced paths to the entrance to play areas and also within them. It is quite common for users to have to walk across a grassed (and in wet weather often muddy) area in order to get to the entrance gate. This will not bother young children, but will dissuade adults accompanying them who do not want to get their shoes or feet wet. Some play areas also lack a hard surfaced area at the entrance gate, with the result that the entrance can be a sea of mud for at least part of the year. The average accessibility score was 75%.
- **Enhancing safety**: some sites are not enclosed,

making it possible for dogs to use and possibly foul them. In addition, young children tend to be scared of dogs they do not know. The Lindens in Walton is a good example; although in many ways an excellent site, it has no fence. The type of safety surfacing beneath equipment items varies considerably with the most common surfaces being a wet pour impact absorbing surface, tarmac and bark chips. The first of these has the advantages of staying in place and being easy to clean, but in spite of being point elastic is not actually particularly safe (it is usually laid on top of tarmac, so tends to minimise cuts and grazes but not a lot else). Bark chips, on the other hand, are better to fall on but tend to become displaced (particularly beneath swings), partly negating their safety properties, and are almost impossible to clean, for example if fouled by a dog. The use of the play areas also tends to result in chips being scattered on paths and grassed areas. The average safety and security score was 79%.

- **Better facilities for parents and carers:** while most sites have at least one seat for adults accompanying young children, a number are in poor condition. Litter bins are also sometimes missing or in poor condition. The average score for facilities was only 69%.
- **Slightly better maintenance:** the average score for management and maintenance is a good 89%, but at a number of sites there is a need for enhanced maintenance
- **Better signage:** every site should have a sign at the entrance giving the age of children for which it is intended, where to get help in case of an accident or other emergency and details of who is responsible for maintenance so that users can draw attention to any need there may be repairs.

Quality Standard

Appendix C gives a suggested quality standard for children's play provision.

Total quantity of Provision

It is impossible to be definitive about the total area of land used for play because some sites are not enclosed and many equipped play areas form only a part of larger sites, with the whole of the site available for some form of play as well as other purposes. Nor is it possible sensibly to differentiate the areas used for toddlers and older children because they generally share the same overall play area. However, our best estimate is that the total area of formal equipped play provision is some 40,876 sq m or just below 41 hectares. This equates to the following average levels of provision per person in each of the planning areas and the Borough as a whole:

- North area 0.33 sq m/person

• North east area	0.27 sq m/person
• North west area	0.37 sq m/person
• South east area	0.15 sq m/person
• South west area	0.37 sq m/person
• Stafford area	0.35 sq m/person
• Borough	0.34 sq m/person

There is therefore surprisingly little difference between the levels of provision per person across much of the Borough, with only the south east area having a noticeably low overall level of provision. The Local Plan standard of 0.6-0.8 ha per thousand people equates to 6-8 sq m per person. Accordingly the amount of provision required by the application of the Local Plan standard is at least ten times the current level of provision, which simply highlights the ludicrous nature of the NPFA Standard.

Local Views

The household survey asked local residents their views on the amount or quantity of different forms of play provision. The results were that 66% and 70% respectively saw a need for more provision for younger and older children. The accessibility assessment also supports the view that there is a need for more provision. Therefore the quantity standard should be higher than the current average level of provision of 0.34 sq m per person.

Trends

There are no particular trends in the use of or demand for equipped play areas, apart from the fact that they are often colonised by teenagers as places in which to hang about in the evenings, largely because equipment items such as swings offer somewhere to sit. There are, however, two significant wider trends in thinking on play provision:

- Increasing recognition that more or less standard play areas are a very poor way of providing for children and as a result a move away from “play areas” - fenced areas with fixed play equipment and safety surfacing - to “playable spaces”, or greenspaces designed in such a way as to stimulate children’s imaginations in a natural play environment
- Significant concern that the design of children’s play is driven too much by fear of litigation in the event of accidents rather than the needs of children – a concern fully endorsed by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

One result of these trends is that interest is growing in “environmental play” or “Child friendly local environments”, an approach which our Companion Guide to PPG17 forecast:

[Using a formulaic approach] tends to result in children’s play being allocated to the more unbuildable parts of housing sites and often ignores the needs of older children, such as teenagers. It

can sometimes place the design of play areas in the hands of manufacturers with a vested interest in selling their products. Other European countries have developed approaches which use pieces of timber and different surfaces to create exciting and naturalistic play environments, better integrated with their surroundings than areas of safety surfacing surrounded by dog-proof fences and containing a few pieces of brightly coloured equipment.

More recently, London's Supplementary Planning Guidance on "Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation", states:

Although children and young people use and value many different types of space, planners and others have historically relied on a limited number of models for the kinds of space to be provided for them. Providing for children and young people is almost universally seen as a matter of installing fenced-off play areas with safety surfacing and fixed play equipment (or variations on these for older young people). This approach leads to artificial, inflexible spaces that make a narrow offer to children and hold little attraction to the wider community. It also reinforces the view that children and young people should be corralled into specially designated areas, rather than being allowed to play in the wider public realm. Whilst clearly designated and bounded spaces may be of value, especially to younger children and their carers, the overall objective should be the provision of well located, well designed and functional spaces that are accessible to children and young people and an integrated part of the wider public realm.

As this quotation makes clear, there is still a place for equipped play areas, especially for young children. However, there should probably be relatively few of them and they should be significantly better than most of those currently available.

Quantity Standard

The new approach to play suggested above is based on a mix of fewer but significantly larger and more stimulating equipped play areas, at key locations such as parks, plus local greenspaces designed with rocks, logs, and other features that stimulate children's imagination and promote and facilitate "natural play". The more local natural provision, the less the need for expensive play equipment.

Against this background, it would be wrong to propose the provision of more formulaic play areas in the Borough. Therefore we recommend that the Council and its Town and Parish Council partners should do two things:

- Plan and progressively develop a “strategic network” of large and exciting equipped play areas in Stafford town and Stone, preferably in high profile, major greenspaces such as parks or park-like spaces.
- Retain the present equipped play areas for the moment but move to a new approach whenever new development, or the need to replace an existing play area, creates the opportunity to do so and the strategic network is in place.

As a result, we believe that the Borough Council can best help to ensure good provision for children and young people by:

- Requiring developers to provide or contribute to amenity greenspaces, natural greenspaces and parks and gardens in accordance with the proposed quantity and quality standards for them
- Ensuring that all new greenspaces in housing areas are designed to be suitable for children’s play in accordance with the proposed quality standards in Appendix C
- Securing developer contributions that the Council and the Town and Parish Councils can use to make existing suitably located greenspaces more stimulating and exciting for children’s play

The Strategic Network

People will happily travel further to see the Rolling Stones than a pub band, or the Berliner Philharmonic than their local amateur orchestra. Many will also by-pass a poor local facility in order to get to a better one, even if it is some distance away. The same goes for visits to facilities like super play areas - provided they are complemented by local provision for everyday use. At the same time, it would be wrong to plan a strategic network of large, high profile play areas that many people will normally visit by car. We therefore suggest a distance threshold of around 15 minutes walk to them, which equates to about 1200 m on the ground or 900 m “as the crow flies”. The actual size should vary with the number of people living within this distance threshold: one size does not fit all.

We also suggest a standard based on a policy-based approach – a conceptual model of an ideal strategic play area of around 1,500 sq m or roughly a quarter of a football pitch. This is large enough to be high profile and contain a wide range of pieces of equipment for children of a wide range of ages.

The number of strategic sites required in each of the main settlements will depend primarily on where it is possible to site them and the extent to which notional catchments are severed by main roads and railway lines. Map 10.7 suggests an outline approach in Stafford town, with

strategic sites as follows:

- Victoria Park (the existing play facilities are fairly boring and run-down, particularly the paddling pool, and Victoria Park is the Borough's "flagship" greenspace)
- Rowley Park, where a strategic play site already exists
- Stafford Common
- Weston Road
- Henry Street
- Wildwood Downs
- Mossnit

This gives seven sites in Stafford town. As the population of the town is around 56,000, this gives one strategic site to roughly 8,000 people or 0.2 sq m per person. In the remainder of the Borough there may be a need for an additional strategic site in the Stone area, for example at Westbridge Park.

Accordingly we suggest a quantity standard of 0.4 sq m per person, made up of 0.2 sq m per person for strategic sites and 0.2 sq m per person for local sites that will complement the strategic provision.

Conclusions

If the Council agrees this approach, LDF policy should allocate suitable sites and require the developers of all residential projects in Stafford town and Stone to contribute to the creation of the nearest strategic site as well as either:

- Creatively designed on-site natural play greenspaces; or
- The enhancement of the play value of nearby greenspaces

In addition, whenever the Borough Council or a Town or Parish Council concludes that the equipment within a play area has reached the end of its useful life, they should remove the equipment and re-landscape the site to make it more interesting with a range of natural features that make the site more attractive to people of all ages, but especially children.

Long Term Benefits

This approach will have three important long term benefits:

- It will result in a slowly but steadily increasing number of more interesting, more attractive and more "playable" greenspaces that should appeal to both children and adults
- It should generate economies of scale in terms of maintenance costs for the Council and the Town and Parish Councils
- It will raise the profile of the Borough's main parks

11: Golf Courses

Introduction	This chapter reviews the provision of golf courses in the Borough.
Accessibility	Because of the need to take heavy bags of clubs, most golfers nearly always travel by car and so walking and cycling accessibility are not significant. In order to assess accessibility we have used a fairly arbitrary distance threshold of 10 km, which approximately to a little over 20 minutes travel for those who start their journey within either Stafford town or Stone. As Map 11.1 shows, practically the whole of the Borough is within this distance of at least one course, apart from a small area in the north west area and therefore we conclude that accessibility is very good.
Quality and Value	All of the courses in the Borough are attractively laid out and offer high quality, high value facilities to golfers and there are no particular improvements that are generally desirable, although on many courses it will be possible to enhance nature conservation and biodiversity without detriment to the playing of golf.
Trends	<p>Until relatively recently many golfers have been members of clubs and joined the best course they can afford, provided it is within an acceptable travel distance. More recently, however, many clubs have seen a significant decline in membership, although not necessarily a commensurate decline in usage, as those members who have played only occasionally have decided that it would be cheaper to “pay and play” rather than purchase an annual membership at the equivalent of a higher cost per round. This has also made it possible for them to play at a range of courses, rather than primarily at their home club.</p> <p>There are two main consequences of this move to “nomadic” golfers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None of the clubs within the Borough currently has a waiting list, although waiting lists were common only a few years ago. Several are actively seeking more members.• Clubs have lost income and are having to increase their

“pay and play” charges which can of course be self-defeating if players start to think they are too high.

Climate change may have a significant impact on golf courses in future if we get the predicted hotter, drier summers, with a need to water not only greens but fairways as well.

Quantity Standard

As all of the clubs in the Borough currently have spare capacity there is no foreseeable need for more golf courses in the Borough, especially as the Stafford Castle Club is currently planning to extend its course from 9 to 18 holes. This may make it more attractive to players who currently travel from the town to an 18-hole course elsewhere and will probably result in some displacement of demand rather than an increased in golf participation overall.

Conclusions

There are currently 109 golf holes in the Borough (this does not divide by either 9 or 18 because one of the courses has 10 holes), or approximately one hole per 1100 residents and therefore this can be taken as a quantity standard for the future. However, before allocating any additional land for golf, or requiring developers to contribute to additional golf provision, the Borough Council should check the current position with local clubs. For the moment, however, there is no need for any additional provision and existing clubs will probably be able to accommodate most of the additional demand that will arise from new housing development planned for the Borough.

12: Grass Pitches

Introduction

This chapter covers pitches for cricket, football, hockey and rugby. It is based primarily on the Sport England Playing Pitch Model and a telephone survey we undertook of a sample of pitch sport clubs across the Borough. Across the four sports, it is clear that the main constraints on pitch sport participation relate to issues such as the lack of volunteers and match officials or meeting running costs rather than the number or quality of pitches.

The Sport England Playing Pitch Model

Appendix I consists of the Sport England playing pitch model (PPM) for the Borough. This uses a standard methodology for each of the pitch sports to compare the number of teams and pitches on the peak match days each week – almost inevitably Saturday and Sundays. We have estimated the number of teams in the Borough by sport, gender and age group, using a variety of sources including league and club websites and contact with club officials. In addition, to estimate the number of pitches, we have used information from our audit of local provision. This has led to the following findings:

- **Cricket:** the Borough has around 19 cricket clubs fielding 48 men's teams, 3 women's teams and 10 boys' teams but no girls' teams; and it has at least 16 club or other publicly accessible pitches plus 2 joint use pitches. Remarkably, over half of the Borough's adult cricket teams are based in the north area although it contains only around 20% of the population.
- **Football:** the Borough has around 56 men's teams, 4 women's teams, 49 boys' teams, 1 girls' team and 75 mini teams; it also has at least 61 adult pitches with community use, 21 junior pitches and 7 mini pitches. Most of the football teams are based in and around Stafford.
- **Hockey:** the Borough has five hockey clubs fielding 12 men's and 11 women's teams plus a varying number of junior and mini teams; and it has three artificial turf pitches that are suitable for hockey. All of the hockey teams are based in the Stafford and north areas.
- **Rugby Union:** the Borough has five rugby clubs fielding 11 men's teams, 2 women's teams and 11 boys' teams; it also has 13 adult rugby pitches, 4 junior

pitches with community use and 1 mini-pitch. The adult rugby teams are based mainly in the north and Stafford areas of the Borough.

Note: the number of teams in any area is constantly changing as teams – especially football teams – form and disband. Therefore the above details should be taken as a “snapshot” and not immutable facts.

There is therefore a clear geographical difference in pitch sport demand across the Borough: cricket is particularly popular in the northern half and football in the southern half.

Appendix I uses the PPM to calculate the current balance between the demand for and supply of pitches for each of the six planning areas in the Borough. The conclusions in relation to the peak day demand for grass pitches are:

Cricket	Peak demand	Pitches	Balance
North	8.5	9	+0.5
North east	0.3	1	+0.7
North west	1.2	3	+1.8
South east	0.6	2	+1.4
South west	1.2	4	+2.8
Stafford	3.3	1	-2.3
Borough	15.1	20	+4.9

Adult football	Peak demand	Pitches	Balance
North	1.1	10	+8.9
North east	0.4	0	-0.4
North west	2.6	6	+3.4
South east	1.1	3	-1.9
South west	0.4	3	+2.6
Stafford	15.4	22	+6.6
Borough	21.0	44	+23.0

Junior football	Peak demand	Pitches	Balance
North	0.8	2	+1.2
North east	0.8	1	+0.2
North west	1.9	2	+0.1
South east	0.0	1	+1.0
South west	0.8	0	-0.8
Stafford	12.2	6	-6.2
Borough	16.4	12	-4.4

Mini-soccer	Peak demand	Pitches	Balance
North	5	2	+0.3
North east	13	0	-4.3
North west	0	0	0
South east	0	0	0
South west	0	0	0
Stafford	57	5	-14.0
Borough	75	7	-18.0

Note: the outcome column assumes that each mini-pitch can be used for 3 matches on each peak day

Adult Rugby	Peak demand	Pitches	Balance
North	2.1	4	+1.9
North east	0	0	0
North west	0.8	2	+1.2
South east	0.0	0	0
South west	0.4	1	+0.6
Stafford	2.6	6	+3.4
Borough	5.9	13	+7.1

Junior Rugby	Peak demand	Pitches	Balance
North	2.5	0	-2.5
North east	0	0	0
North west	0	0	0
South east	0	0	0
South west	0	0	0
Stafford	3.0	0	-3.0
Borough	5.5	0	-5.5

The conclusions for football and rugby assume that all junior and mini matches are played on junior and mini pitches respectively. In reality, many such matches are played on adult pitches, causing extra wear.

In order to model the true situation, we have assumed that one adult pitch can be used for three mini-soccer matches simultaneously, involving six teams. The rules of mini-soccer specify the length of matches and maximum playing time for players as follows:

Age of players	Minutes/half	Maximum play (minutes/session)
6-7 years	10	45
8-9 years	15	60

For simplicity we have assumed that all players take part in match with fifteen minute halves, so one game takes 30 minutes actual playing time plus a short half-time interval. Therefore three matches are equivalent to one adult 90-minute game. As there can be three matches simultaneously on one adult pitch, nine mini-soccer matches can be taken as the approximate equivalent of a single adult match, or nine mini teams as the approximate equivalent of one adult team. This makes it possible to convert the mini-pitch shortfalls in the north, north east and Stafford town areas into "adult pitch equivalents" as follows:

	Mini-pitches shortfall	Adult pitch equivalents
North	3	1
North east	13	2
Stafford	52	6
Totals	68	8

Note: in each case, the number of adult pitch equivalents is rounded up to

the next whole number

As most mini-soccer takes place on Sunday mornings, this changes the balance between supply and demand for adult pitches on Sunday mornings as follows:

	Excluding minis	Including minis
North	8.9	7.9
North east	-0.4	-2.4
North west	3.4	3.4
South east	1.9	1.9
South west	2.6	2.6
Stafford	6.6	0.6
Totals	23.0	15.0

The Need for a “Strategic Reserve” of Pitches

In addition, the PPM assumes that all pitches are available for use all of the time. However, this is not always the case as at times some football and rugby pitches are likely to be either unplayable or being “rested”. This increases the number of pitches required to meet any given level of demand. However, the increase required is impossible to predict with any degree of certainty as it varies from year to year with the weather. We have therefore assumed that there should be a “strategic reserve” equivalent to around 10% of the required grass pitches in each area of the Borough.

Team Generation Rates

The PPM also calculates team generation rates (TGRs) and this makes it possible to benchmark the number of teams in the Borough in relation to its population against the number of teams in other areas. The TGR is the number of people in a specified age group, defined by Sport England, required to “generate” one team. Accordingly the lower the TGR the higher the rate of participation, and vice versa. TGRs for Stafford Borough, compared with the other TGRs from across England and published by Sport England, are:

	Stafford	England Average	England median
Cricket			
Men’s teams	641	1,359	910
Women’s teams	10,053	45,938	40,550
Boys’ teams	528	339	
Girls’ teams	N/a	12,013	4,962
Football			
Men’s teams	425	423	354
Women’s teams	5,705	16,846	12,949
Boys’ teams	90	168	100
Girls’ teams	1,025	3,488	1,853
Mini-soccer teams	67	399	228

Hockey

Men's teams	1,983	9,612	5,175
Women's teams	2,075	7,144	6,387
Boys' teams	N/a	3,582	2,439
Girls' teams	N/a	4,256	3,135

Rugby Union

Men's teams	1,850	6,493	3,597
Women's teams	10,701	27,405	17,238
Boys' teams	226	1,603	564
Girls' teams	N/a	15,345	5,139
Mixed mini-rugby teams	N/a	2,323	1,098

Note: the lower the TGR the higher the rate of participation. The median is the "mid point" in any list of values - in other words, there are as many values above the median as there are below it. Average values can be skewed by one or two "outliers" while medians cannot. Accordingly, medians are a more useful guide than averages in terms of TGRs.

Accordingly, it appears that:

- **Cricket:** participation in men's and women's cricket in the Borough is significantly higher than the median for England, but lower for boys' cricket. This probably reflects the fact that many of the junior cricket teams in the Borough do not play in any league and therefore have only occasional fixtures and are not included in our PPM calculations.
- **Football:** participation in men's football is around the England average, but in women's football is significantly above the England median and average. Junior boys' and girls' football, and mini-soccer, however, are significantly more popular than the English average although the Team Generation Rate for boys' football is only slightly above the median for England.
- **Hockey:** both men's and women's hockey are significantly more popular in the Borough than in England as a whole
- **Rugby:** men's women's and boys' rugby are all significantly more popular than the average and median for England

This suggests that most of the pitch sports are of well above average popularity in the Borough, with the single exception of men's football which is only about average following the decline over the past decade. However, the popularity of football amongst young players suggests that something of a revival may be coming.

Accessibility

It is necessary to consider the accessibility of pitche sin two ways:

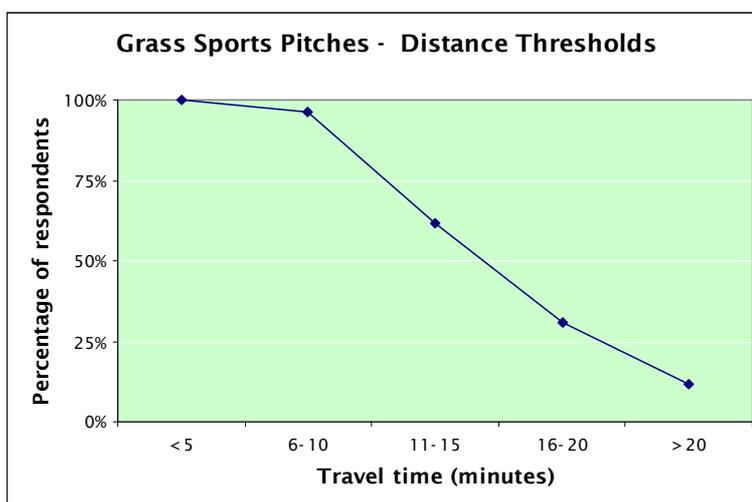
- As local facilities for predominantly casual use, which should therefore be "open access" and within walking

distance of where potential users live. However, there is no need for marked-out pitches for casual use and any greenspace large and flat enough can be used for a kickabout. This type of accessibility is considered as part of the review of the green network in Chapter 13.

- As facilities used for matches, reviewed below. Match pitches can be closed or open access, although the former is preferable to prevent dog walking and its attendant fouling. However, a high level of accessibility on foot or by bicycle from where users live is not particularly important:
 - In any match, half of the players are playing for the “away” team and therefore will almost certainly have had to travel to the match venue
 - Players choose the club or team they will play for more by the standard of play on offer rather than the location of the club’s home ground. Moreover, players often retain a loyalty to a club after moving house and can then end up travelling a significant distance to train and play
 - The higher the league in which players compete, the wider the area from which the league they play in draws its teams

Distance Thresholds

The chart below identifies the time that respondents in our residents survey said they would be willing to walk to a grass sports pitch. The effective catchment of local pitches is clearly around 10 minutes travel time:



Many respondents would not have been pitch sport players and it is reasonable to expect that active players will be willing to travel slightly further than those who simply want a casual kickabout. Accordingly we have used a 15 minute travel time which gives the following distance thresholds:

- Walking 900 m
- Cycling 2250 m
- Driving 5625 m

The proportion of properties in the Borough within these distance thresholds of at least one cricket, football and rugby pitch is:

Cricket Pitches		Walking	Cycling	Driving
North	All	57%	88%	100%
	HQHV	42%	84%	100%
North east	All	55%	83%	99%
	HQHV	24%	56%	96%
North west	All	36%	53%	92%
	HQHV	36%	50%	89%
South east	All	0%	0%	0%
	HQHV	0%	0%	0%
South west	All	7%	10%	96%
	HQHV	5%	7%	88%
Stafford	All	22%	74%	100%
	HQHV	0%	0%	1%
Borough	All	30%	71%	99%
	HQHV	12%	23%	36%
Football pitches				
North	All	58%	90%	100%
	HQHV	56%	88%	100%
North east	All	32%	67%	91%
	HQHV	32%	67%	91%
North west	All	3%	54%	93%
	HQHV	2%	45%	92%
South east	All	10%	54%	97%
	HQHV	0%	0%	4%
South west	All	48%	52%	93%
	HQHV	0%	0%	19%
Stafford	All	93%	100%	100%
	HQHV	46%	93%	100%
Borough	All	70%	88%	99%
	HQHV	39%	76%	88%
Rugby Pitches				
North	All	27%	71%	96%
	HQHV	27%	53%	94%
North east	All	0%	22%	91%
	HQHV	0%	22%	91%
North west	All	2%	10%	84%
	HQHV	0%	0%	7%
South east	All	0%	0%	76%
	HQHV	0%	0%	47%
South west	All	47%	51%	92%
	HQHV	0%	0%	12%
Stafford	All	67%	97%	100%
	HQHV	23%	77%	100%
Borough	All	47%	74%	96%
	HQHV	19%	59%	84%

Accordingly, the accessibility of cricket pitches is best in the north area of the Borough but football and rugby in the Stafford town area.

Quality and Value

We have audited a total of 77 pitch sites across the Borough as follows:

	Sites	Adult Pitches	Junior Pitches	Mini Pitches
Cricket	17	19		
Football	45	55	17	21
Rugby	15	19	4	

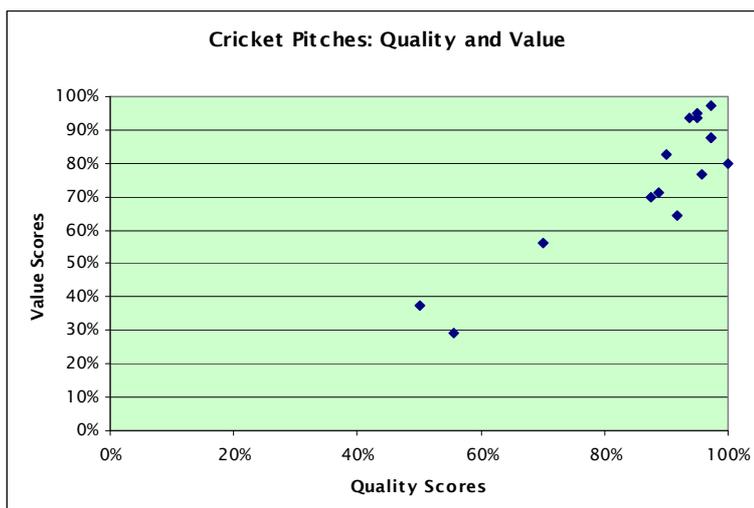
The factors we audited varied slightly by the type of pitch: for example cricket grounds require scoreboxes, sightscreens, a square and watering system for it, and ideally practice nets, but football and rugby pitches do not. However, we used the same broad categories of audit information for all pitches:

- **Factual information**, such as the number of pitches on the site and availability of on-site parking and the degree of public access
- **Quality**: the adequacy of changing accommodation, pitch condition and negative factors that would lessen the attractiveness of the pitch to potential players such as exposure to wind

We also derived value scores from the range of facilities on each site and its quality score. We designed the method of doing this to reflect what makes sites valuable to players. For example, a pitch site with two or three pitches is more valuable than a site with only one; a site with changing is more valuable than a site without; and a site with full community use is more valuable than a joint use one. All of the value scores are designed to reflect the value of sites in terms of community use; accordingly, a school site with no community use has zero community use value.

Cricket

The average quality and value audit scores for all the sites were 86% and 72% respectively. The chart below shows the various scores:

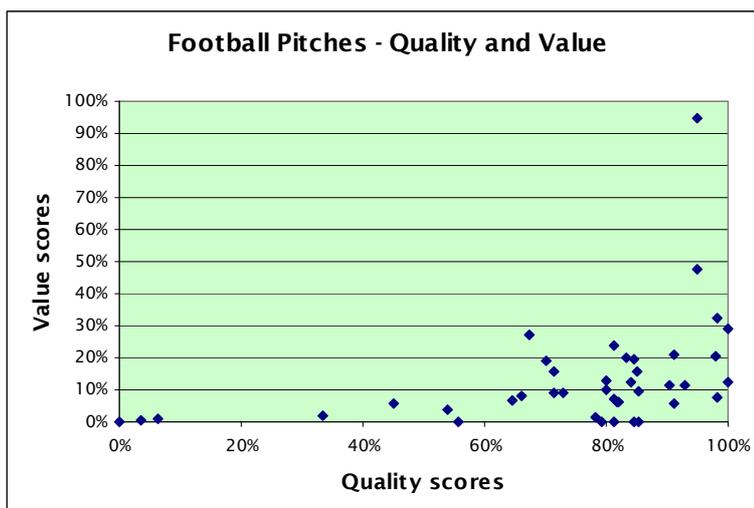


The improvements that will be desirable to cricket sites are relatively minor and include:

- General levelling
- Better or more changing
- Provision of showers
- Better disabled access
- Umpires changing
- Provision of practice nets
- More artificial wickets
- Longer boundary distances
- Better sightscreens

Football Pitches

The average quality and value scores for football pitch sites were 75% and 13% respectively and the chart below shows the various scores:



The average value score for football sites is very low

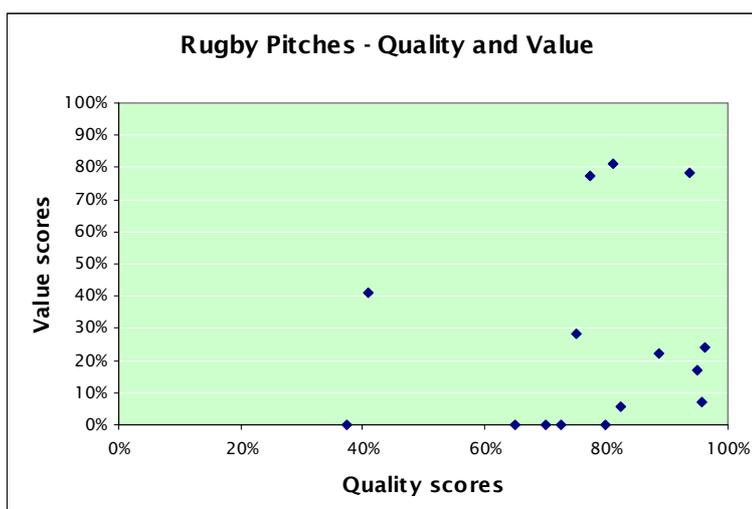
although the best site – Springbank Park – scored very well in terms of both quality and value. This reflects the limited number of pitches on some sites; pitch construction – there is no evidence of sand slits on any of the sites we audited, so the carrying capacity of all of the pitches is very limited; the lack of floodlighting; and the lack of changing on some sites. The zero value scores relate to school sites with no community use.

The main improvements required to sites include:

- Provision or upgrading of changing
- Levelling of pitches
- Provision of sand slits
- Provision of floodlights
- New goalposts
- Better pitch maintenance
- Shelter planting

Rugby Pitches

The average quality and value scores for rugby pitch sites were 77% and 25% respectively and the chart below summarises the various scores:



The zero value sites are school sites with no community use. The lower value sites are generally the smaller ones and therefore unable to accommodate more than a few matches each week. The main improvements desirable to rugby sites include:

- Better drainage
- New goalposts
- Better maintenance
- Floodlighting

Quality, Value and Accessibility

Maps 12.1 to 12.3 respectively show the location, quality and value of the various cricket, football and rugby pitch sites in the audit. They highlight the following points:

Cricket

- The concentration of cricket pitches in the northern half of the Borough, most of them of both high quality and high value
- The relatively poor quality and value of the pitches in Stafford town and the relatively poor value of the pitches in the southern half of the Borough
- The lack of cricket provision in Gnosall: the Sports and Social Club there had a cricket team at one time but it disbanded
- The fairly good match between the location of pitches and the density of development
- Almost all of the Borough is within the driving threshold of at least one pitch

Football

- The concentration of pitches in Stafford town, but the relatively poor quality and/or value of most of them
- The lack of pitches in the north east area of the Borough
- Almost all of the Borough is within the driving threshold of at least one pitch, although not quite as much as for the smaller number of cricket pitches

Rugby

- The concentration of rugby pitches in the Stafford area, although some of them are school pitches that are not available for community use and therefore low value
- Almost all of the Borough is within the driving threshold of at least one pitch, although not quite as much as for cricket or football

Local Views

The following town and parish councils identified a need for more pitches in their areas:

- **Mini-soccer pitches:** Barlaston, Brocton, Church Eaton, Eccleshall, Fulford, Gnosall, Haughton, High Offley and Woodseaves, Hilderstone, Standon and Stone
- **Junior football pitches:** Barlaston, Eccleshall, Fulford, Gnosall, High Offley and Woodseaves, Hilderstone, Standon and Stone
- **Adult football pitches:** Barlaston, Eccleshall, Gnosall, High Offley and Woodseaves, Hopton and Coton, and Norbury
- **Rugby pitches:** Barlaston, Colwich, High Offley and Woodseaves, Hilderstone, Norbury and Stone
- **Floodlit grass pitches:** Colwich, Hilderstone, Norbury

and Stone

Accordingly the most widely identified local needs amongst the Town and Parish Councils are for mini-soccer and junior football pitches, followed by adult football pitches. As it makes sense for all rugby to be played within clubs, and unlikely that the Borough could support another successful rugby club, there is no real point in providing rugby pitches in those parishes without one. However, the Stone Rugby Club is very limited in what it can achieve as a result of having only a single pitch on a ground shared with a football team.

Local Club Views

In order to establish the views of a cross-section of local clubs, we undertook telephone interviews with a total of 21 of them.

Cricket Club Views

Our telephone survey included three of the Borough's cricket clubs which between them run 31 teams. In summary the main findings were:

- **Current problems facing the club:** lack of volunteers (2), lack of female players (1), ageing players (1), getting sponsorship (1)
- **Future plans:** more adult members (3), more junior members (2), more junior teams (2),
- **Views on cricket pitches in the Borough generally:** good (2), poor (1)
- **Constraints on growth in participation in cricket:** lack of volunteers (3), too much football on TV (3), school leavers leave the area (2), young people have too many other interests (2), shortage of match officials (2)

Although all of the clubs identified some constraints on growth in participation generally, and specific problems facing them in particular, none identified any pitch-related issue as a serious constraint on the development of cricket in the Borough. Accordingly it seems likely that the current level of provision for cricket is about right and the quality of pitches broadly acceptable.

Football Club Views

Our telephone survey included thirteen football clubs with a total of 21 teams. The main findings., with the number of respondents in brackets, were:

- **Current problems facing the club:** quality of changing (5), meeting running costs (4), quality of pitches (4), lack of volunteers (2), coaching (2), access to pitches (2)

- **Enough match pitches:** 9 of the 13 respondents indicated “yes”, 2 said “no” and 21 had no firm opinion
- **Future plans:** more adult members (8), survive somehow (6), upgrade changing (3), more junior members (3), more junior members (3), start junior section/team (2), start a women’s section (2), upgrade pitches (2) and more men’s teams (2). However, two of the eleven clubs indicated that they “may fold”.
- **Views on football pitches in the Borough generally:** 4 indicated that the general quality of pitches is acceptable and 8 that it is poor.
- **Constraints on growth in participation in football:** lack of floodlit pitches (9), shortage of match officials (9), too few grass pitches (8), quality of grass pitches (8), children have too many other interests (8), quality of changing facilities (7), lack of floodlit training areas (7), cost of hiring pitches (6), lack of volunteers (5), school leavers leave the area (5), parents aren’t interested (5), lack of players (5), lack of training opportunities (4), players getting older (4), PE teachers aren’t interested (3), match times don’t suit players (3), quality of sand-filled ATPs (2), lack of coaches (1)

These findings suggest that a number of football clubs would like to expand, but will find it very difficult to do so successfully. For example, it will be difficult for many to expand without more volunteers, and if they do manage to expand the lack of match officials will place a real constraint on expanding league programmes. The best ways of increasing participation appear to be to provide more training and floodlit facilities and improve the quality of both pitches and changing facilities.

Hockey Club Views

Our questionnaire survey included only the Stafford Hockey Club. In summary its views are:

- **Current main problems:** lack of new players, ageing players, lack of volunteers
- **Enough match pitches:** No
- **Future plans:** survive; more adult members
- **Views on hockey pitches in the Borough:** acceptable
- **Constraints on growth in hockey participation:** lack of new players; PE teachers aren’t interested and there is no male hockey in Stafford schools; lack of volunteers; lack of match officials; and lack of training facilities

It is impossible to draw any firm conclusions from the views of a single club.

Rugby Club Views

Our telephone survey included three of the Borough’s five

rugby clubs. The main findings, with the number of clubs citing them in brackets, were:

- **Current problems:** lack of male players, lack of female players, keeping juniors, lack of volunteers (2), quality of changing (2), meetings costs (2), coaching (1)
- **Enough match pitches:** No (1), Yes (2)
- **Future plans:** more members (3), upgrade changing (2), move to new site, more teams (2), upgrade pitches (1)
- **Views on rugby pitches in the Borough:**
- **Constraints on growth in rugby participation:** shortage of match officials (3), young people have too many other interests (3), lack of volunteers (2), quality of changing facilities (2), PE teachers aren't interested (2), school leavers leave the area (2)

The main constraints on the development of rugby therefore appear to relate to people and changing facilities rather than pitches.

Governing Body Views

Football

The Staffordshire Football Association has identified the key local needs as:

- Third generation artificial turf pitches
- More multi-pitch sites
- Indoor Futsal facilities
- More floodlit pitches

Rugby

The Staffordshire Rugby Union County Facility Plan 2009-12 sets a number of objectives for the future, including an increase in the number of participants in all age groups by not less than 2% per year. It also identifies the following facility priorities:

- Improved quality and quantity of grass pitches and changing facilities, floodlit areas
- Improved access to ATPs
- Better social and spectator facilities

Conclusions

This leads to the following conclusions:

Cricket

- In the Borough as a whole, there are enough cricket pitches to accommodate all of the demand arising in the Borough, with some limited spare capacity. However, this masks a shortfall of around three pitches in the Stafford town area.

- The first priority should be to increase the capacity of grounds to accommodate midweek use, particularly by junior teams. This can best be achieved by the provision of artificial wickets, which adult teams will also be able to use for net practice.
- The second priority is to improve the changing accommodation at a number of grounds
- The Borough Council should also allocate land in the Stafford area for additional cricket pitches as part of its Local Development Framework.

Football

- Overall, there seems to be an approximate balance between the supply of adult pitches and demand for them, but a need to upgrade some pitches and changing. However, there are significant shortfalls in junior and mini pitches. This means that junior and mini teams have to use some adult pitches, reducing the availability of adult pitches for adult teams and leagues, most noticeably on Sunday mornings.
- The first priority is therefore to provide more facilities for mini-soccer, particularly in the north east and Stafford town areas. This will also free up some adult pitches for more adult use. However, a much better solution will be to move mini-soccer onto artificial turf pitches, as suggested in Chapter 7. If the new ATPs are on school sites this will not require any additional land.
- The second priority is to provide more junior pitches in the Stafford town area. Again, it will be sensible to try to move at least some junior matches onto artificial turf pitches and the more that schools have ATPs, and therefore their pupils get used to playing on them, the better.
- The third priority is to improve the quality of facilities for adult football, primarily by upgrading drainage and changing accommodation. However, the Council should seek first to persuade local leagues to accept that they will move to artificial turf pitches in the future. If this can be achieved, any investment in upgrading grass pitch sites should be confined to as few sites as possible. Spending say £100,000 on reconstructing a pitch to a high specification can increase its capacity from two matches per week to three or perhaps four, but not much more – depending on the weather. Climate change is almost certainly going to make grass pitches unplayable more and more often. Therefore there is a strong case for taking a strategic policy decision progressively to move football onto artificial surfaces as suggested in Chapter 7 above.

Rugby

- There appear to be a more than adequate number of

adult rugby pitches in the Borough so the fact that junior and midi teams use adult pitches does not significantly reduce the availability of pitches for adult teams. However, it will be desirable to have more junior pitches, particularly in the north and Stafford town areas.

- The first priority is to ensure that Stafford Rugby Club finds a suitable new home, sufficiently large to accommodate all of its current teams while also having spare capacity for the club to develop additional teams roughly in proportion to any increase in the town's population.
- The second priority is to find ways of helping some of the rugby clubs, such as Eccleshall, enhance their changing facilities or provide floodlit training areas
- The third priority is to develop floodlit artificial turf pitches that rugby clubs can use for training

Quantity Standard

Appendix I15 uses the findings of the PPM analysis to derive a quantity standard for grass pitches in the Borough of **13.3 sq m per person**. This is a composite standard that includes grass cricket, football and rugby pitches. It splits into:

• Cricket	24%	3.2 sq m per person
• Mini-soccer	11%	1.5 sq m per person
• Junior football	18%	2.4 sq m per person
• Adult football	29%	3.8 sq m per person
• Junior rugby	18%	2.4 sq m per person
• Total	100%	13.3sq m per person

Accordingly, if the Borough Council can persuade mini-soccer to move to artificial turf pitches composite grass pitch quantity standard will reduce by 1.5 sq m per person to 11.8 sq m per person.

13: The Green Network

Introduction

This chapter reviews the Borough “green network” – its overall provision of accessible multi-functional greenspaces (MFGS) - in two ways:

- First, it reviews the accessibility, quality and value of the components of the network in terms of their primary purpose as amenity greenspaces, churchyards and cemeteries, natural greenspaces and open access playing fields and parks and gardens. It then derives an overall quantity standard for these forms of provision, excluding open access playing fields which have their own provision standard.
- Second, it reviews the network as a whole in terms of its overall accessibility, context value, nature conservation value, amenity value, recreational value and play value

This analysis ignores allotments, artificial turf pitches, bowling greens, children’s play areas, golf courses and teenage facilities, all of which are provided for highly specific users and therefore not multi-functional, in order to concentrate on spaces that are of relevance to all members of the community. Our audit encompassed almost 300 multi-functional spaces as follows:

• Amenity greenspaces	180
• Churchyards and cemeteries	46
• Green Corridors	11
• Natural greenspaces	30
• Parks and Gardens	9
• Open access playing fields	18
• Total	294

Accessibility

Accessibility Standard

The three charts below, based on the results of the residents’ survey, identify the percentage of people willing to travel for various times to visit parks, open access playing fields and children’s play facilities. The latter can be taken as a proxy for local greenspaces. They make clear that sensible accessibility standards for both parks and open access playing fields will be around 15 minutes,

- Open access playing fields 15 minutes travel
- Parks and Gardens 15 minutes travel

Because users may not only walk but also cycle or drive to spaces such as parks and playing fields, we have converted these times into distance for cycling and driving as well as walking.

Accessibility Assessment

Appendix H gives the proportion of properties in each of the planning areas of the Borough within the various walking, cycling and driving distance thresholds of different forms of provision. On a Borough-wide basis, the proportions of properties within the various distance thresholds are:

Multi-functional greenspaces

	All	High Quality /High Value
--	-----	--------------------------

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|
| • 5 minutes/300 m walking | 77% | 65% |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|

Amenity Greenspaces

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|
| • 5 minutes/300 m walking | 69% | 29% |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|

Churchyards and Cemeteries

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| • 10 minutes/600 m walking | 35% | 12% |
| • 10 minutes/1500 m cycling | 98% | 36% |
| • 10 minutes/3750 m driving | 99% | 86% |

Natural greenspaces

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| • 10 minutes/600 m walking | 50% | 34% |
| • 10 minutes/1500 m cycling | 69% | 59% |
| • 10 minutes/3750 m driving | 85% | 56% |

Open access playing fields

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| • 15 minutes/900 m walking | 56% | 22% |
| • 15 minutes/2250 m cycling | 72% | 46% |
| • 15 minutes/5625 m driving | 86% | 60% |

Parks and Gardens

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| • 15 minutes/900 m walking | 25% | 17% |
| • 15 minutes/2250 m cycling | 63% | 61% |
| • 15 minutes/5625 m driving | 77% | 76% |

Amenity Greenspaces

Amenity greenspaces are the most accessible spaces in the Borough, as they should be. However, as most greenspaces serve an amenity function, any assessment of

the accessibility of amenity greenspaces as a specific form of provision is not particularly significant. Instead, what matters is the accessibility of the green network as a whole, summarised later in this chapter.

Churchyards and Cemeteries

Churchyards are important not only to church-goers. Many churchyards are oases of peace and quiet and havens for wildlife as well as a collective “memory” of past communities. Many churches and gravestones have a fascinating story to tell, although interpretation is often poor. The fairly good accessibility of churchyards is very much the result of history and where local communities decided they wanted a church. Traditionally these churches were at the heart of the community and it follows that their accessibility tends to remain good today. What is remarkable is the level of investment that local communities, and land owners, must have made in building churches in the years gone by. The 46 churchyards and cemeteries that we audited represent one churchyard to only about 2,500 people across the Borough.

The location of cemeteries is significant primarily in terms of making it possible for people to be buried reasonably close to home so that their surviving family can visit their grave. The need for them is also dictated primarily by the need for graves rather than in response to a specific desire for people to visit cemeteries as such. As individuals move house it is almost inevitable that they will tend to move away from where their family members may be buried and therefore the accessibility of cemeteries as a specific typology is not important.

Natural Greenspaces

A half of properties in the Borough lie within a 10 minute walk of at least one natural greenspace. This is a fairly high figure as we classed spaces as natural only if they appeared to be designed or managed primarily for nature conservation.

Parks and Gardens

It is inevitable that parks and gardens will exist only in larger settlements and therefore not particularly surprising that across the Borough there are only two main parks – Victoria Park in Stafford town and Stonefield Park in Stone. The former has a Green Flag award and the Borough should be seeking to increase its number of such awards. In the course of the audit, we also classed several other spaces in Stafford town as parks because of their nature, specifically:

- Broadeye
- Bull Hill Gardens

- Tithe Barn Road Recreation Ground
- Water Street
- Wildwood Park

Quality and Value

Full details of the results of our audit of multi-functional greenspaces are given in Appendix G8. In summary, the average audit scores for the various types of space were:

	Quality	Value
• Amenity greenspaces	76%	43%
• Churchyards and cemeteries	85%	74%
• Green corridors	69%	73%
• Natural greenspaces	80%	78%
• Parks and Gardens	90%	53%
• Outdoor access playing fields	82%	44%
• All forms of provision	78%	53%

We derived our audit forms for multi-functional greenspaces primarily from the Green Flag Award manual. As well as purely factual information, such as each space's location, the range of facilities present, the degree of public access and predominant nature (eg grass, woodland or whatever) they covered:

Quality

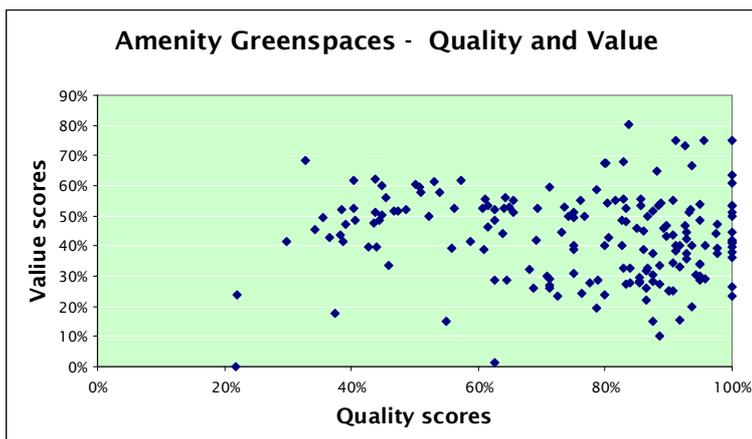
- A welcoming place: signage, physical access, inclusiveness and design and specification
- Healthy, safe and secure: health and well-being, safety and security, control of dogs,
- Well maintained and clean: litter and waste management, grounds maintenance and horticulture, the design, management and maintenance of buildings, and the condition of public toilets and infrastructure such as paths and railings
- Conservation and heritage
- Negative features which detract from the space

Value

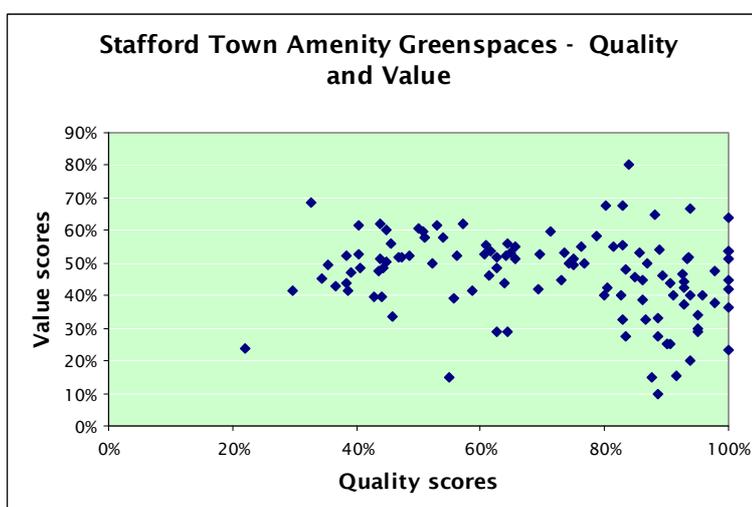
- Context value
- Historical/heritage value
- Contribution to local amenity, vitality and sense of place
- Recreational value
- Play value for children
- Ecological/biodiversity value

Amenity Greenspaces (AGS)

The chart below summarises the quality and value scores for the Borough's amenity greenspaces:



The fairly wide spread of scores indicates that both the quality and value of spaces across the Borough are far from consistent. This wide a variation is unusual as in most areas the grounds maintenance contractor works to a consistent specification. However, it does not arise simply because the town and parish councils, which are responsible for the maintenance of many spaces in the rural parts of the Borough, use a range of contractors or specifications from the Borough Council in Stafford Town. The chart below summarises the scores for Stafford Town and show just as much variation as the Borough-wide scores:



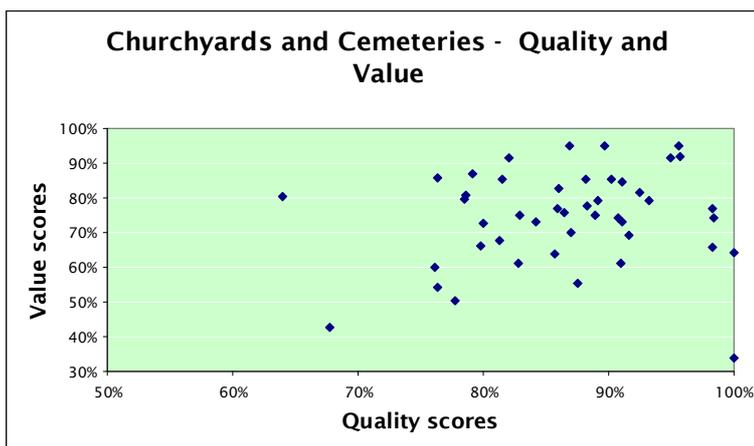
The main improvements that will be generally desirable to amenity greenspaces in the Borough include:

- Better signage to and within in larger spaces: signs in adjacent streets could give directions to them – especially in densely developed areas or where spaces could be linked to create pedestrian routes through the main towns – and signs within spaces, some of which could be worded more positively
- Better disabled access, including designated disabled parking bays in appropriate locations

- Better maintenance of seats – a favourite target for vandals
- Larger or more litter bins
- Changes to promote biodiversity and nature conservation and make spaces more attractive to children for play

Churchyards and Cemeteries (CC)

The chart below summarises the quality and value scores for the Borough’s churchyards and cemeteries:

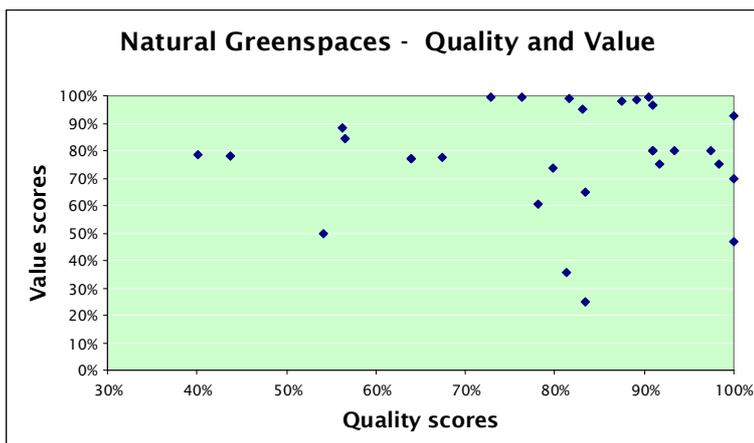


There is noticeably less variation in scores across the Borough than for amenity greenspaces, with most spaces scoring above 75% for quality and 60% for value. Much of the maintenance of churchyards is often undertaken by volunteers, and if this is the case in the Borough they are generally doing a good job. The main improvements that will be desirable include:

- Making headstones safe in old churchyards (not a job for volunteers)
- Doing more to promote nature conservation
- More interpretation at historic churches
- Better maintenance of grassed areas
- Better maintenance of gates and fences
- Lighting of paths – needed for evening services in winter
- Better disabled provision – many churchgoers are elderly; for example, designated disabled parking spaces are few and far between

Natural Greenspaces (NGS)

The chart below summarises the quality and value scores for the Borough’s natural greenspaces:

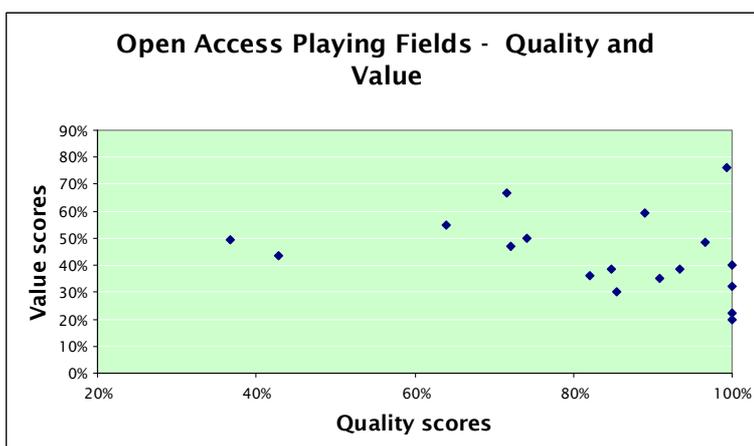


The Borough has relatively few natural greenspaces in its towns and villages, although many residents have good access to attractive countryside, including Local Nature Reserves and other sites with a natural heritage designation, and there are a few attractive and well kept village ponds. The main improvements required to natural greenspaces include:

- Better signage
- Better interpretation
- Better parking and disabled provision

Open Access Playing Fields (OAPF)

The chart below summarises the quality and value scores for the Borough’s open access playing fields as multi-functional spaces, rather than as sports facilities:

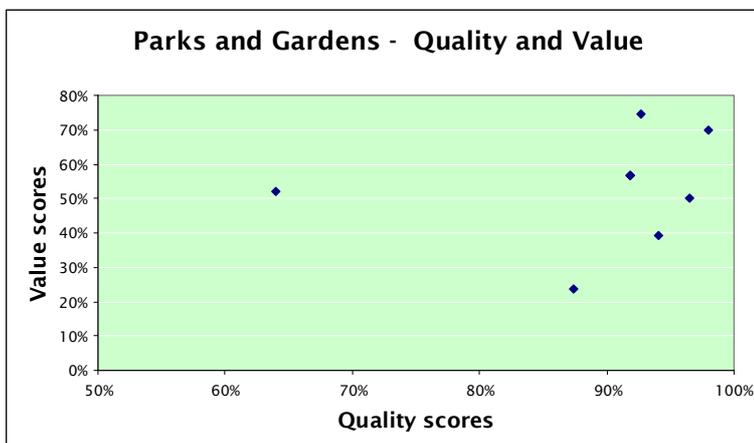


Playing fields perform an important amenity purpose, but it is almost inevitable that they are large flat areas of short mown grass with little visual interest or biodiversity value. However, it can often be possible to provide structure planting in a way which both helps to shield them from the wind, so making them better places for sport, and

enhances their visual amenity. There are no other specific enhancements that will be desirable without compromising their use for sport.

Parks and Gardens (P&G)

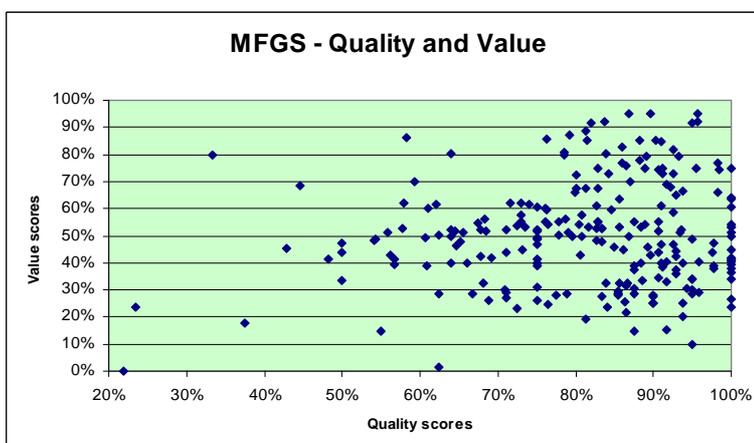
The chart below summarises the quality and value scores for the Borough's parks and Gardens:



Parks and gardens should be the Borough's "Green Flagships" and the good scores indicate that they generally are. However, there are some changes that will be generally desirable:

- Greater attention paid to the needs of people with disabilities, especially designated parking spaces
- Better and more welcoming signage
- More horticultural interest
- The incorporation of public art
- Enhanced biodiversity and nature conservation, coupled with interpretive material

Finally, the chart below brings together all of the various scores:



Quality, Value and Accessibility

Maps 13.1 to 13.4 show the quality, value and accessibility of greenspaces across the Borough. In order to create the maps, we designated all spaces as being either high or low quality and value on the basis of their audit scores. However, it is important to note that Map 13.1 (the green network) and the other maps are based on a slightly different interpretation of scores:

- Map 13.1 classes all spaces across the Borough as of high or low quality and value on the basis of the average scores for all spaces in the audit, irrespective of typology. This means, for example, that any space which scored above the average for all 295 spaces in the audit is classed as “high” quality or value. These average scores, or cut-off points, were 78% and 53% respectively. Conversely, spaces that scored below the cut-off points are classed as low quality or value.
- Map 13.2 to 13.4 are typology-specific and use a similar method of ascribing a high or low value but the cut-off points reflect the average scores for each specific typology and not the average scores for all spaces in the Borough. The practical effect of this is that the high/low classifications of particular spaces can differ on Map 13.1 from their classifications on Maps 13.2 to 13.4.

The practical implication of this is that Map 13.1 provides a broad overview of the relative quality and value of all greenspaces in the Borough and therefore helps to identify areas in which there are clusters of particularly good spaces (such as in the north east part of Stafford town) or poor spaces (such as the south west part of Stafford town). Accordingly it suggests that, broadly speaking, the latter area should have a higher priority for investment than the former in order to improve the consistency of greenspace quality and value across the Borough. Maps 13.2 to 13.4, on the other hand, identify those spaces within a particular typology that offer least to local communities. Taking Map 13.2 as an example, it suggests that if the Borough Council decides to enhance its natural greenspaces, the priorities should be those spaces with low quality and value scores.

The Maps also highlight a number of conclusions across the Borough :

Map 13.1: The Green Network

- The paucity of provision outside Stafford town and Stone
- The extent to which Stafford is a “green” town – something we suggest that the Borough Council does not appear to stress sufficiently, although spaces in the south west quadrant and to a lesser extent the south-eastern area are small, fragmented and of limited quality and value

- The major green spine running along the eastern side of Stafford town – the largest set of linked spaces in the Borough
- The huge significance of Westbridge Park in Stone and the land adjoining it along the river and canal, but the relatively fragmented nature and limited quality and value of other spaces in Stone

Map 13.2: Natural Greenspaces

- The paucity of natural spaces within settlements other than Rough Close, Stafford town, Stone and Colwich
- The desirability of enhancing the four spaces that re shows as low quality and value – in alphabetical order, Barlaston Common, Stone Meadows, Tillington Marshes and Weavers Walk in Swynnerton.

Map 13.3: Open Access Playing Fields

- The lack of open access playing fields outside the main settlements
- The low quality or value of many open access playing fields as multi-functional spaces

Note: Map 13.3 shows the audit scores for open access playing fields as multi-functional spaces that may be used for a variety of purposes and not only as sports facilities

Map 13.4: Parks and Gardens

The lack of parks or park-like spaces apart from in Stone and Stafford town, although Brookhouse Road in Gnosall could be classed as a park.

Map 13.5 Nature Conservation Designations

- The isolated nature of most of the Borough's sites with a nature conservation designation
- The relative lack of sites with a nature conservation designations in or close to the major settlements
- The strategic significance of Aqualate Mere, Midland Meres and Mosses, Tillington Marshes and Cannock Chase AONB as major conservation sites

Quality Standards

Appendix C sets out proposed quality standards for amenity greenspaces, natural greenspaces, green corridors and urban parks.

Overall Quantity of Provision

Appendix G8 calculates the total amount of accessible greenspace within settlements across the Borough as follows:

	AGS (sq m)	CC (sq m)	NGS (Sq m)	OSF (sq m)	P&G (sq m)	Totals (sq m)	Sq m/person
N area	155,253	69,652	954,140	24,765	7,327	1,211,137	51.87
NE area	37,850	14,780	0	0	0	52,630	7.83
NW area	10,087	24,923	3,095	0	0	38,105	5.16
SE area	96,701	18,317	78,939	12,280	0	206,237	32.95
SW area	28,718	40,522	0	0	0	69,240	8.65
Stafford area	1,128,958	212,469	2,869,884	518,805	156,525	4,886,641	70.88
Borough	1,457,567	380,663	3,906,058	555,850	163,852	6,463,990	53.57
Sq m/person	12.08	3.15	32.37	4.61	1.36	53.57	

Accordingly the most common form of multi-functional greenspace provision is natural greenspace. However, a large proportion of the total provision is accounted for by a handful of large spaces:

- Barlaston Common 130,827 sq m
- Baswich 1,386,737 sq m
- Fairway Wetlands 504,467 sq m
- Stafford Common 595,764 sq m
- Stone Meadows 212,515 sq m
- Westbridge Park, Stone 451,341 sq m

The inclusion of these spaces would considerably distort the average figures for the amount of existing provision and it is very unlikely that anyone would provide new comparable spaces them today. Accordingly in order to arrive at a sensible quantity standard we have excluded them from the analysis, although they are included in the above assessments of quality, value and accessibility. We have also not calculated the current average level of natural greenspaces in the rural areas of the Borough as it would be a largely meaningless figure given the small number of relatively large spaces in only a few areas. Finally, we have also excluded open access playing fields as the need for them comes from the need to cater for the pitch sports, which we have analysed separately.

It is also the case that the need for amenity greenspace, natural greenspace and parks and gardens is generally lower in rural than urban areas. There are four main reasons for this:

- Rural residents have much better access to the countryside and other informal natural greenspaces than urban dwellers
- Housing densities are generally significant lower in rural areas, reducing the need for greenspace generally
- Rural areas do not generally have or need local parks
- Recreation grounds are the main form of provision in rural areas and perform many of the functions of other forms of greenspace in urban areas

For these reasons it is sensible to have different quantity standards in rural and urban areas. It is also the case that

it is not generally possible to “retro-fit” more greenspace into developed areas and therefore the main purpose of quantity standards is to guide future development.

Across the Borough, the average level of amenity greenspaces and parks and gardens is approximately:

- Urban areas 15.5 sq m per person
- Rural areas 7.8 sq m per person

Accordingly the average quantity per person of amenity greenspace and parks and gardens in urban areas is almost exactly twice that in the rural areas of the Borough. These are most likely forms of new provision to be created as a result of new developments. There are likely to be very few new cemeteries and churchyards, and natural greenspaces should be protected where they exist and created on an opportunistic basis so there is little point in a quantity standard derived from existing provision.

Local Views

Town and Parish Councils Survey

Opinion varies across the Borough’s town and parish councils as to the adequacy of current provision and it is not possible to draw any clear conclusions. For example, and in terms only of amenity greenspace, Berkswich Parish Council, with some 23.3 sq m of amenity greenspace per person, is of the view that it needs slightly more; but Haughton with 1.8 sq m, Barlaston with 4.9 sq m, Gnosall with 5.3 sq m, Fulford with 6.2 sq m and Hopton and Coton with 16.9 sq m, all believe their level of provision is “about right”

Residents Survey

Residents were as divided in their opinions as the town and parish councils, with roughly half thinking the amount of greenspace in housing areas (ie amenity greenspace) and parks and gardens is “about right” and half that slightly more is needed.

Overview

This makes setting a sensible quantity standard very difficult; it is also the case that it is almost impossible to provide more greenspace in established urban areas and so the main purpose of a quantity standard is in relation to new developments.

Trends

There are three trends worth noting:

- A growing number of councils are coming to the view that they have been too much concerned with the quantity of provision and too little with its quality over the past twenty or thirty years. As it is not easy with limited and often declining budgets to drive up the

overall greenspace quality across a council area, many have taken advantage of the funds available from the National Lottery to enhance their major urban parks.

- Some councils are beginning to think the unthinkable – selling off poorly located and poorly used spaces in order to generate the capital needed to enhance others.
- Broadly speaking, councils are seeing the development industry as a key source of capital funding for the enhancement of parks and greenspaces through planning agreements

The main trends are therefore qualitative rather than quantitative and CABE Space, the open space arm of the government-funded Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, has also published considerable evidence to indicate that high quality greenspaces are effective in terms of:

- Boosting land values in their vicinity and therefore promoting economic development
- Helping to absorb atmospheric pollution and particulates
- Absorbing rainfall and therefore helping to avoid or minimise flooding
- Providing opportunities for relaxation and recreation and helping individuals to reduce their stress levels

Quantity Standards

In order to make the best use of land within settlements, it is obviously important not to set too high a quantity standard. Equally, however, too low a standard will result in towns and villages that are too densely developed. Given that local opinion seems to be split fairly evenly between the current level of greenspace provision being about right or inadequate, it makes sense to adopt a quantity standard based on slightly higher amounts of amenity greenspace and parks and gardens than the current average. Accordingly we recommend a composite quantity standard for these two forms of provision of around 17 sq m per person in the Borough's urban areas (10% higher than the current average of 15.5 sq m per person), and 8.5 sq m per person in the rural ones (half of the urban standard), based approximately on:

Urban areas of the Borough

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| • Amenity greenspace | 16 sq m per person |
| • Parks and gardens | 1 sq m per person |
| • Total | 17 sq m per person |

Rural areas of the Borough

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| • All forms of greenspace | 8.5 sq m per person |
|---------------------------|---------------------|

The Borough Council should apply these overall standards flexibly and not assume that they are always composed of

these three forms of greenspace in the same proportions. In some areas it will be sensible to have higher levels of provision of or contributions to parks and garden; in other to natural greenspaces; and in some to general amenity greenspaces.

Application of the Quantity Standards

The table below summarises the implications of applying these standards to the six planning areas of the Borough. It gives the position for amenity greenspaces, natural greenspaces and parks and gardens plus, as it is the overall amount of greenspace available that is most significant, the aggregate position across the Borough:

Area	AGS+PG provision required by application of standard (sq m)	Surplus (+ve) or deficit (-ve), ignoring NGS and OAPF	Surplus (+ve) or deficit (-ve) including OAPF	Surplus (+ve) or deficit (-ve) including NGS + OAPF (sq m)
North area	344,786	-182,206	-157,441	796,700
North east area	57,163	-19,313	-19,313	-19,313
North west area	100,589	-90,502	-90,502	-87,407
South east area	53,202	43,500	55,780	134,719
South west area	109,531	-80,813	-80,813	-80,813
Stafford area	1,114,801	170,683	689,488	3,559,372
Totals for Borough	1,780,070	-158,651	397,199	4,303,257
Urban areas	1,508,750	-135,277	277,230	3,846,393
Rural areas	271,320	-23,374	119,969	456,864

Overview

This analysis therefore suggests a surplus of provision in the south east and Stafford areas of the Borough and a deficit in the other areas in terms of the total amount of amenity greenspace, parks and gardens and churchyards and cemeteries. If those playing fields that also serve an amenity purpose are included the deficit in the north area is reduced slightly and the surpluses in the south east and Stafford areas increased. In addition, as natural greenspaces also serve an amenity purpose, the total amount of greenspace in the north area is sufficiently large to remove any deficit.

The large apparent surplus in the Stafford area arises primarily because of very large spaces such as the Fairway Wetland (which the Council should obviously continue to protect) and the large spaces in the Baswich area. In reality, therefore, purely local provision is only slightly in surplus.

Secondary Purposes

Multi-functional greenspaces, as their name implies, serve more than one purpose. For example, playing fields can serve an important amenity function for those people who

live or work around the periphery and many parks support biodiversity and nature conservation as well as being of high amenity value. In addition, linked networks of greenspaces are increasingly important as walking and cycling routes. This part of the chapter reviews the secondary purposes of the green network as a whole, ignoring primary purpose and instead concentrating on:

- **Overall accessibility:** the extent to which Borough residents have ready access to at least one greenspace close to where they live
- **Context value** (Map 13.6): the extent to which greenspaces are significant because of the context within which they are set: for example, the only greenspace in a densely developed area is almost inevitably of value to local residents
- **Nature conservation value** (Map 13.7): the extent to which spaces support biodiversity and nature conservation. Map 13.5 shows all the sites in the Borough with a nature conservation designation.
- **Amenity value** (Map 13.8): greenspaces can contribute significantly to local amenity, but only if they are of good quality
- **Recreational value** (Map 13.9): some spaces are suitable for a range of recreational activities from jogging to kickabouts
- **Play value** (Map 13.10): local greenspaces are critically important as places for children to play, but they must be of good quality and safe

For each of the above characteristics, we have used audit cut-off scores of below 50%, 50-74% and 75-100% in order to differentiate between spaces of greater or lesser value to the Borough and its residents. The significance of these scores is:

- Scores below 50%: these spaces are of limited value in terms of a specific secondary purpose and converting them into high value spaces is likely to require both significant capital investment and better management and maintenance
- Scores of 50-74%: these spaces are of worthwhile value in terms of a specific secondary purpose and increasing them to high value spaces is likely to require relatively limited capital investment and better management and maintenance. These spaces therefore have the potential to become much more valuable parts of the green network with only limited investment.
- Scores of 75-99%: these spaces are of significant value in terms of a specific secondary purpose and any desirable capital investment or changes to management and maintenance required to them is very minor. These spaces are currently the most valuable in the Borough's green network in terms of secondary purposes.

Appendix D describes the way in which we have calculated the various value scores. Although we audited all of the spaces using the same audit form and scoring system, the primary purpose of each space dictates the weighting given to particular characteristics in the overall value scores.

The analysis below highlights those areas of the Borough in which it will be desirable to concentrate resources on enhancing the value of spaces and the objective of those enhancements - whether it is to enhance amenity value, context value, nature conservation value, play value or general recreational value. It starts from an implicit assumption that it is clearly desirable, in the interests of making the Borough an attractive place in which to live and work, that all residents should be able easily to access well designed and managed green spaces. This necessarily means maximising the quality and value of existing spaces.

Overall Accessibility

It is desirable that Borough residents should be able to access attractive greenspaces close to where they live. The reasons for this include:

- Attractive greenspaces help to create an environment in which people will want to live; they also provide opportunities for children to play and for adults to interact and form friendships. Nothing unites the residents of an area more than a threat to their local greenspaces.
- Attractive greenspaces enhance property values in their vicinity and as a result they help to promote economic development
- Greenspaces have numerous environmental benefits, including a reduction in the temperature of areas in their vicinity, the filtering of various forms of pollution from the air and the soaking up of rainfall
- Time spent in greenspaces has been proven to be an effective means of reducing stress

Across the Borough, 79% of properties lie within a 5-minute walk of at least one greenspace and 65% within the same distance of one that we classed as being of high quality and value in the audit. These percentages rise to 87% and 81% respectively for a 10-minute walk. The two percentages for the different distances are therefore quite close; if there had been a significant difference between them this would have indicated a need significantly to enhance some spaces in order to ensure reasonably equal access across the Borough to high quality, high value spaces, but this appears not to be the case. However, there are significant disparities between the percentages for access to at least one space and at least one high quality, high value space in some of the planning areas, most noticeably in the north east and south west areas:

		300m	600m
North	All spaces	74%	83%
	HQHV spaces	63%	78%
North east	All spaces	47%	67%
	HQHV spaces	13%	37%
North west	All spaces	46%	57%
	HQHV spaces	27%	45%
South east	All spaces	81%	86%
	HQHV spaces	60%	79%
South west	All spaces	51%	72%
	HQHV spaces	29%	52%
Stafford	All spaces	90%	96%
	HQHV spaces	79%	94%

Accordingly, this suggests that broadly speaking the north east and north west areas of the Borough should have the highest priority for action to enhance the quality and/or value of local greenspaces while the north east, north west and south west should be the priorities for more accessible provision.

Context Value

Some spaces can sometimes be quite poor but enormously significant in terms of their context, for example if they are the only greenspace in a particular area. In our audit, we appraised the following aspects of context value:

- Value as a cycle or pedestrian route
- Value in terms of a linked series of green or hard spaces
- Value in terms of open-ness in a densely developed area
- Value in terms of providing a setting for buildings

Map 13.6 shows the context value of the various spaces in the audit. In general, only the larger spaces show up as having high context value.

Nature Conservation Value

The UK government and all UK local authorities are keen to support biodiversity and nature conservation, not least because upsetting the balance of nature may have serious but unforeseeable consequences for mankind. The Borough Council has also adopted an Local Agenda 21 which, among other things, seeks to promote wildlife conservation and biodiversity. The aspects of nature conservation value that we appraised through our audit were:

- Value as a green corridor for wildlife
- Value for public enjoyment of nature

- Value of habitats within the space (including water)
- Value of trees to the neighbourhood

Map 13.7 summarises the nature conservation value of the various spaces in our audit. It shows that the nature conservation value of most of the small, fragmented spaces in the Borough leaves a lot to be desired, but that the large spaces, such as Westbridge Park and Stafford Common, are good.

Amenity Value

Greenspaces have the potential to contribute significantly to local amenity and the quality of life. They do this in various ways, depending on the context in which they are set and their design and management, but the characteristics or qualities we evaluated through audit were:

- Contribution to the appearance of the neighbourhood
- Evidence of use for events
- Value as a noise buffer
- Value as a visual screen or buffer
- Value in terms of a “sense of place”
- Value in terms of “busyness” for social interaction
- Value in terms of local air quality and amelioration of pollution
- Value in terms of providing a setting for buildings within the space
- Visual attractiveness

Map 13.8 summarises the overall amenity value of the various spaces in our audit and also highlights the limited value of the smaller, fragmented spaces across the Borough.

Recreational Value

Greenspaces offer opportunities to people of all ages and abilities to enjoy a range of activities from various forms of sport to informal ones such as dog walking, attending community events, sitting on the grass, jogging and taking part in informal kickabouts. The characteristics that we reviewed in our audit were:

- The likely appeal of spaces to people of all ages
- Value for community events
- Value for mini-soccer
- Value in terms of health benefits
- Value of formal recreation opportunities
- Value of informal recreation opportunities

Map 13.9 shows the recreational value of the various spaces in the Borough with substantially the same message as in relation to the other value maps.

Play Value

While the Borough has a significant number of play areas for children, and a range of teenage facilities, relatively little play occurs in formal equipped play areas. Most

outdoor play occurs in domestic gardens, where they are available, or in local greenspaces. It follows that greenspaces should be designed and managed in such a way as to stimulate children's imaginations. They can achieve this in a variety of ways, but generally they require that spaces should offer children a range of plants, materials and textures and the opportunity to explore the natural world. Probably the best form of play area of all is woodland, although there can be concerns over children's safety and unacceptable behaviour by some adults. The characteristics that we reviewed in our audit were:

- Value in terms of variety of finishes and experiences
- Value of space for adventure play
- Value of space for kickabout
- Value of space for seeing birds and animals

Map 13.10 highlights the play value of the Borough's greenspaces and shows that Stafford town, in particular, has a range of spaces that are good for play, as do some of the rural settlements such as Colwich, although Gnosall does not.

Conclusions

These assessments point to two inescapable conclusions:

- The Borough's priority should be to work with the town and parish councils to enhance the main spaces in its settlements, but particularly in those most likely to expand through new housing developments
- The main emphasis should be on making spaces more valuable to local communities and boosting their nature conservation and biodiversity value

In addition, the Borough Council and its town and parish council partners should seek to develop networks of linked greenspaces, including the canals network, as walking and cycling routes.

14: Major Indoor Sports Facilities

Introduction

This chapter reviews the provision of major indoor sports facilities across the Borough. For the purposes of the assessment they are:

- Fitness facilities
- Ice rinks
- Indoor bowls halls
- Indoor sports halls
- Indoor swimming pools
- Indoor tennis halls

Fitness Facilities

Health and fitness (H&F) training, once mainly the preserve of those wanting to be fit in order to take part in competitive sport, is now a major recreational activity in its own right. It is served by a “mixed market” of public, private and voluntary sector providers. They all compete for substantially the same market and although private sector facilities are generally significantly more expensive, public facilities often offer a comparable quality and range of equipment and classes.

Demand

In order to estimate demand we have used the following parameters:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • National participation rate in keep fit/yoga | 12.0% |
| • National participation rate in weight training | 5.9% |
| • National visits per week per person | 2.0 |
| • Stafford Borough as % of national participation | 111% |
| • % of H&F participants who are gym users | 50% |
| • Proportion of visits in peak periods | 67% |
| • Peak hours per week | 32 |
| • Comfort capacity | 90% |

Sources:

- National participation rates, visits per week: General Household Survey, 2002
- Stafford Borough as % of national participation rates: Active People survey
- % of H&F participants who are gym users: KCA assumption
- Proportion of visits in peak periods: feedback from clubs

- Peak hours per week: Monday-Thursday 1700-2100; Fridays 1500-1700; Saturdays and Sundays 1000-1700
- Comfort capacity: KCA assumption

Appendix F2 uses these parameters to calculate the demand for fitness equipment and concludes that it is:

- At present 570 machines
- 10% increase in participation rates 630 machines

Existing Provision

We have identified a total of

Commercial facilities

Alpha Leisure (Tillington Hall)	17 stations
Elite 2000	40 stations
Esporta	90 stations
Fit4Life	5 stations
Gymphobics	10 stations
Moddershall Oaks	24 stations
Stafford Sports Arena	76 stations
Stone House Hotel	7 stations
Yarnfield Park	20 stations

Higher Education Facilities

Staffordshire University Sports Centre	50 stations
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School and Public Facilities

Stafford Leisure Centre	100 stations
Sir Graham Balfour School	6 stations
Westbridge Park	69 stations

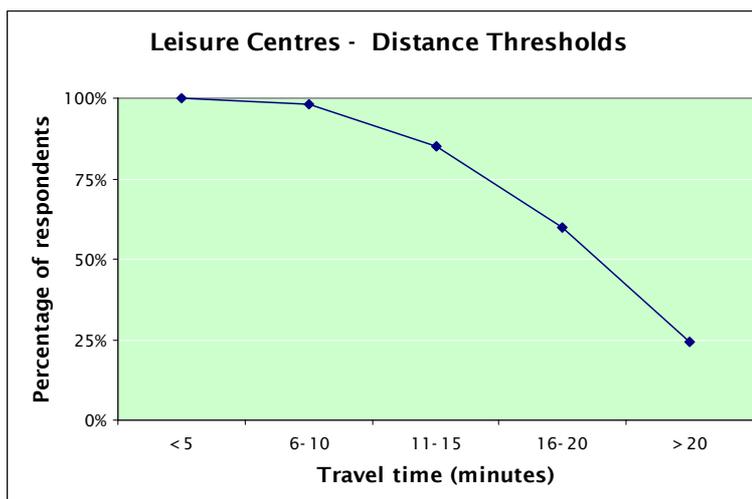
Club Facilities

Stoke on Trent RUFC	20 stations
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Overall, therefore, fitness centres in the Borough provide around 530 publicly accessible stations.

Accessibility

The chart below therefore shows the time for which respondents to our residents' survey indicated they were willing to travel to a leisure centre. From this it is clear that a sensible distance threshold is between 15 and 20 minutes.



Map 14.1 shows the location of the various fitness facilities in the Borough together with 20-minute distance thresholds. It highlights the concentration of fitness provision in Stafford town and the lack of provision in the western part of the Borough and on its eastern fringe. The proportions of properties in the Borough within the walking, cycling and driving distance thresholds of at least one fitness centre are:

	Walking	Cycling	Driving
• North	62%	92%	100%
• North east	0%	78%	97%
• North west	0%	5%	72%
• South east	0%	0%	97%
• South west	0%	3%	72%
• Stafford	54%	95%	100%
• Borough	43%	77%	96%

Accordingly, accessibility to fitness facilities from the rural parts of the Borough by any other mode of transport than car is poor.

Supply-Demand Comparison

Accordingly there is a current deficit in fitness provision equivalent to around 40 machines across the Borough as a whole.

Trends

After a number of years of fairly strong growth, the demand for fitness facilities has levelled off and a number of the larger commercial clubs are beginning to struggle slightly and as a result there has been some consolidation in the industry. Across the country it seems likely that there will be further closures as households cut back on non-essential expenditure.

Local Views

In our survey of the Borough's Town and Parish Councils, the following councils identified a need for more public fitness facilities in their areas:

- North west area High Offley and Woodseaves
- South east area Colwich
- South west area Church Eaton
- Stafford area Berkswich
 Brocton

Among the Town and Parish Councils that responded to our survey seeking their views, only High Offley and Woodseaves regarded the quality of health and fitness provision in its area as poor.

Quantity Standard

Appendix F2 calculates that the quantity standard for fitness training equipment should be around 4.7 machines per 1000 people or around 0.07 sq m per person. This encompasses:

- Cardio-vascular and resistance training areas
- Free weights area
- Studio for classes
- Changing and other ancillary accommodation

Application of the Quantity Standard

Appendix F2 also applies the quantity standard for fitness machines to the six planning areas of the Borough with the following results:

	Surplus or (Deficit)
• North area	10 machines
• North east area	(32 machines)
• North west area	(15 machines)
• South east area	(30 machines)
• South west area	(38 machines)
• Stafford area	67 machines
• Borough	(37 machines)

Accordingly there appears to be demand for reasonably small fitness facilities in the North east, north west, south east and south west parts of the Borough, broadly in accordance with the views of the Borough's Town and Parish Councils.

Ice Rinks

Demand

Sport England and the ice sports governing bodies (excluding curling) developed a rule of thumb for ice rinks

provision some years ago which suggested that the population needed to support a full size rink is 250,000 people within 5 miles or 300,000 within 45 minutes travel time. The Borough certainly cannot meet the first of these criteria although 45 minutes travel extends easily into Birmingham.

Existing Provision

There are no ice rinks in the Borough, but the nearest ones are the Silver Blades Rink in Cannock (20 x 20 m ice pad, 9 miles from Stafford town) and the Telford Ice Rink (26 x 56 m ice pad, 16 miles from Stafford town).

Trends

Across the country, many ice rinks are struggling financially, not least because of recent significant rises in energy costs. Because of their net revenue costs, and especially high maintenance requirements, the UK is likely to lose a number of its rinks in the next decade. This can be interpreted in two ways: an opportunity for Stafford Borough to develop a facility that has the potential to attract users from a fairly wide area, thanks to its good rail and road links north and south, or something that will be extremely risky. We take the latter view. Most ice rink users (in England at least – Scotland is different because of the popularity of curling) are teenagers and therefore depend to a significant extent on public transport. Accordingly it makes sense for ice rinks to be located in major cities. Accordingly there is no need for provision standards.

Indoor Bowls Halls

Sport England has developed a Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) that local authorities and others can use to help them determine the appropriate level of provision of pools, sports halls and indoor bowls rinks for their area. The Calculator suggests that the Borough could sustain around 8 indoor rinks (ie the equivalent of one full size green, but this is for flat rather than crown green bowls). There has only ever been a single indoor crown green, in the Wirral. It opened in the 1980s and closed a few years later as it was not financially viable. Accordingly it seems clear that the demand for indoor crown greens is very limited and no need for a provisions standard for indoor greens.

Local Views

The following Town and Parish Councils identified a need for more indoor bowls provision in their areas:

- North area Barlaston
 Stone
- South east area Colwich
- Stafford area Berkswich
 Brocton

None of these areas has a large enough population to support an indoor bowls centre. Map 14.2 shows that the nearest indoor bowls hall is in Cannock.

Indoor Sports Halls

Demand

The Sport England SFC estimates the need for sports halls in Stafford Borough as equivalent to around 34 badminton courts, which it is possible to convert to a quantity standard of 1 court to around 3,500 people. Applying this to the various planning areas of the Borough, and rounding up to the nearest court, gives the following results:

- North 7 courts
- North east 2 courts
- North west 3 courts
- South east 2 courts
- South west 3 courts
- Stafford 20 courts
- Borough 34 courts

Supply

The Borough has a good level of indoor sports hall provision, ranging from the 8-court hall at the Stafford Sports Arena to various local village and community halls, some of which are used for badminton. Most of the existing provision is in good condition and readily available to the local community, although some of the school halls are available only to clubs and other organised groups. Overall, we calculate there are 11 commercial badminton equivalents, 29 school badminton court equivalents and 4 public badminton court equivalents across the Borough in halls with at least three courts as follows:

	Commercial courts	Joint use courts	Public courts
Alleyne's Sports Centre	0	4	0
Yarnfield Park	3	0	0
Beaconside Sports Centre	0	4	0
King Edward VI School	0	4	0
Sir Graham Balfour School	0	4	0
Stafford Grammar School	0	4	0
Stafford Leisure Centre	0	0	4
Stafford Sports Arena	8	0	0
Stafford Sports College	0	5	0
Weston Road High School	0	4	0
Totals	11	29	4

Note: there is no public use of the Stafford College Sports Hall but we have included it in the calculation because it exists and could be opened up for wider use.

Supply-Demand Comparison

Because of restricted availability, a dual use school hall is not the equivalent of a full public hall in terms of its ability to accommodate demand. Discounting the capacity of dual use halls by 25% results in the Borough having the equivalent of slightly fewer than 37 courts. Accordingly it seems that there is sufficient hall provision overall unless there is a need for any sport-specific hall provision such as for netball (see Chapter 17 for further discussion of this point).

However, the distribution of halls does not match the distribution of the population. Appendix F5 contains a supply-demand model that we have developed using substantially the same parameters as in the Sport England SFC. It differs slightly from the SFC in that we have included a discount factor for joint use and commercial halls when compared with public ones, to reflect their lower average level of use per hour. It gives the following spatial distribution of demand and supply:

	Required courts	Available courts	Surplus/ (Deficit)
North	7	3	(4)
North east	2	0	(2)
North west	3	3	0
South east	2	0	(2)
South west	3	0	(3)
Stafford	20	31	11
Totals	35	37	2

Accordingly all the deficits in provision are in the rural parts of the Borough, although they will be offset by badminton courts in village halls.

Accordingly, there appears to be some extremely limited spare hall capacity across the Borough and therefore population growth will require additional hall provision.

Accessibility

As noted above, a sensible distance threshold is between 15 and 20 minutes.

Map 14.4 shows that, apart from Gnosall, only the rural or low density parts of the Borough are outwith a 20-minute drive of at least one sports hall with three or more badminton courts – three courts are needed to allow some of the larger court games such as basketball and volleyball. In these areas village halls provide something of a substitute, at least for badminton, although they are not suitable for large court activities such as basketball or netball. Overall, the proportion of properties in the Borough within walking, cycling and driving 15-minute

distance thresholds are:

	All halls	Public halls
• Walking	49%	25%
• Cycling	71%	65%
• Driving	96%	90%

Note: “public halls” are in public leisure centres and commercial sports and fitness clubs; “all halls” also includes joint use halls in schools and Staffordshire University

It would be unrealistically expensive to increase the proportion of properties within the 20 minute driving threshold to be 100%. In a sizeable rural area such as Stafford Borough it is very good that over 90% of properties lie within a 20 minute drive of a hall with three or more courts. However, it will be desirable to consider providing a hall in Gnosall, possibly on the tennis courts at the St Lawrence Primary School as it will then be possible for it to be used by both the school and local community.

Quality

Appendix C gives a draft quality standard for sports halls and related facilities. Of the public facilities in the Borough, the new Stafford Leisure Centre is obviously the best hall, although the Stafford Sports Arena has the largest. Some of the joint use school facilities, however, are of relatively poor quality. However, until the County Council’s *Building Schools for the Future* proposals are clear there is no point in suggesting any upgrading.

Local Views

The following Town and Parish Councils identified a need for greater community access to school sports facilities or public leisure centres in their areas:

- North area Barlaston
- North east area Fulford
- North west area Eccleshall
 Standon
- South east area Colwich
- South west area Church Eaton
 Gnosall
- Stafford area Berkswich
 Brocton

In addition, Berkswich, Brocton, Eccleshall and High Offley and Woodseaves Parish Councils identified the quality of provision in their areas as either poor or very poor.

Residents of Barlaston and Fulford are reasonably close to sports halls in Stone or Stoke-on-Trent, while residents of Colwich, Berkswich and Brocton are reasonably close to facilities in Rugeley or Stafford town.

Trends

The overall demand for hall sports has been fairly steady for a number of years, although individual activities rise and fall in popularity. One important trend, however, is for 5-a-side soccer to move out of halls and to specialist outdoor 5-a-side centres and this is freeing time in existing halls for other activities.

Conclusions

Overall, the Borough appears to have adequate indoor sports hall provision at present, although it will be desirable to consider providing at least a two-court hall in Gnosall as a growing community of 5,000 or so people.

Quantity Standard

Using our Supply-Demand Model, we have derived a quantity standard of 0.05 sq m of court per person. As the floor area of the main hall in a dry sports building is generally around 50-60% of the total area this gives an overall quantity standard of around 0.1 sq m of building per person.

Indoor Swimming Pools

Existing Provision

There are currently nine pools in the Borough, ranging from the 25 m/8 lane competition pool at the Stafford Leisure Centre to the tiny pool in the Stone House Hotel. Overall, they have a combined water area of approximately 1,530 sq m. However, not all of the current water area is available for public use all of the time and the smaller hotel pools will have only very limited public use. Discounting the size of the commercial and joint use to allow for restricted public access results in the equivalent of only about 1,060 sq m.

Demand

The Sport England Sports Facilities calculator assesses that there is a need for a total of some 1200 sq m of water area in public pools. Using our own supply-demand model, we estimate the total need as marginally lower than this at around 1,150 sq m water area.

Appendix F4 gives the results of running our supply-demand model. It uses substantially the same parameters as the Sport England Facilities Planning Model but rounds the average length of visit up from 54 minutes to one hour. In summary the model results are:

- Minimum water area required 1,152 sq m
- Effective water area available 1,058 sq m
- Deficit 94 sq m

- Realistic water area required 1,646 sq m
- Effective water area available 1,058 sq m
- Deficit 588 sq m

As the two figures above can be taken as the minimum and maximum desirable amounts of water area in the Borough, there is a need for more water area in the Borough.

If participation in swimming rises, or if any of the existing pool provision is lost, however, the situation will obviously change. A 10% rise in participation will increase the Borough-wide need to between 1,267 and 1,811 sq m, and the deficit in provision to between 209 and 753 sq m. Accordingly there is a current need for at least one more pool and residential developments will increase the need for pool provision further.

Accessibility

Swimming pools have the same general distance thresholds as public leisure centres and so a 20-minute threshold is appropriate.

Overall, the proportion of properties within the Borough within the 20 minute travel time threshold of at least one pool is:

	All pools	Pay and Swim
• Walking	41%	26%
• Cycling	77%	65%
• Driving	95%	87%

As with sports halls, this is a very good level of accessibility. Map 14.5 shows that the only sizeable area of the Borough outwith the distance threshold of at least one pool is most of the sparsely populated north-western area, although Eccleshall is right on the edge of the distance threshold from pools in Stafford town, Stone and Gnosall.

Quality

Appendix C gives a draft quality standard for swimming pools and related facilities. The comments on the quality of sports halls above apply equally to swimming pools s.

Local Views

The following Town and Parish Councils identified a need for pool provision in their areas:

- North west area Standon
- South east area Colwich
- Stafford area Brocton

though there could be a significant market for indoor tennis in the Borough. The capacity of indoor tennis is fairly low – as the maximum usage is four players per court and bookings last for at least an hour a four court centre operating on the basis of 35 peak hours per week can accommodate a maximum of only 560 players per week, which is likely to be the equivalent of at least a quarter of players in the Borough.

Existing Provision

There are no indoor tennis halls in the Borough, although St Dominic’s Priory School in Stone has a hall with two indoor courts. The school built them about 20 years ago with the help of some funding from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and they were at one time used by the Staffordshire County squad for training and practice. However, the LTA no longer runs County squads and the agreement between the school and LTA has expired.

The courts have a fairly low profile as they have been squeezed in at the back of the site, half hidden by a smaller school hall. Use is also fairly limited as they are on a school site. The school generally lets them out in 90-minute per week slots to groups for 27 weeks at a time, so there is no real casual use and a fairly small band of users play regularly.

Elsewhere in the Borough, there is a fairly old hall at the Stafford Sports College which is large enough for tennis, but not suitable for it at present.

As shown on Map 14.3, the nearest indoor courts outside the Borough are at the Draycott Sports Centre, with two indoor courts 11 miles from Stafford town and 6 miles from Stone. The next nearest courts are in +Wolverhampton.

The following Town and Parish Councils identified a need for indoor tennis provision in their areas:

- North east area Fulford
- North west area Standon
- South east area Colwich
- Stafford area Berkswich
 Brocton
 Hopton and Coton

These views appear to support a need for indoor tennis provision in the Stafford area. Fulford residents are close to the indoor courts at the Draycott Sports Centre in Stoke, while Standon is too small to support an indoor tennis centre and fairly far from any major centre of population.

Aspirations

There are at least three sets of aspirations for indoor tennis provision in the Borough, namely:

- Stafford Sports College, Rising Brook, which has good outdoor tennis provision but a very constrained site
- Stone Lawn Tennis and Squash Club, which would like to cover two or three of its six outdoor courts. However, the club probably has more pressing needs in terms of keeping its existing clubhouse in a reasonable condition.
- The Lawn Tennis Association, which would like to see a four court indoor centre in the Borough. The LTA has had some discussions with the Council in relation to a centre at Rowley Park but we understand it has some reservations over the proposed siting.

Quantity Standard

Assuming that a four court centre would make sense, this gives a quantity standard of one court to roughly 30,000 people. A court takes up an area of 666 sq m (36.5 x 18.25 m), or 0.022 sq m of court per person. Indoor tennis centres require relatively little by way of ancillary accommodation; in a typical four court centre, the ancillary areas account for around 20% of the total floor area. Accordingly a sensible quantity standard is 0.028 sq m of indoor centre per person.

Summary of Provision Standards

Health and Fitness Facilities

- Accessibility:
- Quality: see Appendix C
- Quantity: 0.07 sq m per person

Ice rinks

- No standards required

Indoor bowls halls

- No standards required

Indoor sports halls

- Accessibility: 20 minutes drive/7,500 m
- Quality: see Appendix C
- Quantity: 0.1 sq m of dry sports building per person

Indoor swimming pools

- Accessibility: 20 minutes drive/7,500 m
- Quality: see Appendix D

- Quantity: 0.06 sq m of pool building per person

Indoor tennis halls

- Accessibility: 30 minutes drive
- Quality: see Appendix C
- Quantity: 0.028 sq m per person

15: Tennis and Multi-sport Courts

Introduction

This chapter reviews the provision of tennis and multi-sport courts (also known inelegantly as MUGAs, or multi-use games areas) across the Borough. It covers quality, accessibility and quantity and also derives and then applies a quantity standard to identify deficiencies and surpluses in provision.

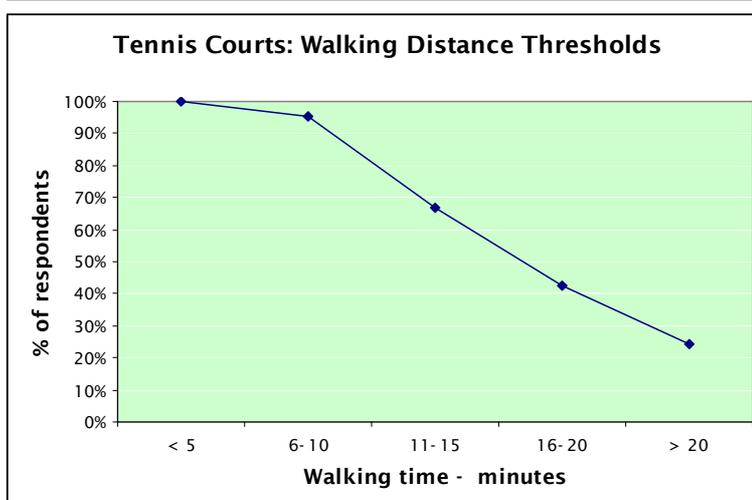
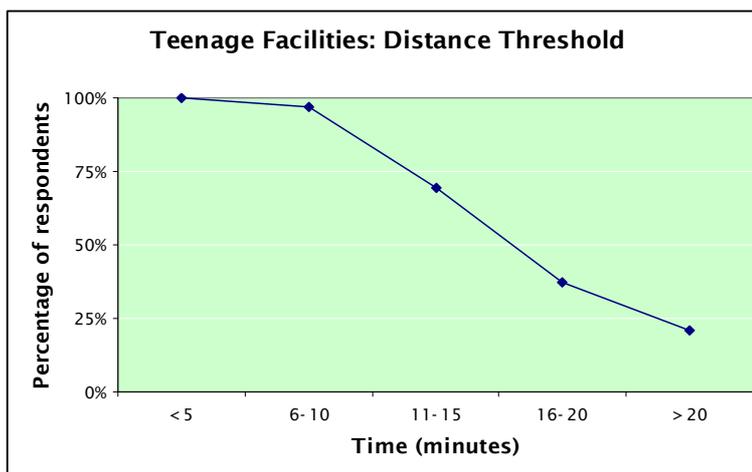
Definitions

For the purposes of this analysis, we define tennis courts as outdoor courts used only for tennis and multi-sport courts as outdoor areas used for two or more sports, possibly floodlit, normally enclosed by a fence typically at least 2 m high and at least the size of a tennis court. Courts intended for 5-a-side football also require a rebound fence around the sides 1.2 m high. They should have some form of all-weather surface, the most common of which is tarmac, suitable for tennis, basketball, netball and possibly other sports as well. However, other surfaces are also possible, such as a poured polymeric finish and artificial turf. Multi-courts can be open access and therefore intended for use primarily by teenagers on an informal basis, or controlled and then intended for use for sport by people of all ages. The latter approach tends to result in lower levels of vandalism and litter.

Accessibility

Accessibility Standard

The chart below, based on the results of the results of our resident's survey, identifies the percentage of people willing to walk for various times to tennis courts. It makes clear that the sensible accessibility standard will be around 15 minutes as around 75% of respondents indicated that they were willing to walk for this length of time to use a court.



Note: the same distance threshold applies to both tennis and multi-courts.

Accessibility Assessment

Across the Borough as a whole, the proportions of properties with the walking distance threshold of at least one tennis or multi-court are:

<i>Tennis courts</i>	<i>HQHV</i>	<i>All</i>
North area	23%	39%
North east area	0%	1%
North west area	28%	30%
South east area	0%	0%
South west area	0%	5%
Stafford area	17%	14%
Borough	16%	34%

Multi-courts

North area	0%	14%
North east area	0%	0%
North west area	0%	0%

South east area	0%	20%
South west area	0%	0%
Stafford area	0%	59%
Borough	0%	37%

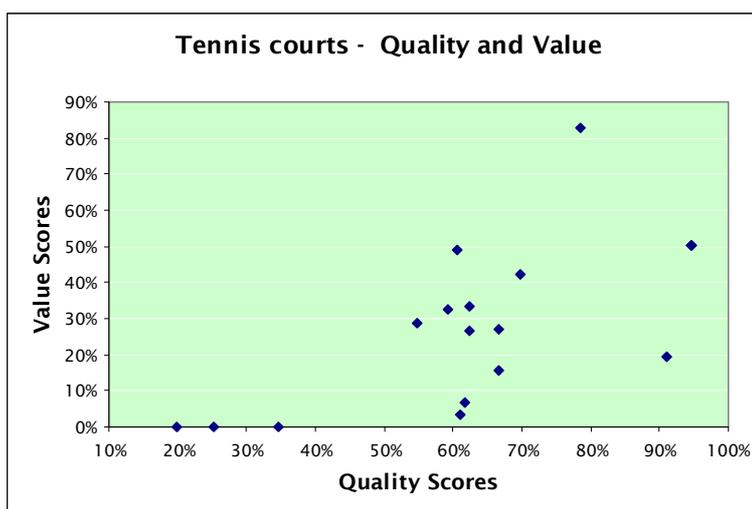
Note: HQHV = High Quality, High Value

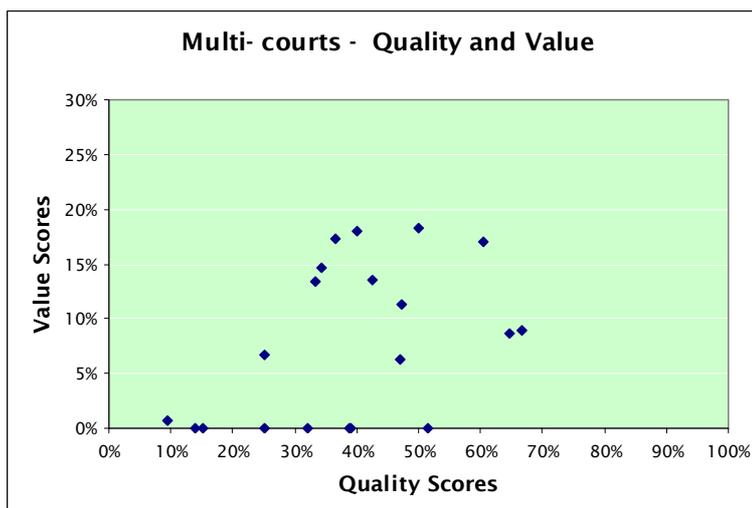
Quality and Value Audit Findings

Across the Borough we have identified and audited 19 tennis court sites, of which five belonged to schools, and 20 multi-court sites, of which 11 belonged to schools and one to the MoD. The characteristics that we audited included:

- **Quality:** access, signage, the size and condition of the playing surface, surround netting and fencing and the availability and adequacy of changing provision
- **Value:** the number of courts on the site, the nature of their playing surface and the availability of floodlighting and changing

The charts below summarise the various quality and value audit scores:





These charts emphasize the low quality and value of most of the multi-courts compared with the tennis courts: we have calculated summary quality and value scores in effectively the same way. They show “community” sporting value, so those school courts that are not accessible to the community have a value score of 0%. The other main reasons for poor scores – and therefore the things that require attention – are:

- Multi-courts - value: lack of changing, playing surfaces that are not particularly good to play on (especially tarmac/Bitmac), limited number of courts, lack of community access and lack of floodlighting
- Multi-courts – quality: poor surround netting, poor line markings, position of goals (5-a-side goals should be recessed rather than stand-alone), lack of shelter from the wind
- Tennis courts – value: playing surfaces that are not particularly good to play on (especially tarmac/Bitmac) or not all-weather (eg grass), limited number of courts on a site (three courts are needed for matches but many sites have only one or two), lack of changing
- Tennis courts – quality: condition of surround netting and entrance gates, line markings

Quality, Value and Accessibility

Location, Quality and Value

Maps 15.1 – 15.4 show the Borough-wide distribution of tennis and multi-courts:

- Map 15.1 shows that most of the Borough lies within the driving distance threshold of at least one tennis court, but only a relatively small proportion lies within the cycling and walking distance of a court. The main settlements without easy access to a court are Barlaston, Gnosall, Colwich and Hixon. In addition, significant parts of Stafford town and Stone lie outwith the walking distance threshold of a court.

- Map 15.2 shows that the vast majority of multi-courts are concentrated in Stafford town, but their quality and/or value is generally poor; indeed all the courts across the Borough are of low quality and/or value. There are no courts at all in the north west and north east areas.
- Map 15.3 shows that converting all of the tennis courts to multi-courts would make only a limited difference to the accessibility of courts across the Borough
- Map 15.4 shows the paucity of floodlit courts across the Borough, with none in the south west, north east and south west areas and only one site in the north west area.

Accessibility

Across the Borough as a whole, the proportion of properties within the various distance thresholds of a tennis or multi-court are:

Tennis courts	Walking	34%
	Cycling	75%
	Driving	95%
Multi-courts	Walking	37%
	Cycling	64%
	Driving	86%

Because multi-courts can be used for a range of sports, it is obviously desirable that as many people as possible should have ready access to at least one. Many function primarily as teenage facilities and this also emphasises the importance of good accessibility. Accordingly there is a need for more multi-courts across the Borough, with the most obvious locations for additional courts being:

- Barlaston
- Colwich
- Eccleshall
- Gnosall
- Meir Heath
- Yarnfield

In addition there are obvious opportunities to create additional multi-courts at the Westbridge Sports Centre in Stone and Rowley Park in Stafford town and possibly Great Bridgford and Church Eaton. In all of these locations there are hard tennis courts that could be converted to multi-courts fairly easily. The addition of floodlights at Westbridge Park (where half the pylons that would be needed are already available to support car park lighting) and Alleyne's High School in Stone and Church Eaton Tennis Club will also benefit tennis and increase the availability of floodlit facilities across the Borough.

Total Quantity of Provision

Appendix G12 gives full details of courts across the Borough while the table below provides summary information, excluding the two derelict tennis courts at the Stone House Hotel:

Area of the Borough	Type	Public courts	Dual use education courts	Courts with no public use	Total number of courts
North	Tennis courts	12	0	4	16
	Multi-courts	0	4	2	6
	All courts	12	4	2	22
North east	Tennis courts	0	0	0	0
	Multi-courts	0	0	0	0
	All courts	0	0	0	0
North west	Tennis courts	3	0	0	3
	Multi-courts	0	0	0	0
	All courts	3	0	0	3
South east	Tennis courts	0	0	0	0
	Multi-courts	1	0	0	1
	All courts	1	0	0	1
South west	Tennis courts	2	0	0	2
	Multi-courts	0	0	2	2
	Total courts	2	0	2	4
Stafford	Tennis courts	15	10	1	26
	Multi-courts	6	20	21	47
	Total courts	21	30	22	73
Borough	Tennis	32	10	5	47
	Multi-courts	7	24	25	56
	All courts	39	34	30	103

Taking a joint use court as equivalent to half a public court (because of the restricted access), and ignoring courts with no public access, this gives a total of around 37 “public equivalent” tennis and 19 “public equivalent” multi-courts across the Borough and the following quantity of provision per person:

North area	Tennis courts	0.36 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.00 sq m/person
	Total	0.36 sq m/person
North east	Tennis courts	0.00 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.00 sq m/person
	Total	0.00 sq m/person
North west	Tennis courts	0.27 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.00 sq m/person
	Total	0.27 sq m/person
South east	Tennis courts	0.00 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.09 sq m/person
	Total	0.09 sq m/person

South west	Tennis courts	0.16 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.00 sq m/person
	Total	0.16 sq m/person
Stafford	Tennis courts	0.17 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.15 sq m/person
	Total	0.32 sq m/person
Borough	Tennis courts	0.19 sq m/person
	Multi-courts	0.09 sq m/person
	Total	0.28 sq m/person

Accordingly the north west and Stafford areas of the Borough have by far the highest overall levels of publicly accessible provision and the north and south east the lowest.

Local Views

Borough Councillors' Views

In our survey of Council Members, they identified a need for more courts in the following wards:

North	Barlaston and Oulton Walton and Stone
North west	Eccleshall
South east	Haywood and Hixon
Stafford	Coton Forebridge Highfields and Western Downs Holmcroft Tillington

Residents' Survey

56% of those residents that expressed an opinion identified a need for more public tennis courts and 47% a need for more club courts. In terms of quality, 63% and 66% rated public and club tennis courts as either good or very good.

Survey of Town and Parish Councils

The following town and parish councils identified a need for more courts:

North	Multi-courts	Barlaston Stone
	Tennis courts	Barlaston Sandon
North east	Multi-courts	Fulford

	Tennis courts	Fulford
North west	Multi-courts	High Offley and Woodseaves Standon Whitgreave
	Tennis courts	Standon
South east	Multi-courts	Berkswich Brocton Hopton and Coton
	Tennis courts	Colwich
South west	Multi-courts	Church Eaton Haughton Norbury
	Tennis courts	Haughton Norbury

Trends

Tennis Courts

With milder winters, the number of people playing tennis outdoors all year round is slowly rising, but this obviously depends to a large extent on floodlit courts. The table below summarises the membership of tennis clubs in the Borough in 2001 and 2007:

Club	2001	2007	Change	Members per court 2007
Burton Manor	39	0	-39	0
Church Eaton	80	48	-32	24
Eccleshall	47	81	+34	41
Great Bridgeford	49	86	+37	43
Stone	189	202	+13	34
Walton	196	224	+28	45
Totals	600	641	+41	

Accordingly, tennis club membership grew by an average of around 6 players or 1% per year over this period; on the other hand, the Burton Manor Club disbanded. However, there has also been some increase in the use of public and joint use courts, so the overall increase in participation is likely to have been higher than 1% per year. The most obvious trend is that better courts – and especially the development of commercial leisure clubs with high quality indoor and outdoor tennis courts such as David Lloyd or Next Generation - tend to result in more players. The Next Generation Club in Dudley has more members than all of the tennis clubs in the Borough, for example. As a result, it makes sense to concentrate tennis provision at a limited number of high quality venues, each with a number of courts. This facilitates coaching and junior development programmes and enhances the viability of clubs and other

centres.

The main centres for tennis in the Borough are currently:

- Eccleshall Lawn Tennis Club (2 floodlit courts)
- Great Bridgeford Lawn Tennis Club (2 floodlit courts)
- Rising Brook Sports College (6 floodlit courts)
- Rowley Park, Stafford (4 floodlit courts)
- Stone Lawn Tennis and Squash Rackets Club (6 floodlit courts)
- Walton Tennis Club (5 courts, 4 of them floodlit)

Multi-courts

There are no obvious trends in the demand for multi-courts in general. Across the country, some are well used while others lie idle and neglected most of the time. As with tennis courts, the better facilities appear to be the best used and vice versa, although floodlighting is obviously very important in terms of winter use. However, one of the results of climate change is that grass pitches are likely to be less playable for at least part of the year. Appropriately surfaced multi-courts can provide a valuable substitute to allow to teams at least to continue training and practising even when pitches are unplayable.

By and large, most multi-courts are stand-alone, with those that are open access intended primarily for use by teenagers for kickabouts and, to a lesser extent, informal basketball. However, they can also be well used sports facilities if well managed. Having several courts together makes it possible to develop netball or football leagues and play tennis matches. There are also several companies that develop and manage commercial 5-a-side soccer centres based on courts surfaced with artificial turf.

Conclusions

Tennis

Apart from Burton Manor, the only club in the Borough with declining membership is Church Eaton. This suggests that there may be scope to convert at least one of the two Church Eaton courts to a multi-court. As noted later in this report, there are no teenage facilities in Church Eaton so this could give local young people something to do at low cost.

While various consultees identified a need for more tennis courts in various parts of the Borough, it seems unlikely that there will be sufficient demand to justify any further dedicated tennis provision. However, there will be merit in considering the provision of additional multi-courts designed in such a way that they can be used for tennis as well as other sports.

Multi-courts

Floodlit multi-courts are a relatively cheap form of local sports provision and double up as teenage facilities. Accordingly it is desirable for there to be a network of courts across the Borough in locations where there is currently a lack of both local sports and teenage facilities. Ideally, there should be a court in each parish, provided it has enough residents to make provision sensible.

There is no consistent or clear evidence on the demand for multi-courts; as noted above, some are popular and others are not. This suggests that a pragmatic approach will therefore be to develop a programme of providing at least one court in each of the main settlements in the Borough. The main parishes with no tennis or multi-court provision are:

Area	Parish	Population
North east	Fulford	5,579
South east	Colwich	4,584
North	Swynnerton	4,233
North	Barlaston	2,659
North	Stone Rural	1,539
South east	Seighford	1,750
Stafford	Brocton	1,052
South east	Haughton	1,009
North west	High Offley and Woodseaves	880
South east	Weston	849
North west	Standon	823
North east	Hilderstone	590
North west	Adbaston	556

In addition, it will be desirable to explore ways of opening up the courts at the St Lawrence's Primary School in Gnosall for public use out of school hours.

Quantity Standard

This suggests at least 13 additional courts to the 56 "public equivalent" courts that currently exist, or an increase of around 25%. As the current level of publicly accessible courts equate to around 0.28 sq m per person, this suggests a quantity standard of some 0.35 sq m per person.

Application of Quantity Standard

Appendix J8 shows the implications of applying this standard. In summary, it suggests a need for the following additional courts:

Area	Parish	Deficits (sq m)	Deficits (courts)
North	Barlaston	931	1

	Swynnerton	1482	2
North east	Fulford	1953	3
North west			
South east	Colwich	1604	2
South west	Gnosall	1707	3
	Houghton	353	1
Stafford	Brocton	368	1

Note: Stafford town is excluded from this list, although Appendix J8 highlights a deficit of around 11 courts. It is a special case because of the other forms of provision readily available to residents, such as sports halls.

Whenever the Borough Council, or one of the Town or Parish Councils, provides one or more courts to reduce these deficits, they should be multi-purpose and floodlit in order to maximise use. Wherever possible, they should also be on or close to school sites so as to be available for physical education classes.



16: Teenage Facilities

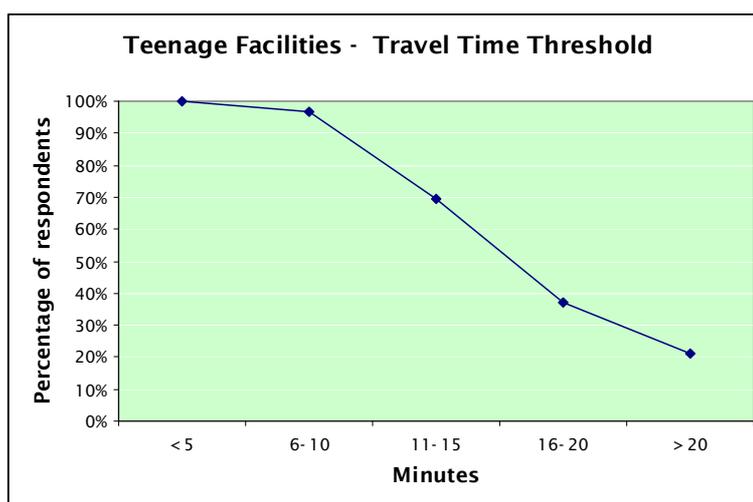
Introduction

This chapter reviews the provision of teenage facilities across the Borough, defined as areas intended primarily for informal use by teenagers and containing one or more of the following: a shelter, a skateboard area, a BMX track, basketball hoops, an open access ball court (or ball rebound wall) or an aerial runway. Good teenage provision is desirable in its own right, but it can also help to reduce anti-social behaviour and the social and economic costs of vandalism. It covers quality, accessibility and quantity and also derives and then applies a quantity standard to identify deficiencies and surpluses in provision.

Accessibility

Accessibility Standard

The chart below, based on the results of the residents' survey, identifies the percentage of people willing to walk for various times to teenage facilities. It makes clear that the sensible accessibility standard will be around 15 minutes as around 75% of respondents indicated that they were willing to walk for this length of time to suitable provision.



Accessibility Assessment

Across the Borough, the proportions of properties with the

relevant distance thresholds of at least one teenage area are:

	All sites	HQHV sites
15 minutes/900 m walking	51%	14%
15 minutes/2250 m cycling	75%	37%

Note: HQHV = High Quality, High Value

The proportions of properties within the distance thresholds vary considerably across the District. For example, in relation to the walking threshold, they are:

North	All	34%
	HQHV	0%
North east	All	0%
	HQHV	0%
North west	All	0%
	HQHV	0%
South east	All	21%
	HQHV	0%
South west	All	48%
	HQHV	0%
Stafford	All	71%
	HQHV	25%
Borough	All	51%
	HQHV	14%

It would obviously be unsustainable to have every teenager in the Borough living within a 900 m/15 minute walk of at least one teenage area, but desirable to raise the above percentages significantly, especially in relation to high quality, high value areas.

Quality and Value Audit Findings

We have identified a total of 19 outdoor teenage sites across the Borough, with the following facilities:

• Aerial runways	1
• Ball courts (floodlit)	2
• Ball courts (not floodlit)	9
• Ball walls	6
• Basketball goals	14
• BMX tracks	3
• Shelters	4
• Skateboard areas	2
• Other	1
• Total	42

On average, therefore, each teenage area has around 2.2 facilities. It follows that teenage provision is generally fairly limited. The best site in terms of quality is Pitt Street in Tillington, Stafford town, and the best in terms of value is Meadow Road, also in Stafford town. The best site overall is Wildwood Park in Stafford town. The average quality and value scores across the Borough were 79% and 20% respectively, and the chart below gives the individual

quality and value scores:



We based the quality and value scores on:

- **Quality:** general characteristics (eg the distance to the nearest dwelling window, signage); accessibility (eg for people with disabilities); safety and security (eg the condition of surfaces, the availability of informal surveillance and lighting); the condition of the various facilities on the site; and management and maintenance (eg freedom from litter and vandalism)
- **Value:** the type and range of facilities on the site

Most of the teenage facilities are very limited and we classed only four of the 19 as above average quality and value on the basis of the audit scores.

The main improvements required to sites include:

- More and better equipment
- Lighting
- Better safety features
- Better accessibility, including for young people with disabilities
- Better signage
- Better maintenance
- Better ancillary facilities, such as seats and bicycle racks

Quality Value and Accessibility

Map 16.1 shows the location of teenage facilities in the Borough and teenage facilities highlights:

- The paucity of facilities in the north east and north west areas
- The poor quality and value of the provision in Stone and Hixon
- The poor quality and/or value of the provision in the northern part of Stafford town, compared with the southern area

Quality Standard

Appendix C contains a proposed quality standard for teenage facilities based on a facility with a notional area of around 500 sq m, ie around three quarters the size of a tennis court. This is large enough to accommodate one or two basketball hoops or a skateboard area and a shelter.

Total Quantity of Provision

The 19 teenage sites across the Borough appear to have an aggregate area of around 12,269 sq m, or just less than 1.3 ha, although it is not possible to identify the area of teenage provision definitively because many are not enclosed in any way. This equates to an average of 0.1 sq m per person and the average size of a single teenage area is around 650 sq m. The tables below summarises the quantity of provision in the Borough:

Area	Sites	Total population	People/site
North	2	22,489	11,245
North east	0	6,693	N/a
North west	0	7,475	/Na
South east	1	7,584	7,584
South west	2	8,132	4,066
Stafford	14	68,280	4,877
Borough	19	120,653	6,350

Local views

Residents Survey

89% of those respondents expressing a view identified a need for more teenage facilities in their neighbourhood while 76% classed the quality of provision as poor or very poor. Both of these were the highest percentages of respondents to identify a need for more or better for any form of provision - something that also occurs in other areas of the country. There is a widely-held view that better teenage provision is likely to result in less anti-social behaviour and especially vandalism.

Survey of Town and Parish Councils

Of the 22 town and parish councils that responded to our survey, all but five - Gnosall, Ingestre with Tixall, Milwich with Fradswell, Sandon and Burston, Stone Rural - identified a need for more teenage facilities in their area.

Trends

There are no specific trends in relation to teenage activities, although teenagers are very fickle and interest in any particular form of activity can rise and fall rapidly. This said, the most popular forms of teenage provision are usually:

- Skateboarding/BMX areas
- Open access kickabout/floodlit basketball areas (although basketball areas without floodlights, the most common form of provision, tend to be poorly

- used)
- Shelters

Conclusions

It is clear the Borough needs significantly more and better teenage provision throughout its area. As a first step, we therefore suggest that the Borough, Town and Parish Councils should aim to plug the obvious gaps in walking accessibility to at least one teenage area in each of the main settlements and then follow up with further provision in those other settlements with a significant number of teenagers. Initially, this will require additional teenage areas as follows:

- Barlaston
- Colwich
- East Stafford
- Eccleshall
- North Stone
- South-east Stafford/Walton on the Hill
- South-east Stone
- West Stafford

This requires roughly a 50% increase in the number of teenage areas. Taking the average size of a worthwhile teenage area as 650 sq m, this gives a quantity standard of around 0.15 sq m per person. Put another way, such a facility will require a population of around 4,300 people within a 15 minute walk.

Application of the Quantity Standard

With the Town and Parish Councils, the Borough Council should seek to identify acceptable and accessible locations for teenage facilities where they do not already exist and then use the quantity standard to determine the approximate size of each facility, bearing in mind the desirable size of 650 sq m.



17: Strategic Issues and Recommendations

Introduction

This assessment has identified the quality, quantity and location of existing open space, sport and recreation provision across the Borough and proposed suitable provision standards for the Council to use. It has also identified surpluses and deficiencies in provision. In the course of the work it has become clear that there are a range of issues that the Borough Council needs to tackle that are not primarily related to planning issues, although they generally have some land use implications. This chapter therefore summarises these issues and recommends what the Council should do about them. We discuss them in five main groups:

- General cross-cutting issues
- Greenspace issues
- Outdoor sports facility issues
- Indoor sport facility issues
- Target sport facility issues

In each of the five sections, we identify the issues in alphabetical order as it is impossible to be specific about their relative importance.

There is also one very broad issue that underpins all the others: the need for a clear vision of what the Council wants to achieve in the long term, shared by all its Members, partners and potential partners, including the voluntary sector. Chapter 19 suggests what this vision might be.

General Cross-cutting Issues

Within the overall policy imperative of promoting sustainable development, there are eight main cross-cutting issues that the Council and its partners need to tackle. In alphabetical order, they are:

- Biodiversity and nature conservation
- Choice and opportunity
- Climate change
- Community involvement
- Creative thinking
- Green Infrastructure

- Joined up thinking
- Regeneration

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

Issue

The Borough has seen a significant reduction in biodiversity in the past decades. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a statutory duty on the Council to promote biodiversity and therefore the Council and its partners need to find ways of reversing this unwelcome and potentially disastrous trend. The Council has also identified better management of Local Nature Reserves and the promotion of biodiversity as amongst its corporate priorities.

Recommendations

There is no “do nothing” option. The Council and its partners need actively to continue to implement the Local Agenda 21 Strategy and see greenspace provision, management and maintenance as a major opportunity to promote biodiversity and nature conservation because of their fundamental importance to the future quality of life in the Borough. They are not “frills”; for example, the loss of bees could hugely reduce the pollination on which many plants depend. The Council also needs to embed the promotion of biodiversity and nature conservation more fully into the work of Leisure Services and in particular the grounds maintenance service and it will be desirable to encourage the town and parish councils to do the same. Other initiatives the Council and its partners should consider include:

- The creation of more meadow grassland
- Further active conservation and interpretation of the Borough’s wetlands
- Active management of sites with a nature conservation designation and creation and designation of additional local nature reserves
- Encouraging churches to manage their churchyards and cemeteries for nature conservation
- Encouraging schools to develop nature areas
- Encouraging local residents to manage their gardens for nature conservation and biodiversity

Choice and Opportunity

Issue

It is obviously desirable that all residents of the Borough should have more or less equitable access to as many forms of greenspace and sport and recreation provision as possible, although it is simply not sustainable to have the

same range of provision and level of accessibility in the rural areas as the main towns. The accessibility assessment, however, has highlighted the very poor accessibility to a number of forms of provision in the rural areas, particularly on the western side of the Borough.

Recommendations

The Council should:

- Adopt a settlement hierarchy in its Local Development Framework and identify a limited number of service centres in the rural areas which will have provision intended to serve a wide area around them. These should also be the areas to which the Council allocates an amount of development so that it is possible to make the maximum possible use of planning obligations to fund new or enhanced provision. The obvious candidates are Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon and the Haywoods.
- Seek to negotiate joint use agreements with the main schools in the rural areas and work with the County Council to invest in them to make them into local community clubs
- Foster the development of multi-sport clubs wherever possible so as to make the best use of voluntary effort and encourage them to achieve quality accreditations such as Clubmark or Quest. For example, in Eccleshall there may be an opportunity to bring various clubs together as a result of the proposal to relocate the school.

Climate Change

Issue

The UK's climate is changing, and in ways that are not totally predictable. However, there is a growing consensus that the most likely changes include:

- Hotter summers, leading to increased water stress on plants and trees (and possible losses as a consequence) plus a need to water grass areas in summer – when there may be water shortages and hosepipe bans
- Milder winters and longer growing seasons requiring additional expenditure on grounds maintenance; for example, additional grass cuts will be needed in spring and autumn
- More winter depressions and gales, with the danger of losing trees
- Changes to habitats, likely to result in the loss or migration of some currently common species
- Higher levels of atmospheric pollution from traffic
- Increasing waterlogging and unplayability of grass pitches for significant parts of the year. This will have

major implications for football and rugby as the timing of the season may have to change – which may then have knock-on implications for cricket where cricket outfields are used for football in winter

Recommendations

Once again, there is no “do nothing” option; it would lead only to a decline in the quality of the Borough’s greenspaces and its grass-based outdoor sports facilities. Instead the Council should:

- Actively monitor the impact of climate change and adjust its approach to landscape design and maintenance as a result
- Seek to reduce the dependence of the pitch sports on grass areas
- Include a policy in its Local Development Framework requiring all new significant housing developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems within greenspaces; a key element of this will be to ensure that holding ponds have shallow margins. This will enhance both safety and nature conservation.
- Require developers to locate and design greenspaces and vegetation where they will have the greatest effect in terms of ameliorating the negative impacts of climate change, for example in terms of providing shade, shelter for buildings absorbing or holding rainfall
- Increase the number of trees across the Borough, but particularly in the developed areas, as a way of providing additional shade from the sun and mitigating the “heat island” effect and pollution
- Actively plan and create additional “green corridors” for walking and cycling as a cost-effective way of helping to reduce the use of motor vehicles and the pollution it generates
- Investigate the use of Council-owned land for floodplain management

Community Involvement

Issue

There are several “Friends” groups in the Borough – including groups for Riverway, Victoria Park and Stafford Castle and the Ferndown and Astonfields Local Nature Reserves – but Sport Stafford appears to have only a limited role and the Borough’s Town and Parish Councils vary considerably in their effectiveness and initiative. In addition, there appear to be few amenity societies, although there is a Youth Council and shadow Children’s Board.

Recommendations

Local communities can be a valuable resource, not least in terms of reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour – although the Borough suffers less from this than many other areas – and acting as “ginger groups”. However, there are areas in which levels of vandalism appear to be higher than in other areas of the Borough. The Council needs to concentrate on these areas and on working with a limited number of key groups that can have a Borough-wide role such as Sport Stafford and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. It should also seek to foster further Borough-wide or local groups where they can serve a useful purpose and will have a clear role; the best opportunities probably relate to Local Nature Reserves and areas of publicly accessible woodland. However, it also needs to beware of overloading volunteers: most of the sports clubs we have consulted in the course of undertaking this assessment have identified a lack of volunteers as one of the factors causing them real concern for their future.

Creative Thinking

Issue

The Council has finite resources and has to deliver a growing range of statutory services. It would be very easy to develop a long wish list of things the Council should consider doing, but if they are unaffordable and therefore undeliverable doing so would be a waste of time and make no difference to the quality of life across the Borough. Equally it is not realistic to expect that everything that may be desirable will attract significant amounts of external funding. It is getting more and more difficult to access external funding, particularly in Boroughs like Stafford that are not classed as deprived.

This means that the Council faces a clear choice. The first alternative is to reduce Leisure Services budgets wherever possible in order to concentrate on the provision of the best possible statutory services. This will fail to deliver some of the priorities in the Council’s corporate plan. It will also increasingly become a process of managing decline, resulting in frustration amongst residents and businesses as they see their local environment and sports facilities starved of investment. The second alternative is to try to be as creative as possible with the Council’s assets and budgets. Arguably it is not making as good use of some of its land holdings as it could: for example, small pitch sites are very expensive to manage and maintain for their relatively limited use.

This said, the Council may also not be making as good use of planning obligations as it could and arguably should. Developer contributions are not a tax on development, that

the Council can spend as it sees fit, but a way of ensuring that it is possible to mitigate the anticipated negative impacts of a proposed development at no cost to the taxpayer. Government policy guidance on the use of planning obligations, contained in DCLG Circular 5/2005, is absolutely specific on this point. It follows that the Council should not be seeking contributions towards non-specific requirements. It has significant sums sitting in its Section 106 account but has recognised this and put measures in place to address the issue.

There is also the question of ongoing management and maintenance of new greenspaces, play areas or sports facilities provided by developers and adopted by the Council. While it requires a commuted maintenance sum in such cases, it does not appear to have an effective mechanism in place to ensure that the commuted sum is expended in accordance with the purpose for which it was given. In addition, sooner or later commuted sums run out and when they do, the Council will have to meet the costs of management and maintenance from its revenue budget. This raises the question of whether it should continue to adopt spaces and facilities provided by developers, or seek another approach which will achieve proper maintenance at no cost long term to itself. It also needs to ensure that developers do not default on their responsibilities, leaving the Council to “pick up the tab”.

Recommendations

The Council needs:

- To work positively and creatively with developers to initiate positive change in broadly the same way as it did with the new Stafford Leisure Centre and deliver revenue savings that can be retained within Leisure to drive other service improvements. More specifically, it should see Council-owned greenspaces as potential opportunities rather than land that should necessarily be protected. This will require political courage because many people take the view that “every blade of grass is sacred” and will not be willing to countenance change, almost on principle, no matter the potential benefits. Therefore the Council must make clear to local residents that it will re-invest the proceeds of any disposals in better local spaces or facilities and if possible augment them by external funding. At the same time, it must take a balanced view and not dispose of sites simply in order to generate capital receipts. Instead it should use the PPG17 assessment, and particularly the provision maps, to identify opportunities to “move spaces around” in order to retain high levels of accessibility but drive up quality and value. As a broad principle it will be better to have a slightly smaller network of high quality, accessible spaces than a slightly larger network of poor value

- spaces.
- To review its approach to the negotiation and use of planning obligations to ensure it is compatible with government policy guidance and best practice and the Government's proposed Community Infrastructure Levy, once introduced.
 - To allocate the resources needed to ensure that developer contributions will be spent in ways that will best mitigate the impact of new developments
 - To review its willingness to adopt new spaces and facilities provided by developers

Green Infrastructure

Issue

The Borough has to allocate land for a significant number of new dwellings over the next 15-20 years, much of it in and around Stafford town. This will obviously place additional demand pressures on infrastructure such as roads and utility networks – the things that make it possible for us to live in towns and villages. However, green infrastructure – the networks of green and blue spaces and the biodiversity that make it possible for us to live on Planet Earth – is even more important. One of the implications of the designation of Stafford as a growth point in July 2008 – when this strategy was already in draft – is that it is required to prepare a green infrastructure strategy.

The preparation of this strategy has already started as part of the *Plan for Stafford Borough*. Natural England and the Woodland Trust both promote recommended standards: the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) in the case of the former and the Woodland Access Standard (WASSt) in the case of the latter. If applied, they normally in apparently very large deficits in provision, although it can be difficult to determine which areas of natural greenspace should be included when assessing an area against the ANGSt, especially as the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) effectively opens up most of the countryside to responsible visitors.

Recommendations

The Borough Council should continue to develop a Green Infrastructure strategy as part of its Plan for Stafford Borough. The evidence base that accompanies this strategy will provide details of spaces within the Borough's settlements. The main additional information required will relate to countryside access and provision.

Joined Up Thinking

Issue

This is merely one a growing number of strategies being developed by the Borough Council in relation to the various services it provides for its community. For obvious reasons, these strategies should “join up” as much as possible. Overall, the “driver” for the work of the Borough Council and its primary partners is the Sustainable Community Strategy for Stafford and therefore this strategy is set in the context of it, as summarised in Chapter 4.

There are also numerous strategies prepared by external agencies, ranging from the Primary Care Trust to governing bodies of sport and national agencies such as Sport England and Natural England. By their very nature, they inevitably focus on a particular service or area of activity. They inform the wider context for Borough Council strategies, but do not drive them in the way that the Sustainable Community Strategy does. Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of those that are most relevant to the Borough.

Recommendations

The main links between this strategy and other Borough Council strategies relate to sustainable development and particularly:

- The development of walking and cycling routes
- Health and physical activity, not least through allotments, “Green Gyms” and the joint Borough Council South Staffordshire PCT “Health Fit” programme and initiatives to reduce childhood obesity
- Biodiversity and nature conservation

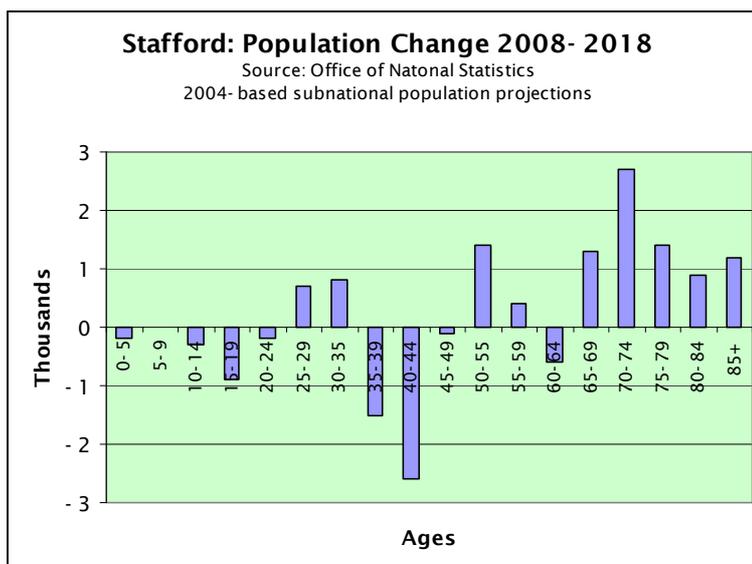
Regeneration

Issue

Over the next decade, there will be two main drivers of change in the Borough’s demographic structure:

- The average age of the existing population will increase and the number of retired people will rise significantly
- New house building will almost certainly result in an influx of younger people into the Borough

The chart below shows the anticipated change in the current population, ignoring new house building:



This makes clear that the Borough will need an influx of new residents in order to ensure that it remains economically buoyant. As wages in the Borough are generally below the national average, occupational pensions will also be. For the sake of their health and quality of life, the Council and its partners will have to work hard to keep its older residents active. This may well be expensive in staff time; but many of the increasing number of retired people will also require subsidised access to leisure facilities and may require access to transport. Their interests will probably include activities like walking, visiting the countryside, gardening and horticulture and to some extent swimming. There are very obvious links to the wider health agenda and a clear role for the Primary Care Trust in promoting exercise. New residents, on the other hand, are more likely to want to take part in sport and active recreation and good provision should help to attract them to the Borough and therefore attract investment and promote regeneration.

Recommendations

The Council needs to embrace change if the Borough is to be successful in future. To do this it needs:

- To ensure that new development results in an appropriate level of local greenspace and sport and recreation provision
- To increase the quality and capacity of the Borough's existing green and sporting infrastructure in order to help promote the integration of new residents and ensure equity between new and existing residents

Greenspace Issues

The main issues relating to greenspaces, again in alphabetical order, are:

- Children's play
- Formal parks
- Providing for teenagers
- Quality versus quantity
- The urban fringe
- Walking and cycling

Children's play

Issue

There are almost 80 equipped play areas in the Borough. Of these, almost 70 are owned and maintained by the Council. As the average life of play equipment is at most 15 years, it follows that the Council needs to upgrade an average of around 5 sites a year. Moreover, the total amount of play provision in the Borough is a small fraction of the amount required by the application of the provision standard in the Local Plan. Given this, there is no point in continuing with the current Local Plan standard, or indeed anything like it, as the Council's current approach is unsustainable.

Recommendations

The Council should move to the approach suggested in Chapter 10 and concentrate on developing a limited number of strategic play areas and plan a rolling programme of works to convert those play areas coming to the end of their useful life into landscaped natural areas with high play value. It also needs to reintroduce its play schemes. Suitable schemes for teenagers could well prove to be cheaper than the consequences of not having them in terms of the cost dealing with vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Formal Parks

Issue

The Borough has two formal parks – Victoria Park in Stafford town and the much smaller Stonefield Park in Stone. Victoria Park is the Borough's "Green Flag-ship", but certain parts of it – particularly the children's play area and most of the buildings – require upgrading and do not match the status of a major town park. The paddling pool, in particular, takes up a significant amount of space but is inevitably little used for much of the year, although popular in good weather in summer. Stonefield is a little gem, but hidden away and too small to be used by a significant number of people at once or for most community events.

The Borough should not limit its ambitions to just these two parks. Parks are the most popular of all publicly funded leisure facilities and they are totally inclusive.

Ideally all sizeable communities should have at least one park or “park-like” space within walking distance of home. There are opportunities to have good local parks in Stafford town at least at Wildwood Park (substantially in place already, and with the potential to use developer contributions from the redevelopment of the Police Headquarters to fund enhancements) and Charnley Road. In Stone, Westbridge Park is a park in name only but the whole green area between Walton and Stone could be a wonderful facility with some investment.

Recommendations

The Borough Council should:

- Replace the existing play areas in Victoria Park with a major facility for children and teenagers, designed for year-round use. Given the proximity of Stafford College, this will be a good location for a major skateboarding facility with a bowl as well as ramps and half pipes.
- Review the condition and use of each of the buildings in Victoria Park and take appropriate action to conserve or replace them as appropriate. Some are of historical significance as they were gifted to the Borough and so it will be important to keep these historical links without necessarily retaining specific buildings. However, it should not take piecemeal action but revive its Heritage Lottery Fund application for a major upgrading of the whole of the park.
- Set an objective of retaining its Green Flag Award for Victoria Park
- Set an objective of gaining and then retaining a Green Flag for Stonefield Park. This will require the development of a Friends Group and also a higher profile for the park.
- Westbridge Park and the area to the south of it are under-used resources at the moment. The Council should consider enhancing the area close to the Sports Centre in order to make it more “park-like” and attractive for informal activities. It will also be desirable to open up greater access to the river and canal, particularly if the proposed marina proceeds, and link the park to the Stone Meadows Local Nature Reserve to the north and other land to the south.

Providing for Teenagers

Issue

Provision for teenagers in the Borough – as just about everywhere else – is very limited and the Town and Parish Councils, and local communities, regard better provision for young people as a high priority.

Recommendations

The Council needs to develop an approach that provides attractive facilities that teenagers will want to use. This is easier said than done as teenage fashion is fickle and in the time it can take to respond to local teenagers' requests for something, by the time it is built they may well have moved on to other interests. It is also the case that many more teenage boys than teenage girls want to take part in physical activities, but most public facilities that attract teenage boys also attract teenage girls. This said, the facilities that tend to appeal most to teenagers, in approximate declining order of importance, are usually:

- Skateboard areas, provided they offer a challenge and are not simply minimal ramps
- Floodlit, hard surfaced ball courts
- Covered, but not fully enclosed, shelters and "hanging out" areas
- BMX tracks
- Unlit ball courts
- Basketball goals

The Council needs to strike a balance between two types of provision:

- Local facilities, that teenagers can walk to within a few minutes of home; because of the potential number of such facilities, it is almost inevitable that they have to be fairly small
- Strategic facilities that will attract teenagers from a wide area and may use public transport to use

Quality versus quantity

Issue

To date, the main emphasis in the Council's planning policy for both greenspace and outdoor sports provision has been on quantity rather than quality. It is time to redress the balance in favour of quality.

Recommendations

The Council should:

- Require developers to comply with the quality standards set out in Section 5 and related appendix C in relation to all new spaces of facilities and use them as an aspiration for the spaces and facilities it owns and maintains itself
- Encourage the Town and Parish Councils also to adopt the quality standards
- Make greater use of planning obligations to generate

developer contributions to be used to enhance existing spaces and facilities in the vicinity of a development. In principle there is no reason why single dwelling developments should not contribute to the enhancement of local spaces.

There appears also to be a need to review maintenance and planting regimes and the training of grounds maintenance staff. Many of the Borough's greenspaces appear to be designed primarily for machine maintenance rather than to promote amenity and give pleasure to local residents.

The Urban Fringe

Issue

The Borough has some wonderful countryside and some good examples of promoting access to it, such as Barlaston and Rough Close Commons, the privately owned Trentham Park (also popular for water sports), mountain biking in the Milford Common area and the part of the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the Borough. It is also reasonably flat, making it ideal walking and cycling country. Furthermore, the main towns are sufficiently close together that cycling from one to another is a realistic possibility: from the centre of Stafford town to the centre of Stone, for example, is only some 11 km or about half an hour by bicycle. There are obvious opportunities to promote greater access to urban fringe areas and develop more cycling routes and indeed to encourage commuting by bike.

However, the Borough has no country park of its own. The obvious location for one is somewhere on the River Trent/Trent and Mersey Canal or River Penk/Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, not least because this will provide the opportunity to create linear routes to the park along the waterways. The Council faces at least two significant opportunities to develop a country park, both of which have the potential to help to divert some potential demand away from the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

- As part of any significant expansion of Stafford town to the south of it;
- At Crown Meadow/Westbridge Park in Stone, especially if the marina proposal proceeds

Recommendation

The Council should:

- Actively consider the potential for a country park in one of the above locations and if thought appropriate allocate land for it in its Local Development Framework
- Seek to maximise access to the urban fringe on foot or

by bicycle through the development of path networks that link to longer distance routes and rights of way

- Seek to include one or more of the Borough's rivers and canals within any country park

Walking and Cycling

Issue

With significant development planned for the Borough, traffic congestion is likely to get worse, and with it traffic-generated pollution. At the same time both Stafford town and Stone are reasonably compact and fairly flat towns so they lend themselves to walking and cycling, especially along the rivers and canals. The walkway along the River Sow in Stafford town is excellent and well used; the walkway beside the Trent and Mersey Canal in the northern part of Stone is also very good but less well used. However, in some areas, the canal is fenced off – no doubt originally for safety reasons – and the fence is something of an eyesore. It also has gaps or broken sections which make it ineffective.

Recommendations

The Council's walking and cycling working groups should identify opportunities to create a linked network of walking, cycling and jogging routes in partnership with British Waterways, the County Council, Sustrans and neighbouring local authorities. Four broad types of route are particularly desirable:

- Routes that link suburban areas with the urban fringe and town centres, separated from roads as much as possible
- Routes that go round the perimeter of towns and settlements and link to rights of way in the surrounding countryside, thereby creating "spiders' web" routes that residents and visitors can use for circular and other walks of different lengths
- Routes that link settlements to Sustrans national cycle routes 5 and 81
- Routes beside the rivers and canals in the Borough

Outdoor Sports Facility Issues

The four main issues relating to outdoor sports facilities are, in alphabetical order:

- Adult and junior football pitch provision
- Artificial turf pitch provision
- Central venues for mini-soccer
- The Future of Rowley Park

Adult and Junior Football Pitch Provision

Issues

Football is the sport in the Borough with the highest participation, although adult participation in 11-a-side matches has been reducing for some time. For example, the Stafford Saturday League slowly declined and then disbanded a few years ago and the Sunday League currently has around 48-49 teams, down from the 60 of a year or so ago. The Staffordshire Football Association has identified a clear need:

- To address the decline in 11-a-side football
- To foster the development of community clubs
- To improve the maintenance of pitches

Four facility related initiatives are key to delivering against these objectives:

- Floodlit third generation pitches (see below)
- Multi-pitch sites with good ancillary accommodation that will support the development of multi-team clubs for players of all ages and both sexes
- Better pitches and changing facilities
- Floodlit grass pitches for major games

Broadly speaking, the Borough has amongst the best quality football pitches in the County. However, a number of sites lack changing accommodation, or have only very poor facilities, and others require significant pitch improvements such as levelling or better drainage. The sites that lack changing are:

- Church Lane, Derrington
- Great Bridgford Playing Field
- Greensome, Doxey
- Grindley Park, Meir Heath
- Stone Youth and Community Centre
- Swynnerton Recreation Ground
- The Drive, Doxey
- Torrington Road, Stafford town
- Western Downs, Stafford town
- Wootton Drive, Stafford town
- Yarnfield Park

Our audit identified 45 non-school pitch sites in the Borough, of which 24 have only a single adult pitch and 9 have only two. Most of these pitches are in the Stafford town area so there is an obvious opportunity to dispose of a number of the smaller sites and use the capital receipts to rationalise provision into a smaller number of multi-pitch sites as a first step in the creation of community clubs.

Recommendations

The Borough Council should seek to allocate land for at least two multi-pitch sites at accessible locations, ideally to the north and south of Stafford town, to be developed using the capital receipts from the disposal of smaller pitch sites. In addition it should identify those sites that it will be acceptable to sell for development from the following list of sites in the Stafford area:

- Charnley Road/Henry Street, Stafford town
- Greensome, Doxey (currently 1 adult pitch)
- Meadow Road, Stafford town (currently 1 pitch)
- The Drive, Doxey (currently 1 pitch)
- Torrington Road, Stafford town (currently 1 adult pitch plus 1 mini pitch)
- Western Downs, Stafford town (currently 1 adult pitch)
- Woodlands Road, Stafford town (currently 2 junior pitches plus one mini pitch)
- Wootton Drive, Stafford town (currently 1 pitch)

Stafford Common is an obvious location for a football centre in the Stafford town area and, as it is just off Beaconside, it will be accessible from a wide area. Although owned by Trustees and therefore not under the direct control of the Borough Council, creating a pitches centre will help to preserve the open aspect of the site for the future.

Depending on the future of Westbridge Park in Stone, it may be sensible also to develop a pitch complex for the town if a suitable site can be identified and allocated in the Local Development Framework.

The total number of pitches required at the multi-pitch sites will depend on the extent to which football interests are willing to use artificial turf pitches for matches (see below). However, it is likely that the minimum sensible size will be around 5-6 adult pitches plus at least two junior ones. The Council should seek to allocate suitable sites in its Local Development Framework.

Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) Provision

Issues

There are several issues relating to ATP provision:

- Climate change means that grass pitches will become waterlogged more often in winter and this will almost certainly result in the cancellation of matches and significant backlogs in football and rugby fixtures by the end of winter seasons. In the south of England, some leagues were unable to play any matches for a

couple of months in early 2007 and 2008. As global warming develops further, it is likely that the Borough will begin to suffer from the same problems. The likelihood is then that an increasing number of players will retire or start to play only 5-a-sides and then, as many football clubs are actually simply teams, the number of teams in an area will reduce. Fortunately the development of “third generation” (3G) artificial turf surfaces makes it possible to overcome this problem at least in relation to football. Such surfaces are also suitable at least for mini-rugby and some adult rugby training. The Staffordshire Football Association has identified floodlit third generation ATPs as a key priority for football facilities in the Borough and the Staffordshire Rugby Union Club Facility Development Strategy also highlights the need for third generation pitches.

- The Borough lacks floodlit pitches for football and rugby training. However, floodlighting does not increase the capacity of grass pitches significantly, especially during wet weather when they can be damaged easily.
- The Borough currently has three ATPs but none of them has a 3G surface and all are operating more or less at capacity at peak times most of the year for a mixture of football and hockey; although not generally for football league matches. However, there is insufficient capacity to accommodate all of the local hockey demand and the Phoenix Blues Women’s team has to play in Cannock.
- Grass pitches make very poor use of land, although there is no alternative for cricket and most rugby. If football wants to reverse the downward trend in weekend 11-a-side participation, it will need more pitches. But primarily it will be fighting against social trends rather than a facility-imposed constraint. Moreover, if grass football pitches did not exist, no sensible person would consider inventing a facility that could be used for only 2-3 games a week – a maximum of around 70 or so players. What football has to do, even although it has not fully realised it yet, is to introduce mid week leagues (some of which could easily be 30 minutes each way in order to keep less fit players in the game) on artificial turf. This is the only sensible way of significantly increasing the opportunities to play football. ATPs on school sites will also make it possible to run after-school coaching all year round and foster close school-community clubs links to create a seamless pathway for young players from school to adult club. Looking to the future, we should be planning for higher levels of participation in football overall, but lower levels of participation at the weekend. This will require a significant increase in ATP

provision.

- The attitude of clubs and the governing bodies for football and rugby. The suggestions relating to ATPs in the consultation draft strategy generated considerable concern on the part of Sport England and the hostility of one football club, but not the Rugby Football Union or the Borough's rugby clubs. Appendix A sets out in more detail the reasons why we believe ATPs will progressively be used more and more for football and rugby.

ATPs are obviously expensive to construct. Thereafter, however, the annual maintenance cost is broadly similar to a grass pitch but the level of use – and income – hugely greater. In research we did for **sportscotland** on the whole life costs of pitches a number of years ago, we came to the counter-intuitive conclusion that it would be cheaper for local authorities to make artificial turf pitches available free than to provide grass pitches and charge for them.

Recommendations

- The Borough Council should work actively to persuade football interests of the benefits of third generation artificial surfaces and develop a rolling programme of artificial turf pitch provision across the Borough, concentrating initially on creating sites that can be used for adult training and floodlit games during the week and as central venues for mini-soccer and possibly mini-rugby at the weekend. Other things being equal, in order to maximise the use of these pitches, they should be located on secondary school sites as much as possible, although the County Council's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in the Borough is unclear at present. Accordingly this argues for the first such pitch being located at the Sir Graham Balfour High School as it has already been built under the BSF programme. The school has been investigating getting an ATP and its site is large enough to accommodate one, albeit with the loss of some grass pitch provision. There will also be a need for additional changing accommodation as the current changing is used by both indoor and outdoor users. However, depending on the site and orientation of the pitch, there may be some objections to floodlighting. Accordingly the Borough Council should work with the school and County Football Association to develop a joint approach to the Football Foundation and other funding agencies. Given that the school is managed by a contractor on behalf of the County, it will be necessary to negotiate an extension to the contract.
- This will provide an ATP in the northern part of Stafford town. The second priority will be a similar pitch in the

southern part of the town. The obvious potential locations for this are the Stafford Sports College, King Edward VI High School, Blessed William Howard RC High School or Rowley Park. Of these, the order of preference should be Blessed William Howard High School followed by Rowley Park (subject to the comments below), Stafford Sports College and King Edward VI High School. The reasons for this are:

- Blessed William Howard already has a lot of community use of its sports facilities, adequate on-site parking and is a significantly larger school than the Sports College in terms of both its roll and site. It also has spare land. Moreover its grass pitches are fairly poor.
 - Rowley Park already has sufficient changing to support an ATP (although it needs upgrading) and the Borough Council has staff presence on site for the athletics track on midweek evenings. The site is also an established centre for mini-soccer.
 - Stafford Sports College is currently considering a proposal for an ATP to be funded through the disposal of part of the site. However, the site is limited and most of the changing accommodation is not up to community use standard.
 - King Edward VI has a fairly large site, although its facilities are fairly poor. Any ATP will have to be to the north of the existing sports hall which will result in one side being fairly close to the houses in Elliot Way and Dryden Crescent with possible nuisance to residents from floodlighting and noise from players.
-
- The third priority should be to provide floodlit ATPs on suitable sites in Eccleshall and Gnosall. Ideally on or as close as possible to the local schools. These pitches need not be full size but must be large enough for mini-soccer, for example around 60 x 40 m.
 - In the longer term, the Borough Council should work with the County Council to seek to ensure that all new schools built under the BSF programme gave at least one floodlit artificial turf pitch with full community use. It should then be possible to move a significant amount of local football league matches onto artificial surfaces.
 - The Borough Council should investigate the potential for an additional ATP to be shared by the University and Weston Road High School. This will also provide an accessible ATP on the eastern edge of Stafford town with good road links to some of the villages in the eastern part of the Borough. If this proves possible, in the longer term, the Borough Council should seek to persuade the University to have one ATP with a surface designed specifically for hockey and the other a 3G

surface designed for football, although it may prefer to retain a compromise surface suitable for both hockey and football on its existing ATP.

Central Venues for Mini-soccer

Issue

Central venues are the most effective way of catering for mini-soccer match demand as they make it possible for teams to play more than one match in a session, minimise the child protection concerns that can arise on sites with a mix of adult and mini pitches and make the best use of volunteers. Rowley Park and to a lesser extent the pitches at Riverway already function as central venues, as does Alleyne's High School in Stone, and most girls' mini-soccer teams play at a central venue in Stoke. However, there are no central venues in the rural parts of the Borough.

An alternative approach worth investigating will be to create a 5-a-side soccer centre in an accessible location in either Stafford town or Stone. This centre should consist of a number of floodlit, artificial turf surfaced courts of a size that will suit both mini-soccer and adult 5-a-sides.

Recommendations

- The Borough Council should seek to negotiate joint use agreements with the larger schools to allow their sites to be used as central venues for mini-soccer until such time as it is possible to develop sufficient ATP capacity to accommodate the local demand.
- The Borough Council should investigate the potential for a 5-a-side centre that will also function as a central venue for mini-soccer. This may be a viable alternative to a full size artificial turf pitch on a secondary school site.

The Future of Rowley Park

Issue

Rowley Park is the Borough Council's premier outdoor sports facility. It attracts users from a wide area to its football and athletics facilities, with the pitch in the centre of the track used for local finals, while the bowling green and tennis courts are more local in their significance. It also serves most of the time as an informal local park for the people living in its vicinity, particularly the residents of the Highfields Estate, many of whom bring children to use the excellent play area. However, it also has a number of significant shortcomings:

- The athletics facilities are not good enough to attract major events
- The changing facilities require significant upgrading

- The pitches require drainage improvements
- There is inadequate parking
- The main entrance, from Averill Road in the Highfields Estate off the traffic calmed West Way, gives no impression of a major sports facility

If the Borough Council wishes to upgrade the facilities, it will probably have to fund the vast majority of the capital costs itself. While it might be able to attract some funds from the Football Foundation and the Big Lottery – especially if it progresses its plans for a football coaching centre – there is no guarantee that any applications to them will be successful. We have not estimated the likely total cost, but no matter what is spent access to the site will remain poor.

The site extends to some 13 hectares, is reasonably close to the centre of the town and is therefore a significant potential sustainable development site for a significant number of new houses. Any suggestion to redevelop it will meet with strong resistance, especially from those living around its perimeter, but it will nonetheless be sensible for the Borough Council objectively to consider the potential advantages and disadvantages of redeveloping a large part of it. It should not consider the redevelopment of the whole of the site because it will be important to retain a significant area and lay it out as a local park. However, 8-9 hectares could accommodate around 300 dwellings and the capital receipt might be sufficient to fund a replacement and better athletics stadium plus a major football centre and possibly other sports facilities in a more suitable location. Some people will argue that the relocation of the facilities will unnecessarily increase traffic generation to the new site, but the alternative is for those 300 or so dwellings to be located elsewhere. The traffic generated by 300 dwellings will be significantly greater than the traffic generated by a sports stadium and pitches and the more that users come for a wide area the less desirable it is that the stadium should be located in the centre of a residential area.

Recommendations

One option for Rowley Park will be to consider its relocation on an alternative site, although this is not an option currently favoured by the Council. However, if it were to be considered, the key questions the Council will need to consider are:

- Where might replacement facilities be located and what sort of athletics events should the Borough Council aim to attract? Probably the most accessible location for potential users from throughout the Borough and wider afield will be near the Redhill roundabout on the A34, if suitable land can be identified and allocated in the Local Development Framework. Alternatively, if the

Council is happy to have a more or less like for like replacement of the present athletics facilities, it may be possible to locate a new track in the University/Weston Road High School area. As suggested in chapter 8, another approach may be for the Borough Council to work with Cannock Chase District Council to develop a new joint stadium at a suitable location.

- What additional facilities should the Borough Council seek to provide? It will clearly be desirable to develop a major football centre, but what about other facilities?

If the Council is not willing to consider relocating Rowley Park, it should develop a comprehensive master plan for its future development, after deciding on the standard of athletics competitions it wishes to be able to attract.

Indoor Sports and Recreation Provision

The main issues relating to indoor sports facilities are, in alphabetical order:

- Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSFP)
- The needs of new residents
- Westbridge Sports Centre

Building Schools for the Future

Issue

The most sensible way to provide “mainstream” indoor sports facilities such as sports halls and swimming pools is for them to be designed for joint use and located on secondary school sites. Daytime community demand is low, when schools can use them for curriculum physical education and after-school clubs. The corollary is that:

- They usually suffer considerable wear and tear at the hands of school pupils. It can then deter community users and result in loss of income. Schools should take full responsibility for the behaviour of their pupils in joint use facilities and ensure there is adequate supervision of them at all times.
- If designed primarily for school use they lack social facilities and some features that are needed for community use such as lockers in changing areas
- If schools manage them, they tend to prefer the easy option of being “gate-keepers” rather than managers – that is, rather than encourage casual use, they prefer long lets with local clubs or other community groups.

The Borough has some fairly old schools that the County is likely to want to replace through the Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSFP). However, it will not progress any new developments until at least 2013, which means the present schools will continue until at least then. However, no-one yet knows whether the present pattern of school provision will continue and, if it does, what the

future layout of school sites will be. Experience with past BFSP projects is that where schools are replaced on their existing sites, the practical approach is to build on the playing fields – so the existing school building can continue to operate during the building period – and then demolish the current building and create new playing fields. This means that any existing facilities at the time of redevelopment may be lost. However, site constraints mean that this approach will not be possible at the Stafford Sports College, so if the County decides to retain it as a school in its own right, it may wish to relocate the school to another site.

As a 5-years (or so) time frame is not enough to justify significant investment by the Borough Council in joint use facilities, if it decides that it will be appropriate to concentrate on joint use provision, there is no real sense in undertaking any specific investment in facility provision on most school sites in the Borough over the next few years.

Recommendations

The Council should seek work with the County Council to help plan the sports elements of proposed BFSP schools to ensure that they include suitably located and designed joint use sports facilities. The Council should normally seek to ensure that the County includes the following minimum community use requirements:

- A floodlit artificial turf pitch
- Floodlit multi-sports courts
- A sports hall
- A dance/exercise studio
- A fitness area with a minimum of 20 equipment items
- A specific identity as a community sports facility, rather than a school-linked identity
- Designated disabled parking spaces in the car park
- A high profile; joint use facilities should be visible from the entrance to the school site and not “round the back”
- A clearly identifiable community entrance
- Changing provision designed for community use
- Adequate storage for community use equipment
- An appropriate reception desk and staff accommodation
- Meeting rooms, or access to meetings rooms in the school
- Appropriate social facilities

In addition the Council should seek to agree a general joint use agreement with the County Council that it can subsequently incorporate into management contracts for new BFSP schools.

The Needs of New Residents

Issue

While the overall level of demand for sport from the existing population of the Borough is likely to decline slightly as a result of the rising number and proportion of older people, the Borough is required to accommodate an additional 10,000 dwellings over the next decade or so. This will increase the Borough's population by around 10-15,000 people and obviously generate significant increased demand for access to sports facilities. The facilities that will almost certainly be needed, over and above those that already exist, are:

- Cricket pitches
- Football pitches – adult, junior and minis – unless by then the Borough has sufficient spare capacity in artificial turf pitches to accommodate the demand
- Swimming pools, sports halls and other dry sports facilities
- Multi-courts

The Borough Council will need to establish the need for the following facilities at the time when development proposals come forward, depending on trends between now and then:

- Bowling greens
- Outdoor tennis courts
- Golf facilities

Recommendations

- The Council should use all of the sports facility provision standards derived earlier in this report to make provisional allocations of land for new sports provision to meet the needs of new housing allocations, but undertake a specific investigation of the need for bowling greens, outdoor tennis courts and golf facilities when development proposals come forward.

Westbridge Sports Centre

Issue

Westbridge Sports Centre is now simply a fitness centre, but was designed as a “blind box” sports hall. As a result, the facilities are fairly claustrophobic with no daylight and no views over Westbridge Park. In addition, the adjacent tennis courts are of fairly poor quality and not floodlit, although it would be possible and reasonably cheap to fix floodlights to the existing lighting stanchions for the car

park on one side of them. While the complex is no doubt financially viable, relocating it to Alleyne's School could help to encourage even higher levels of use and therefore greater income.

Recommendations

- The Borough Council should consider relocating the Westbridge Park Fitness Centre to the Alleyne's Sports Centre in order to achieve economies of scale, subject of course to the conclusion of a suitable joint use agreement.

Target Sports Facility Issues

The Borough Council has limited resources so we suggest that it should concentrate its efforts on a limited number of "target sports". There are five main sports in the Borough that already have a successful voluntary and club infrastructure from juniors to veterans but are facing constraints on their future development which could be removed with some assistance from the Borough Council. They are:

- Canoeing
- Cricket
- Indoor tennis
- Netball
- Rugby

Canoeing

Issue

The Borough is an important national location for canoeing:

- Much of the upper reaches of the River Trent are within its boundaries
- There is the opportunity to develop several mixed river and canal routes in both Stafford town and Stone
- The Stafford and Stone Canoe Club, with around 150 members, has a national reputation for developing competitive paddlers. Its clubhouse is located on Council land at Westbridge Park, although lack of adequate security of tenure has prevented the club from gaining grants for better facilities.
- The Shugborough Outdoor Education Centre promotes canoeing on the River Trent

The Stafford and Stone Canoe Club has been developing proposals for a new clubhouse on the west bank of the river which it has had costed at around £800,000.

Recommendations

Whatever the future of Westbridge Park and Crown

Meadow, the Borough Council should do what it can to support the Stafford and Stone Canoe Club. Canoeing will be an attractive feature for visitors to the area and will complement the marina proposal with an additional water-based activity. In order to support the club, the Borough Council should:

- Provide it with sufficient security of tenure to allow it to access grant aid for improvements to its current site and car park area.
- Work with the club to identify suitable locations for canoe access points to the river and canal and then help it try to persuade the riparian owners to allow any works that may be necessary

Cricket

Issues

Cricket is popular in the Borough, particularly in the north planning area in which nearly half of the Borough's 18 clubs are located. At one end of the spectrum, a number of clubs have very good junior development programmes; at the other, Stone Cricket Club has staged county matches in the past but is probably unlikely to do so again until it improves its poor changing facilities, although it has plans in hand to do so. The main things holding back the further development of cricket are a lack of players, volunteers and match officials, plus three facility-related issues:

- A shortage of pitches; we calculate that there is a need for an additional two or three pitches in the Stafford town area. A few clubs in other parts of the Borough have also outgrown their facilities but do not have the opportunity to create an additional pitch so have to hire other pitches when needed. For example, the Meir Heath Club has four adult teams but only one pitch.
- The lack of artificial wickets: only the Barlaston and Eccleshall clubs and Alleyne's High School have one. Artificial wickets are particularly suited to junior development and junior matches.
- There are no indoor coaching and practice facilities which could help to boost interest on a year-round basis, although Little Stoke Cricket Club is planning to develop an indoor centre.

Recommendations

The Council should:

- Encourage the cricket clubs to develop artificial wickets, primarily for junior use, plus practice nets if they do not have them already, by offering small grants
- Work with local clubs to attract County matches to the Borough

- Work with local schools and clubs to promote junior coaching
- Come to an early view on the acceptability in planning terms of the proposed Little Stoke indoor centre and if it is acceptable work with the club to ensure that cricket clubs and teams throughout the Borough will benefit from the facility when it opens

Indoor Tennis

Issue

The Staffordshire Lawn Tennis Association has identified a need for an indoor centre in the Borough. There are in fact two indoor courts at St Dominic's Priory School in Stone. However, in West Midlands terms, the Borough is underperforming significantly with only a single age group player in the top 100 in the country. By comparison, the Tipton Sports Academy and the Stourbridge and Wolverhampton Lawn Tennis Clubs have an average of around seven each. The Staffordshire Lawn Tennis Association's top priority is to see a major indoor centre in Stoke, but it would also like to see a four court indoor centre in the Borough, preferably in Stafford town.

Recommendations

The development of an indoor tennis centre in the Borough, irrespective of its location, will not be without financial risk in terms of revenue costs. The Borough's clubs have an aggregate membership of around 650, but only a proportion of them are likely to play indoors. Against this, there is considerable evidence that indoor centres attract new players to the game. However, while an indoor tennis centre is obviously desirable in Stafford town, the operator will obviously want to minimise the financial risk inherent in setting one up. Accordingly we recommend that it should be designed to accommodate two main sports, tennis and netball. We give further details of netball's needs below.

The Stafford Sports College recently sold part of its site to the Fire and Rescue Service and hopes to use the capital receipt to construct a three-court indoor centre. However, it will be dependent on additional funding from the Lawn Tennis Association and the Borough Council.

Netball

Issue

Apart from county schools tournaments, all netball in Staffordshire is played indoors. However, although the sport is popular, and one of the few sports with a competition structure primarily for girls and women, there are no venues in the Borough with two or more indoor

courts and facilities are generally poor. They are:

- Stafford Sports College: the hall floor is not semi-sprung
- Alleyne's Sport Centre, Stone: the sports hall floor is not semi-sprung
- Blessed William Howard RC High School, Stafford: the hall is too short (note: the league that plays at the school, with about 20 teams, is also not affiliated to English Netball)

Recommendations

If the Borough Council manages to develop an indoor tennis centre it should allocate some programme time to netball. For example, the centre could function as a central venue for netball one night each week during the season. The Council should therefore select a floor surface that will be suitable for netball as well as tennis.

Rugby

Issue

As with other sports, a lack of volunteers and match officials is holding back the development of rugby. The Borough has five rugby clubs, of which two – Eccleshall and Stafford – have large junior development programmes operating more or less at capacity. The Stafford Club would like to move to a new site and will require at least two more mini and midi pitches, plus a floodlit training area and main pitch. Other clubs also require access to floodlit training areas and some require better drainage to their pitches.

Recommendations

The Borough Council should:

- Do all it can to help the Stafford Rugby Club find a new site, possibly as part of any Stafford Sports Village or multi-pitch site
- Look as sympathetically as possible on planning applications from clubs for floodlights
- Ensure that rugby clubs get appropriate opportunities to use any third generation artificial turf pitches in the Borough for training

Consequential Issues

There may be two consequential issues that arise depending on how the Council responds to the above recommendations:

- It would not be sensible simultaneously to develop central venues for mini-soccer based on grass pitches, multi-grass pitch sites for adult football and also move

as much football as possible on to ATPs. So what approach should the Council take?

- If the Council develops an indoor tennis centre which also caters for netball, this will free time and space in existing sports halls for other activities. How should it seek to help hall owners fill them?

Providing for the Pitch Sports

The above discussion suggests a number of mutually exclusive possibilities in relation to the future pattern of pitch provision in the Borough. Therefore the approach the Council should take is:

- Try to reach agreements with local football interests on the future use of ATPs for mini-soccer, junior and adult football. It will probably be sensible to wait a year or so, until there are more third generation ATPs, and then arrange a visit by a number of club and league representatives to two or three examples of third generation pitches and give them an opportunity to use them for a while. If they agree to the development of an “artificial future” over a number of years the Council should develop a rolling programme of ATP provision based as much as possible around the BSF programme, while keeping its existing grass pitches in as good condition as possible.
- The second option is to try to get agreement to move all mini-soccer onto ATPs. One ATP can be used simultaneously as three mini-soccer pitches. If young players start off their playing careers on ATPs they will probably not want to move onto grass pitches as they move up to 11-a-side play.
- If football interests are adamant that they will not agree to an artificial turf future, the Council will have an interesting decision to make. It can accept football’s views and concentrate on developing suitable multi-grass pitch sites and central venues for mini-soccer based on grass pitches, in the knowledge that sooner or later football will almost certainly embrace artificial surfaces. By then the Council will probably have incurred significant expenditure which may turn out to have been wasted. Alternatively, as football is largely dependent on public pitches, it could go ahead with the construction of ATPs and force clubs and teams to use them by withholding permission for them to use Council owned grass pitches. The downside of this is that the clubs will make it as difficult as they can for the Council to get the planning consents it will need to allow the development of existing grass pitch sites to generate the capital receipts for ATPs. A better approach, therefore, will be to try to reach agreement with football interests that certain leagues will use only artificial turf pitches for one or two seasons and then

review their acceptability. In addition, during trial period, the Council should guarantee not to sell any grass pitches so that football can move back to grass if it insists on doing so.

The Use of Sports Halls

At present the Borough's joint use sports halls have fairly limited programmes based mainly around long lets. If and when the Building Schools for the Future Programme leads to their redevelopment, the Council should try to persuade the County Council to develop specialist facilities for specific sports. For example, one school might become a central venue for table tennis; another concentrate on martial arts; and another badminton or volleyball. Provided they complement the multi-purpose Stafford Leisure Centre, and any additional facilities the Borough Council may provide in the future to meet the additional needs that will be generated by population growth, it will then be possible to operate at least some school halls in a very simple and cheap manner with block bookings done through leagues, governing bodies or coaches.

18: Planning Policy

Introduction

Planning policy has the potential to be a critically important delivery mechanism for the recommendations in this assessment and strategy. This chapter summarises the current Local Plan policy and then suggests the approach the Council should adopt in its Local Development Framework (LDF).

Current Local Plan Policy

The current Local Plan policies relating to open space, sport and recreation are:

- HOU7, *Public Open Space Requirements for New Residential Development*: this policy requires new residential developments to provide public open space which is at least equivalent to 6 acres per thousand population in the form of outdoor sports facilities, equipped children's play areas, casual children's play areas and kickabout areas. However, it offers no guidance as to when it will be acceptable for some or all of this provision to be off-site.
- HOU8, *Loss of Open Space within Residential Areas*: this very unusual (but inherently sensible) policy allows for the possible incorporation of small areas of public open space into residential gardens if there is compensation in the form of acceptable improvements to the remaining space
- HOU9, *Commuted Sums for Open Space Provision*: this policy gives the Council flexibility to allow developers to contribute to the enhancement of off-site spaces in lieu of making on-site provision.
- RLT1, *Protection of Land with Recreational Value*: this policy, as its title implies, is primarily protectionist
- RLT2, *Loss of Playing Fields and Sports Pitches*, is also primarily protectionist although it does allow development that will result in compensatory provision of an equivalent or higher standard
- RLT3, *Allotments Gardens*, also allows development that will result in appropriate compensatory provision
- RLT4, *Recreation and Tourist Facilities in the Countryside*, is primarily permissive, but subject to certain safeguards
- RLT5, *Ancillary Development Associated with Recreational Uses*, requires ancillary facilities to be

- clearly necessary
- RLT6, *Golf Related Development*, simply notes that the Council will consider the impact of the proposals when determining any application for planning permission and may be unnecessary as this is simply good practice
 - RLT7, *Rights of Way and Equestrian Development*, seeks primarily to protect rights of way from the potential detrimental impacts of equestrian developments
 - RLT8, *Water Based Recreation*, is primarily permissive
 - RLT9, *Canal Related Development*, is primarily permissive within settlements but requires development to respect the countryside
 - RLT10, *Recreational Activities Causing Noise or Other Nuisance*, simply notes that the Council will consider the impact of the proposals when determining any application for planning permission and may be unnecessary as this is simply good practice

Critique

The Stafford Borough Local Plan contains an unusually comprehensive, sensible and flexible set of policies relating to open space. There is however one important gap in the policy approach: the whole question of long term management and maintenance. This apart, in principle there is no need for significant change to the thrust of existing policy, other than to use the provision standards set out in this report rather than the NPFA Six Acre Standard. There is just one other small detail that can be criticised: Policy HOU9 refers incorrectly to developer contributions as commuted sums.

Suggested Broad Approach to Policy

However, Core Policies in Local Development Frameworks should be as short and “strategic” as possible, so it is unlikely that the Council will wish to have six separate policies relating to open space provision within settlements and another seven relating in some way to open space provision in the countryside.

It will probably be sensible to have two policies each with a related SPD, the first dealing with open space, sport and recreation within settlements and the second relating to developments in the countryside. They can most easily be classed as a “settlement” and “countryside” policies. To describe them as “urban” and “rural” would create a need to define the respective area of the Borough to which they will apply. The “countryside” policies can be a reworked and abbreviated version of existing policies RLT4-RLT9.

Settlement Policy Principles

The following principles should underpin the settlement policy:

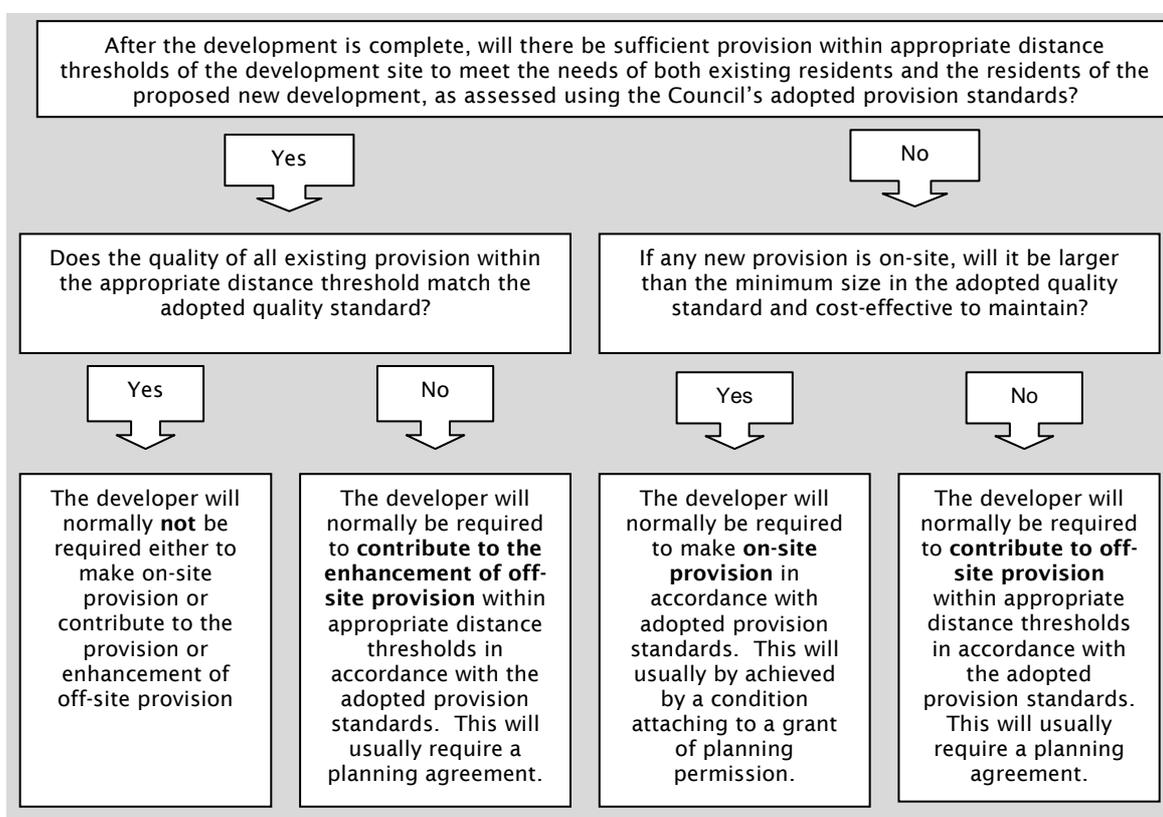
- A general presumption in favour of the protection of all existing open spaces and sport and recreation provision unless the development of a space will lead

to greater benefits to the community in the vicinity of the site than retention of the space or facility; with “greater benefit” defined in terms of quantity, carrying capacity, quality and/or accessibility of provision

- All new developments which will result in a net increase of one or more residential units will increase the need for access to open space and sport and recreation provision within the distance thresholds defined in this report
- However, this does not automatically mean that the Council will require all new developments to provide or contribute to additional provision; in the interest of sustainability, and the best use of land, there will be many instances where it will be better for new developments to contribute to the enhancement of existing spaces or facilities within the distance threshold in order to increase their capacity to accommodate use or reduce an identified qualitative deficiency
- Where there is a quantitative deficiency in provision, assessed using the quantity and accessibility standards set out in this report, or where such a deficiency will arise as a result of the development, the Council will require developers to provide or contribute to the amount of new provision required by application of the appropriate quantity standard(s), after taking account of any existing surplus of provision there may within the distance threshold. If the amount of provision required will be larger than the minimum size set out in the provision standards, it should normally be on site and will be secured by condition; if smaller, the Council will normally require the developer to contribute to off-site provision, with contributions secured through a S106 agreement or unilateral undertaking given by the developer.
- Where there is no quantitative deficiency, and one will not be created by the development, but there is a qualitative deficiency in provision within the distance threshold, the Council will require the developer to contribute to the enhancement of an amount of provision equivalent to the size of the development multiplied by the appropriate quantity standard(s). (note: the purpose of the quantity standard is to assess the amount of provision that is required to serve a development; it can therefore also be used to assess the area of provision that should be enhanced). This will be secured by a planning agreement or a unilateral undertaking offered by the developer.
- Commercial developments in town centres will increase the need for town centre greenspaces such as parks because workers will be likely to use these spaces during lunch breaks. It is clearly impractical to make additional park provision in town centres, so the Council will require developers to contribute to the enhancement of the nearest park or similar greenspace on the basis of the net increase in floorspace.

- Where developers make or fund on-site or other provision that is intended primarily for the benefit of the occupants or users of a development, the Council will impose a condition requiring them to make arrangements for management and maintenance in perpetuity that will be acceptable to the Council. This will normally include payment of a commuted establishment sum to fund the replacement of trees and other plants that die within five years of the completion of the development. (Note: this complies with paragraph B18 of DCLG Circular 5/2005)
- Where developers make or contribute to off-site provision, or contribute to the enhancement of off-site provision, that is not intended primarily for the benefit of the occupants or users of the related development, the Council will expect the agency or body in whom the land is vested to make arrangements for long term management and maintenance that are acceptable to the Council. It will also seek to negotiate a commuted establishment sum to fund the replacement of trees and other plants that die within five years of the completion of the development. Where necessary, the Council will secure these arrangements through a planning agreement. (Note: this complies with paragraph B19 of DCLG Circular 5/2005)

The diagram below, taken from the Companion Guide to PPG17, summarises the suggested policy approach to residential developments:



Management and Maintenance Issues

There is no point in providing high quality, well located open spaces and sport and recreation facilities if they will be badly managed and maintained. As noted earlier in this report, the Council's current policy of adopting new open spaces provided by developers is storing up long term problems for its maintenance budgets. Circular 5/2005, however, allows Councils to require developers to make alternative arrangements "in perpetuity" for spaces that are primarily for the benefit of the occupants or users of a development. In practice such spaces and facilities will nearly always be on-site. The main options open to the Council are:

- A section 106 planning agreement plus bond when maintenance is to be by someone other than the Council
- For the Council to impose a condition requiring developers to include a clause in title deeds requiring householders to create and fund, on an equitable basis, a management company or committee that will oversee the maintenance of the common areas of a development. These can include not only open spaces but (for example) estate lighting and the entrance doors, stairways and passages in flatted developments. Any householder not contributing to the management company or committee will then be in breach of conditions in their title and so it is desirable that the title deeds should also:
 - Grant the management company or committee rights to seek a court order requiring payment of maintenance contributions from any householder that defaults
 - Grant the Council "step-in rights" to take over the maintenance and recover the costs, plus an appropriate administrative fee, from the various householders in the event of either there being no company/ committee or the management company/committee not appointing a grounds maintenance suitable contractor.

The first of these possible arrangements is fraught with difficulty. Most developers do not wish to retain any interest in a development after it is complete and sold. While any Section 106 agreement will run with the land, it is unlikely that developers will be willing to fund a bond that may be called upon in the event of a third party over whom the developers have no control, such as the householders in a completed development, defaulting on maintenance. This also gives householders an incentive to default.

The second approach has much more to offer, although some householders will no doubt claim that it amounts to

double taxation: their Council Tax will include an amount for general grounds maintenance across the Council area while they will also have to pay an additional sum each year for the maintenance of the open spaces in the development in which they happen to live. The counters to this are:

- If the Council had agreed to adopt the land it would have required a commuted maintenance payment which the developer would have added to the cost of their house anyway
- The better the local environment in which a house is set the higher its selling price will be

Related Supplementary Planning Documents

The Council will potentially have a suite of SPDs that complement the core policies in its LDF. The content of any SPD relating to open space, sport and recreation provision will obviously depend on the content of other documents in the suite; for example, if the Council produces a specific SPD on planning obligations, there will be no need to go into detail on obligations on them in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation SPD. However, the SPD should, at the least, set out all of the Council's provision standards and the methods it will use to apply them.

19: Vision, Aims and Objectives

Introduction

Most of this report has related to planning policy and the derivation of the locally determined provision standards required by PPG17. However, the Borough Council is an important provider and manager of open space, sport and recreation provision, as are a range of other agencies across the Borough including the town and parish council, the County Council and local schools, the University, Stafford College, local clubs, land owners and a few commercial providers and operators such as some of the larger hotels and the Stafford Sports Arena in Stafford town. All of them serve the same basic market – primarily the Borough’s residents, but also visitors. For obvious reasons, therefore, it is desirable that they should all work together as much as possible. This creates the need for the Borough Council to have a clear strategy for the future of open space, sport and recreation provision across the Borough.

Any strategy starts with a clear long term vision of a desirable and deliverable future, backed by clear aims and objectives and delivery plans. This creates a “policy cascade”. However, as it is impossible to predict accurately all of the issues and opportunities that might arise in the future, and just as with the spatial planning system, it is important to start by getting the broad policy framework right. This chapter suggests the vision, aims and objectives that should guide the Council for the next decade or so and also sets out an initial delivery plan designed to deliver them.

Long Term Vision

For obvious reasons, the vision for open space, sport and recreation provision must relate directly the Local Strategic Partnership’s wider vision and the principles set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan - the universal starting point for the local policy cascade, irrespective of the service area under consideration. The overall vision and related principles are summarised in Chapter 4, but to recap the key points are that the Borough should:

- Have a thriving economy
- Be an area in which everyone shares in prosperity and has access to decent housing, education and training

- opportunities
- Be a safe area
- Be a community in which people live long and happy lives
- Have a strong community and community sector
- Be a place in which the environment is protected and enhanced

And offer:

- Prosperity for all
- Cleaner, Safer, Greener Communities
- Health and Wellbeing
- Effective Leadership and Delivery for the Community

We therefore suggest the following vision:

Stafford will be a Borough with a safe and accessible network of high quality greenspaces and sport and recreation facilities that offer residents and visitors a comprehensive and stimulating choice of leisure opportunities, support sport and physical activity and therefore physical and mental well-being, nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainability, help to boost land values, support regeneration and contribute significantly to making the Borough the area with the best quality of life in the West Midlands

The Council can use this vision to “test” any proposals or ideas that will affect the future of open space, sport and recreation provision anywhere in the Borough. The test is simple: will implementing the idea or proposal be a cost-effective way of delivering the long term vision? If it will, the idea will be worth pursuing; if not, it won't.

Aims and Objectives

The next step in the “policy cascade” is to develop a small number of broad aims that set out in more detail the areas on which the Council will concentrate. Ideally, its main partners should also sign up to them. Wherever possible, they should reflect the aims of other strategies so as to promote “joined up” thinking and, more importantly, joined up delivery. We suggest four such aims:

- A greener, safer and more sustainable Borough
- A more active and healthier Borough
- An involved and proud Borough
- A forward-looking Borough that makes the best use of its resources

The tables below expand these three aims into more detailed objectives and highlight how each of them “joins up” with other Council plans and strategies.

Strategic Aim 1: A Greener, Safer and More Sustainable Borough

Form of Provision	Objectives	Links to/helps to deliver:							
		Sustainable Community Plan Objectives	Local Agenda 21 objectives	Biodiversity strategy objectives	Council Corporate Plan objectives	Local Play Strategy objectives	Local Plan objectives	Local Cultural Strategy objectives	
Greenspace and Informal Recreation Provision	1.1	To use greenspace provision to support regeneration and promote local distinctiveness, effective placemaking and local pride across the Borough	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	1.2	To drive up the quality, value and inclusiveness of greenspace provision across the Borough for people, wildlife and bio-diversity and achieve a progressively more equitable distribution of high quality, high value spaces, with local parks, or park-like spaces, in as many of the main neighbourhoods of the larger settlements as possible	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	1.3	To plan and develop strategic networks of high profile, stimulating equipped play and informal recreation opportunities for children and young people	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	1.4	To develop a secondary network of locally accessible, high quality informal opportunities for play and informal recreation that will complement the strategic network and meet the local needs and aspirations of the Borough's children and young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Strategic Aim 2: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Form of Provision	Objectives	Links to/helps deliver:							
		Sustainable Community Plan Objectives	Local Agenda 21 objectives	Biodiversity strategy objectives	Council Corporate Plan objectives	Local Play Strategy objectives	Local Plan objectives	Local Cultural Strategy objectives	
Greenspace and Informal Recreation Provision	2.1	To develop walking and cycling routes that combine to create networks of sustainable and healthy transport routes that make the maximum possible use of the Borough's canals, rivers and greenspaces to link residential areas to community facilities and work opportunities and, by encouraging "busyness", make them appear safer and more welcoming	✓	✓		✓		✓	
	2.2	To increase access to the urban fringe and link the Borough's main settlements to the rights of way network better	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Provision for Organised Sport and Recreation	2.3	To work with the Town and Parish Councils to maximise opportunities for participation in sport and active recreation in the rural areas of the Borough	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
	2.4	To work with the County Council to ensure that the Building Schools for the Future Programme delivers a sustainable network of joint use sports facilities that will have a high profile in both their local areas and the Borough as a whole, cater for participants from beginners to County level in as wide a range of sports as possible, be designed for community as well as school use and well managed and maintained	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
	2.5	To plan and develop specialist indoor facilities for tennis and netball	✓			✓		✓	✓

Strategic Aim 3: An Involved and Proud Borough

Form of Provision	Objectives	Links to/helps deliver:							
		Sustainable Community Plan Objectives	Local Agenda 21 objectives	Biodiversity strategy objectives	Council Corporate Plan objectives	Local Play Strategy objectives	Local Plan objectives	Local Cultural Strategy objectives	
Greenspace and Informal Recreation Provision	3.1	To promote greater community involvement in local greenspace management and the development and organisation of local social and cultural events	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	3.2	To promote greater community involvement in the planning and delivery of play and teenage provision							
Provision for Organised Sport and Recreation	3.3	To support the development of the Borough's sports clubs	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

Strategic Aim 4: A Forward-looking Borough that Makes the Best Use of its Resources

Form of Provision	Objectives	Links to/helps deliver:							
		Sustainable Community Plan Objectives	Local Agenda 21 objectives	Biodiversity strategy objectives	Council Corporate Plan objectives	Local Play Strategy objectives	Local Plan objectives	Local Cultural Strategy objectives	
Greenspace and Informal Recreation Provision	4.1	To draw up and implement a long term master plan for the development of the Westbridge Park site	✓		✓				✓
Provision for Organised Sport and Recreation	4.2	In the short term, to rationalise the Borough's grass football pitches onto a small number of major sites, with better playing and ancillary facilities than currently available, in order to provide better facilities for players, support the development of community clubs and reduce the revenue costs associated with pitch maintenance	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Form of Provision	Objectives	Links to/helps deliver:						
		Sustainable Community Plan Objectives	Local Agenda 21 objectives	Biodiversity strategy objectives	Council Corporate Plan objectives	Local Play Strategy objectives	Local Plan objectives	Local Cultural Strategy objectives
4.3	In the longer term, to develop a network of floodlit artificial turf pitches across the Borough and progressively increase the extent to which football teams in the Borough use artificial surfaces for coaching, training and matches in order to maximise opportunities for participation by people from juniors to veterans and both sexes while also minimising revenue costs	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
4.4	To review the use, potential and future of Rowley Park and then, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw up and implement a long term master plan for the site; or • Draw up and implement a long term plan for the relocation of the Rowley Park track and other facilities to one or more alternative sites, to be funded by the disposal of not more than about two thirds of Rowley Park for development, plus the enhancement of the remainder as a local park for the Highfields area 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.5	To draw up and implement a long term masterplan for the development of the Riverway site	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

20: Delivery Plans

Introduction

The tables below suggest the types of tasks and other initiatives that it will be necessary for the Council to pursue in order to deliver the vision, aims and objectives. They are intended to be illustrative rather than definitive or exhaustive because the Council will have to decide how best to amend staff work programmes to deliver the strategic aims and objectives. For each objective, the delivery plans set out:

- **Tasks:** a brief description of what the Council and its partners need to do in order to deliver the objective
- **Notes:** explanatory notes to describe the tasks or the reason for them more fully
- **Lead:** the Council service that should take lead in progressing each task
- **Potential partners** with whom the lead Council service should work to progress the task. Partners can be internal (other Council services) or external (eg the town and parish Councils)
- **Baseline:** the current position
- **Target outcome:** the outcomes that the Council and its partners should aim to achieve
- **Timescale:** when the Council and its partners should aim to complete the task.
- **Resources:** the resources that will be needed to progress each task

At this stage, however, the last two columns are blank because the delivery plans will have to be integrated into staff work programmes and Council budgets.

Strategic Aim 1: A Greener, Safer and More Sustainable Borough

Objective 1.1: To use greenspace provision to support regeneration and promote local distinctiveness, effective placemaking and local pride across the Borough

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Adopt the locally determined provision standards set out in this report as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF)	The new standards will have to be adopted formally by the Council	Planning	Leisure Services	Out of date NPFA Standard	Robust PPG17-compliant locally determined standards		
Produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) giving guidance to developers on how the Council will apply its locally determined provision standards	The Core Policies in the Local Development Framework should be relatively short and so this will be necessary to provide additional information for developers	Planning	Leisure Services	Guidance note for developers in draft but not adopted by the Council	Adopted SPD		
Use the new standards in a consistent manner to determine the need for on-site provision or contributions to off-site provision in relation to all residential planning applications	The Council should apply its new standards to all developments involving a new gain of one or more dwellings	Planning	Leisure Services	Potential for inconsistent application of current standards	Consistent and policy-based approach		
Review the effectiveness of the new standards and SPD after using them for about 2-3 years and make amendments as necessary	This is basic good practice	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team	N/a	Amended SPD, if required		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Allocate land in the LDF for a green infrastructure that will link any new housing allocations on the periphery of Stafford town and Stone to existing greenspaces within them	For example, it will be desirable to extend Stafford Common northwards to any housing allocations on the north side of the town; or Wildwood Park to the south; or Walton Common to any housing allocations on the western side of Stone/Walton	Planning	Leisure Services	N/a	Comprehensive green infrastructure of high quality, accessible major spaces in Stafford town and Stone		
Prepare green infrastructure-led development briefs for major housing allocations and/or require developers to prepare masterplans for new neighbourhoods for the Council's consideration and, if thought fit, approval	Structural greenspaces in major new developments should link to existing greenspaces and green corridors within established urban areas as much as possible	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team	N/a	High quality green spaces as the focus of all major residential developments		
Encourage or (preferably) require applications for developments of more than say 50 dwellings to include a green infrastructure and landscaping plan prepared by a chartered landscape architect, showing how the site relates and links to nearby greenspaces and green corridors and will be landscaped	All significant housing sites should have a strong green infrastructure with greenspaces the focus of the development and green corridors that broadly follow desire lines and provide clear pedestrian routes to other greenspaces outside the site and community facilities such as schools and shops and to bus stops	Planning	Leisure Services	N/a	Greenspaces that mature into attractive multi-functional park-like landscapes over time		
Ensure that all regeneration projects have a strong designed-in green infrastructure from the start	All regeneration sites should incorporate a strong green infrastructure that links to nearby greenspaces	Planning	Leisure Services Regeneration Local Agenda 21 Team	N/a	Greenspaces that mature into attractive multi-functional park-like landscapes over time		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Seek the agreement of businesses in the Stafford and Stone town centres for the creation of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)	Use the BIDs, supplemented by sponsorship from individual businesses, to support Stafford and Stone in Bloom	Economic development	Leisure serves Regeneration	N/a	Improvements to the design and maintenance of the public realm in town centres		

Strategic Aim 1: A Greener, Safer and More Sustainable Borough

Objective 1.2: To drive up the quality, value and inclusiveness of greenspace provision across the Borough for people, wildlife and bio-diversity and achieve a progressively more equitable distribution of high quality, high value spaces, with local parks, or park-like spaces, in as many of the main neighbourhoods of the larger settlements as possible

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Require developers to contribute to the enhancement of specific off-site spaces with low audit scores, rather than provide more on-site spaces as much as possible	This will obviously depend on the scale of individual development proposals and the context in which they are set.	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team	Untargeted requirement for developer contributions	Enhancement of the spaces with the lowest audit scores, provided they are needed		
Develop and implement a grounds maintenance specification that manages sites in ways that will enhance their biodiversity value and promote nature conservation	This should also reduce some maintenance costs	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Local communities unaware of the standards of grounds maintenance they can expect	Sustainability-driven grounds maintenance specification; local communities knowing what they can expect		
Encourage other land owners to manage sites in ways that will enhance their biodiversity value and promote nature conservation	Eg churches, housing associations, schools, the County Council, local sports clubs, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	No real concern for biodiversity or nature conservation at most sites	Significant boost to biodiversity and nature conservation in the Borough		
Publicise the way in which the Council and its partners are promoting biodiversity and nature conservation through improved grounds maintenance practices and provide interpretation at major sites	Eg simple interpretation boards in suitable spaces could explain the management regime, how it benefits wildlife and draw attention to the wildlife to be seen in and around the space	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team	Limited publicity through Sustainable Development newsletters	Enhanced local knowledge and appreciation of the importance of environmental sustainability		



Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Designate appropriate sites in the main neighbourhoods in the major settlements as local parks and use developer contributions to enhance and make them more park-like and inclusive		Planning	Leisure Services	Only three formal parks in the Borough (Victoria, Wildwood and Stonefield)	Network of local parks in the main settlements		
Encourage the Borough's town and parish councils to create more park-like and inclusive spaces in the main settlements		Leisure Services		No parks in the rural parts of the Borough	Network of park-like spaces in the smaller settlements		
Encourage schools to develop allotments sites and grow their own vegetables		Leisure Services	Local Agenda 21 Team	?	Schools growing some of their own produce and educating pupils in healthier eating		
Keep the open space audit up to date by redoing 20% of the audit each year and monitoring the average audit scores both across the Borough as a whole and in appropriate planning areas (eg the planning areas used in this report)	If the average scores rise steadily, the Borough's greenspaces are improving in overall quality and value	To be determined	To be determined	Complete audit available for the first time	Audit kept up to date as a working tool		
Monitor the proportion of properties in the Borough within the appropriate walking distance thresholds of high quality high value spaces	Appendix H gives the proportion of properties currently within the distance thresholds appropriate to different forms of provision and also the proportion within these distances of high quality, high value spaces	Planning	Leisure Services	See Appendix H	Rising proportion of properties within distance threshold of HQHV spaces and facilities		

Strategic Aim 1: A Greener, Safer and More Sustainable Borough

Objective 1.3: To plan and develop strategic networks of high profile, stimulating equipped play and informal recreation opportunities for children and young people

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
<i>Children's Play</i>							
Identify appropriate locations for a strategic network of large and stimulating equipped play sites for children in the main settlements	Chapter 10 includes some suggestions for these locations. Rowley Park is an excellent example of an existing strategic play site.	Leisure Services	Planning	Rowley Park play area	Agreed network of future sites		
Develop the network of strategic equipped play sites, seeking external funding for the strategic play sites and also requiring housing developers to contribute to the development of them	Ideally, the first site should be in Victoria Park	Leisure Services	External funding agencies eg Big Lottery, Play England	Rowley Park play area	Agreed network of future sites		
<i>Teenage Facilities</i>							
Identify appropriate locations for a strategic network of high profile, large and stimulating sites for teenagers in the main settlements	Chapter 16 includes some suggestions for these locations and the facilities to be included	Leisure Services	Planning	N/a	Agreed sites		
Consult teenagers on the most appropriate nature of teenage areas		Leisure Services	Teenagers	N/a	Teenagers in agreement on nature of facilities		
Develop the network of strategic teenage facilities, seeking external funding for them and also requiring housing developers to contribute to the development of them	Ideally, the first site should be in Victoria Park	Leisure Services	Planning	N/a	First site complete and open		



Strategic Aim 1: A Greener, Safer and More Sustainable Borough

Objective 1.4: To develop a secondary network of locally accessible, high quality informal opportunities for play and informal recreation that will complement the strategic network and meet the local needs and aspirations of the Borough’s children and young people

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
<i>Children’s Play</i>							
Estimate the useful life of all equipped play areas in the Borough, assuming current levels of maintenance continue, and identify approximately when the Council will have to re-invest in sites in order to keep them safe and attractive, if it retains them	Approximately 80 equipped areas, with most of them owned by the Borough Council	Leisure Services		To be determined	Summary of anticipated useful life, by site		
Research best practice in the provision of “natural” play areas		Leisure Services	Planning Local Agenda 21 Team	N/a	N/a		
Identify the 2-3 play areas in the Borough with the shortest future life and initiate “natural play” demonstration projects at these sites, involving the removal of the play areas and redesign and re-landscaping of the spaces in which they are set in order to enhance their play value and attractiveness to people of all ages, involving local communities in all stages of the work		Leisure Services		To be determined	2-3 demonstration projects		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Monitor and publicise the success of the new “natural play areas”		Leisure Services	Planning Local Agenda 21 Team	N/a	Experience for future sites		
Develop a rolling programme for the development of natural play areas across the Borough as existing equipped play areas reach the end of their safe or useful life, in all cases working with local residents		Leisure Services	Local residents Local Agenda 21 Team	N/a	Agreed programme		
<i>Teenage Facilities</i>							
Estimate the useful life of all teenage facilities in the Borough, assuming current levels of maintenance continue, and identify approximately when the Council will have to re-invest in sites in order to keep them safe and attractive, if it retains them		Leisure Services		To be determined	Summary of anticipated useful life, by site		
Consult teenagers on the most appropriate nature of teenage areas		Leisure Services	Teenagers	N/a	Teenagers in agreement on nature of facilities		
Plan a network of secondary and more local teenage facilities	This network should build on existing facilities as much as possible	Leisure Services	Planning	N/a	Network planned		
Develop a rolling programme for the development of the network of secondary teenage facilities across the Borough, working with local residents and using external funding and developer contributions where possible	It may be possible to persuade Rotary or Lions Clubs and other local community groups to raise funds for these facilities, given the strong support within the community for more provision for teenagers	Leisure Services	Planning	N/a	Network delivered		

Strategic Aim 2: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 2.1: To develop walking and cycling routes that combine to create networks of sustainable and healthy transport routes that make the maximum possible use of the Borough's canals, rivers and greenspaces to link residential areas to community facilities and work opportunities and, by encouraging "busyness", make them appear safer and more welcoming

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Identify and map existing green corridors within each of the main settlements	River and canal banks should form the core component of these networks. They also offer opportunities for activities such as jogging, fishing, canoeing, and bird watching.	Planning	Leisure Services	?	Map of existing green corridors		
Identify opportunities to extend and link up existing green corridors into walking and cycling networks within settlements with minimum use of roads	This should form part of the preparation of village plans	Planning	Leisure Services	?	Strategy for the development of a network of green corridors within each of the main settlements		
Develop a design manual and specification for green corridors within settlements	This should cover things such as safety close to water, gradients, widths, path surfaces, lighting, bins, landscaping and signage	Planning	Leisure Services Local Agenda 21 Team Natural England	No guidance	Borough-wide design manual		
Require developers to link up new developments to the network of green corridors as much as possible and contribute to the overall network		Planning		?	New developments "plugged in" to the network of green corridors so as to encourage residents to walk or cycle		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Design and install a Borough-wide signing system for green corridors within urban areas, designed to encourage walking and cycling	Signs should indicate the time it will take to get to potential destinations along the green corridors rather than distance eg "XYZ primary school - 10 minutes walk"	Planning	Leisure Services Natural England	?	Consistent and comprehensive signage system		
Promote health walks that use the green corridors network		Local Agenda 21 Team	Leisure Services	Some health walks within Stafford town			
Monitor the flora and fauna along green corridors and develop informative and interpretive material as appropriate		Local Agenda 21 Team	Leisure Services				

Strategic Aim 2: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 2.2: To increase access to the urban fringe and link the Borough's main settlements to the rights of way network better

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Map rights of way and other paths on the periphery of settlements, together with the proposed network of green corridors within them		Planning	Leisure Services				
Identify opportunities to link green corridors within settlements to rights of way and other paths in the urban fringe and countryside	The ideal network will be a "spider's web" of routes in the urban fringe and adjoining countryside so that individuals can set off in almost any direction and come back to their starting point by a variety of routes of different lengths and gradients	Planning	Leisure Services				
Seek to negotiate land for the creation of paths linking urban areas to the rights of way network with farmers and other land owners	While the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act effectively creates a "right to roam responsibly", it is much better to reach agreement with landowners on the designation and development of a permissive path network	Planning					
Develop and install a signage system for paths and rights of way in the urban fringe and countryside	Signs should indicate the time it will take to get to potential destinations along the green corridors rather than distance eg "Such and such village - 30 minutes walk". They should also indicate the modes of transport that may be used eg walking, non-powered cycles, horses	Planning	Leisure Services				



Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Develop publicity leaflets for countryside walks and promote health and nature walks in the countryside		Local Agenda 21 Team	Leisure Services Wildlife groups				
Monitor the flora and fauna along the green corridors and publicise gains in biodiversity and wildlife conservation		Local Agenda 21 Team	Wildlife groups				

Strategic Aim 2: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 2.3: To work with the Town and Parish Councils to maximise opportunities for participation in sport and active recreation in the rural areas of the Borough

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Create a model but flexible specification for a village hall or community centre	This should cover points such as disabled accessibility, ensuring that the main hall is large enough for badminton, the need for meeting room(s) and kitchen plus the desirability of a stage and smaller hall and multi-court	Leisure Services	Staffordshire Parish Councils Association	No guidelines	Clear guidelines that the Council can use when assessing any requests for financial support		
Encourage the town and parish councils to audit provision in their areas against the model specification and identify any changes realistically needed	The Borough Council should develop an audit for the town and parish councils can use	Leisure Services	Town and Parish Councils	No database	Database of village hall provision across the Borough		
Require developers of rural housing projects to contribute to the upgrading of the nearest village hall		Planning	Leisure Services Town and Parish Councils	No developer contributions	Upgrading of village halls to make them more suitable for basic sports use		

Strategic Aim 2: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 2.4: To work with the County Council to ensure that the Building Schools for the Future Programme delivers a sustainable network of joint use sports facilities that will have a high profile in both their local areas and the Borough as a whole, cater for participants from beginners to County level in as wide a range of sports as possible, be designed for community as well as school use and well managed and maintained

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Encourage the County to create a "Task and Finish" group to review best practice from elsewhere and experience in the first BSFP schools in the county and identify the most effective ways of planning, designing and managing joint use sports facilities developed through the Building Schools for the Future Programme so that future PPP contracts are based on best practice	It will be desirable for all the Staffordshire Districts and Boroughs to pool their experience of working with schools in relation to joint use facilities	Leisure Services	County Council Other Staffordshire Districts and Boroughs	Variable experience of joint use agreements with different schools	Clear guidelines for the planning, design and management of future joint use school sports facilities		
Try to agree a model joint use and funding agreement with the County Council		Leisure Services	County Council Other Staffordshire Districts and Boroughs	School by school negotiation of joint use agreements	Model joint use agreement endorsed by the County Council to be used as the basis for community use arrangements in PPP schools		
Work with the County Council to plan the joint use sports facilities in new schools, taking a Borough-wide view	The Borough Council should not necessarily be seeking a standard specification for all joint use facilities. Instead it will be sensible to try to ensure that different schools have different specialist facilities that can serve a Borough-wide role eg one	Leisure Services	County Council Sports governing bodies	Limited Borough Council input	Community use sports facilities that are fit for purpose in all respects		

school has a sports hall designed particularly for badminton; another one designed particularly for volley/basketball; another has a hall suitable for use a central venue for a table tennis league; another specialist facilities for marital arts.

Strategic Aim 2: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 2.5: To plan and develop specialist indoor facilities for tennis and netball

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Undertake or commission a feasibility study for a combined indoor tennis and netball centre	The study should explore the potential markets; possible sites; capital costs; funding; revenue costs and management	Leisure Services	Sport England Sports Governing Bodies Local tennis and netball clubs	Very poor indoor provision for both tennis and netball	Clear project brief (if realistic and affordable) or abandonment of project (if not)		
Implement or abandon project after feasibility study		Leisure Services	Big Lottery Fund Lawn Tennis Association	N/a	To be determined		

Strategic Aim 3: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 3.1: To promote greater community involvement in local greenspace management and the development and organisation of local social and cultural events

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Foster the formation of a "Friends" group for each of the designated local parks plus Stonefield Park and possibly Rowley Park and involve them in the management of the Borough's parks. In addition, encourage the formation of Friends Groups for Local Nature Reserves and other sites with a natural heritage designation.	A Friends group is essential in any park for which the Borough Council may seek a Green Flag Award	Leisure Services	Local communities	One Friends Group (Victoria Park)	A Friends group for each local park		
Work with and help Friends groups make funding applications	Friends groups can sometimes access funds that are not available to the Council						
Encourage a member of the Borough Council's parks service to become a Green Flag judge	This is the most cost-effective way of getting the knowledge that the Council will need to prep-are and submit further Green Flag applications	Leisure Services		No Green Flag Judge on the Council staff	At least one Green Flag judge on the Council staff		
Encourage town and villages across the Borough to take part in the annual "Staffordshire in Bloom" competition and publicise the results in Council newsletters	Towns and villages "in bloom" are a real source of local pride and can help to support regeneration and inward investment	Leisure Services	Staffordshire Parish Councils Association	Patchy involvement in the competition across the Borough	Widespread involvement and considerable local pride		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Encourage the town and parish councils to promote community events in their main greenspaces	This will provide opportunities to raise awareness of local greenspaces and help to attract volunteers who may wish to become involved in local greenspace management	Leisure Services	Staffordshire Parish Councils Association	Relatively few community events	Steady programme of community events and working parties		
Include a condition in planning permissions for residential developments requiring developers to make householders responsible for the maintenance of on-site public greenspaces	See chapter 17 for further details	Planning		Council usually adopts and maintains on-site spaces, with long term revenue consequences	Householders take responsibility for their own local environments with safeguards allowing the Council to “step in” if necessary and recover its costs		
Encourage local communities to work with organisations like Groundwork and the BTCV to enhance their local greenspaces		Leisure Services	Staffordshire Parish Councils Association Rotary clubs and other similar community-minded voluntary groups				
With the town and parish councils, promote a “best front garden” competition to complement Staffordshire in Bloom	Small prizes for such competitions can be an extremely cheap way of generating local pride and enhancing the appearance of residential areas	Leisure Services	Town and Parish Councils				

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Seek to persuade local businesses to provide and maintain (or sponsor) hanging baskets, window boxes and other floral displays to complement Staffordshire in Bloom	Small prizes for such competitions can be an extremely cheap way of generating local pride and enhancing the appearance of town centres areas	Leisure Services	Town and Parish Councils Local businesses				

Strategic Aim 3: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 3.2: To promote greater community involvement in the planning and delivery of play and teenage provision

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Foster the development of a Stafford Borough Play Council to work with the Council and its partners to promote high quality play schemes and play provision across the Borough	As a result of the loss of the Play Officer, the Borough needs a “ginger group” for play	Leisure Services	Local communities	No Play Council	Active Play Council working in partnership with the Borough Council		
Create a panel of teenagers, or possibly a Youth Council, to work with the Council to plan the network of teenage facilities	Teenage involvement is vital in this process if the teenage facilities are to be a success	Leisure Services	Local teenagers	Informal arrangements only	Effective sounding board		

Strategic Aim 3: A More Active and Healthier Borough

Objective 3.3: To support the development of the Borough's sports clubs

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Agree a range of target/priority sports with Sport Stafford	This does not imply that non-target sports should be ignored. However, resources are limited and the greatest effort should go into supporting those clubs and sports which are the most popular and have the greatest potential to attract and serve additional members eg football, rugby cricket, netball, tennis, canoeing	Leisure Services	Sport Stafford	Sports development team spread fairly thinly across many sports	A few really strong, well run sports in the Borough		
Encourage the clubs catering for the target sports to be "development-minded" and help them to remove any facility-related constraints that may be hindering their ability to expand	"Development-minded" means that clubs want to expand and cater for all ages and both sexes. The sort of constraints that are limiting club development include the paucity of artificial cricket wickets; and the lack of indoor cricket training facilities	Leisure Services	Sport Stafford				
Increase the amount of money available to Sport Stafford to grant aid clubs wanting to improve their facilities	Sport Stafford does a good job of distributing small grants to clubs and saves the Council the costs it would incur if it administered them	Leisure Services	Sport Stafford	£	?		
Provide advice and assistance to sports clubs making funding applications to external agencies	Clubs can benefit considerably from the expertise and backing of local authority officials when it comes to Lottery and other funding applications	Leisure Services		N/a	Successful funding applications		

Strategic Aim 4: A Forward-looking Borough that Makes the Best Use of its Resources

Objective 4.1: In the short term, to rationalise the Borough’s grass football pitches onto a small number of major sites, with better playing and ancillary facilities than currently available, in order to provide better facilities for players, support the development of community clubs and reduce the revenue costs associated with pitch maintenance

Note: see the delivery plan for Objective 4.2. If the Council decides to pursue 4.2, it should not put a lot of effort in to Objective 4.1 unless the site(s) progressed in terms of 4.1 can subsequently be used for artificial turf pitches

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Identify the use of the football pitch sites with the fewest and worst pitches and/or no changing	See Chapter 12 for a first list of these sites and the audit results for more detailed information	Leisure Services			List of low value, low use sites		
Review the development potential of each of these sites owned by the Council in terms of the alternative uses for which it may be acceptable to develop them and therefore the potential value of each site	If the sites are suitable for housing, and depending on the context and the availability of other greenspaces within the appropriate distance thresholds, it may be necessary to retain part of them as local greenspace. This will obviously reduce the potential capital receipt.	Planning		N/a	Identification of potential development value		
Identify potential sites in accessible locations for a multi-pitch football centre, the number of pitches they could accommodate and potential site costs	In this context, “accessible locations” can include locations on the periphery of major settlements because half the players in any match are playing “away”	Planning		N/a	Site options for football centres(s)		
With the Staffordshire Football Association, develop a model for a community club		Leisure Services		N/a			

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Undertake or commission a feasibility study to estimate the costs and benefits of developing one or more football centres	This should investigate the views of the local football leagues that will be affected, potential demand, capital and revenue costs, potential management structures and the potential to attract external funding from the Football Foundation or Sport England. It may be desirable to have football centres in Stafford town and Stone.	Leisure Services	Planning	N/a	Completed feasibility study		
If the Council decides that it wishes to progress a grass-based football centre (preferable also with one or two artificial turf pitches in order to generate income during the week), allocate suitable sites in the Local Development Framework and also identify the acceptable forms of development on the existing football pitch sites that will no longer be needed		Planning	Leisure Services	N/a	Site(s) allocated		
Make the necessary funding applications and progress the development, selling off the surplus football sites as appropriate		Leisure Services		N/a	Project(s) complete		

Strategic Aim 4: A Forward-looking Borough that Makes the Best Use of its Resources

Objective 4.2: In the longer term, to develop a network of floodlit artificial turf pitches across the Borough and progressively increase the extent to which football teams in the Borough use artificial surfaces for coaching, training and matches in order to maximise opportunities for participation by people from juniors to veterans and both sexes while also minimising revenue costs

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Designate the Sir Graham Balfour High School as the Council's preferred location for the Borough's first third generation artificial turf pitch and work with the School and the County Council to work up the best possible funding application	School is already planning an ATP	Leisure Services	County Council	N/a	Funding approved		
Negotiate a formal joint use agreement with the school and PPP contractor		Leisure Services	County Council	N/a	Agreement in place		
Encourage the school to progress the project as soon as possible		Leisure Services		N/a	Pitch complete		
Initiate a floodlit mid-week football league at the school		Leisure Services		N/a	League in operation		
Seek to persuade the local mini-soccer leagues to use the Sir Graham Balfour ATP as a central venue		Leisure Services		N/a	Pitch used as central venue		
Seek to persuade local football leagues to accept the principle of playing matches on artificial turf pitches	Leagues may resist the move initially but will have to accept it sooner or later	Leisure Services		N/a	Clubs using the Sir Graham Balfour School ATP and happy to play league matches on ATPs		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
With the County Council, identify all the sites for proposed new schools that could accommodate one or more floodlit artificial turf pitches and seek to ensure that site planning will ensure that any ATPs will be high profile and be accompanied by appropriate community use changing and social facilities	The Borough Council's planning service should seek to ensure from the start that all proposed secondary school sites are suitable for floodlighting	Planning	Leisure Services	N/a	Locations identified		
Plan a rolling programme of artificial turf pitch provision in partnership with the County Council		Leisure Services	County Council	N/a	Programme agreed and implemented		
Identify the football sites that will become redundant as the programme of ATP provision progresses and determine their most appropriate future use	Some sites should be retained in sports use eg as cricket or rugby pitches, some can become local parks and some, or part of some, can be sold for development. If possible, it will be desirable to identify sites for disposal in the Local Development Framework so the Council can take account of them when assessing housing land supply	Leisure Services	Planning	N/a	Use of redundant sites agreed and outline planning consents granted as appropriate		
Initiate plans for the disposal of redundant grass pitch sites in order to fund other sports facilities eg the indoor tennis and netball centre in Objective 2.5	This does not mean that the whole of redundant pitch sites should necessarily be sold.	Leisure Services	Other Council departments as appropriate eg Legal Services	N/a	Programme of disposals agreed		



Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Seek to ensure that PPP contract specifications contain adequate safeguards for community use and appropriate changing and social facilities		Leisure Services	County Council	N/a	Acceptable agreement in place		
Work with local football leagues and the Staffordshire FA to maximise use of the ATPs		Leisure Services	County Council Staffordshire FA	N/a	Leagues using ATPs		

Strategic Aim 4: A Forward-looking Borough that Makes the Best Use of its Resources

Objective 4.3: To draw up and implement a long term master plan for the development of Westbridge Park

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Draw up a long term master plan for Westbridge Park	Key features of the master plan should be improve pedestrian access to the Stone Meadows Local Nature Reserve to the north and the flood plain to the south, and maximising the potential of the banks of the River Trent and the Trent and Mersey Canal as walking and cycling routes; to facilitate the Marina Project; to give the Stafford and Stone Canoe Club a higher profile; to enhance the environmental qualities and amenity of the park	Leisure Services	Regeneration				
Give the Stafford and Stone Canoe Club sufficient security of tenure (eg a long lease) to allow it to apply for capital grants	Funding agencies generally require a club to have at least 21 years security at the time a grant is agreed	Leisure Services	Other Council departments as appropriate eg Legal Services				
Work with the Stafford and Stone Canoe Club to help it develop better changing and clubhouse facilities and raise its profile within the park	The club is a major asset to the Borough but fairly low profile	Leisure Services	Regeneration				
Consider relocating the facilities in the Westbridge Park Fitness Centre to Alleyne's High School	There may be highways constraints on further development at Alleyne's. If so, the Council should retain the Westbridge Park facilities.	Leisure Services					

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Objective 4.4: To review the use, potential and future of Rowley Park and then, as appropriate:

- Draw up and implement a long term master plan for the site; or
- Draw up and implement a long term plan for the relocation of the Rowley Park track and other facilities to one or more alternative sites, to be funded by the disposal of not more than about two thirds of Rowley Park for development, plus the enhancement of the remainder as a local park for the Highfields area

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Consult Cannock Chase District Council to establish the potential for it and the Borough Council to work in partnership to develop joint athletics facilities.	This could be the upgrading of the Rowley Park ancillary facilities or the creation of a new athletics facility on a suitable site between Stafford and Cannock	Leisure Services		N/a	Clarity over Cannock Chase intentions		
Decide the standard of athletics competitions that a track in the Borough should be able to host	The Rowley Park track has 8 lanes and so is suitable for most standards of competition. However, different standards of competition have different requirements in terms of spectator and ancillary accommodation and Rowley Park is not suitable for much more than club and county level school events.	Leisure Services			Clarity over the levels of competition that the Borough wishes to be able to host		
Undertake a detailed condition and fitness for purpose survey of all the facilities in Rowley Park	This will include the pitches, bowling green, tennis courts, track and field facilities, pavilion, spectator facilities, multi-court and play area	Leisure Services	Technical Services	Rowley Park in operation but requires investment	Estimate of need for investment in the site		

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
Identify the development potential of the Rowley Park site	This should include not only the identification of acceptable land uses and therefore the potential capital receipt but also means of providing appropriate means of access	Planning	Leisure Services		Clear statement of development potential		
If it would be acceptable in planning terms to redevelop Rowley Park, and possible to achieve appropriate access for an alternative land use, undertake or commission a feasibility study to investigate and compare the costs and benefits of retaining or relocating the sports facilities to another location and disposing of up to about two thirds of Rowley Park for development	For example, it may be possible to relocate the track and field facilities to Beaconside so they can be shared by Weston Road High School and the University or a site between Stafford and Cannock. If most football moves to artificial turf pitches in the medium term, the grass pitches at Rowley Park may become redundant, unless they are converted to cricket or rugby.	Leisure Services	Planning		Feasibility study complete		
<i>If the feasibility study recommends re-location of the Rowley Park facilities and this recommendation is approved by the Council:</i>							
Implement the feasibility study on the agreed site(s)							
<i>If the feasibility study recommends retention of Rowley Park and this is agreed by the Council, or it recommends re-location of the Rowley Park facilities and this recommendation is rejected by the Council:</i>							
Develop a masterplan for the future of Rowley Park, taking account of the potential transfer of football to artificial turf pitches	The masterplan should identify how the Council will seek to develop the site in the long term as the Borough's primary "Centre for Sport"						

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Objective 4.5: To draw up and implement a long term masterplan for the development of the Riverway site

Tasks	Notes	Lead Service	Potential partners	Baseline	Target outcomes	Timescale	Resources
With Stafford College, the Stafford Town Football Club, the Stafford Cricket and Hockey Club and possibly the White Eagle Polish Club identify a long term vision for the future of the Riverway and Oval sites	If Stafford wishes to develop a county cricket ground, this is the most obvious site (note, however, that Little Stoke Cricket Club also has aspirations to be a county ground. Stone Cricket Club, which has staged county matches, is probably too small to do so again.)	Leisure Services	Stafford College Stafford Town FC Stafford Cricket and Hockey Club Polish Club				
Develop a long term masterplan for the two sites and feasibility study for delivering it		Leisure Services					