

## **SECTION VI – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Introduction**

- 6.1 The PPG17 audit and assessment has identified several specific issues relating to the provision, quality, accessibility and quality of open space, indoor sport and indoor community recreation facilities across the District.
- 6.2 The key priority the District Council needs to consider is to redress the deficiencies in provision both in terms of quantity and quality. The audit has identified accessibility issues faced by local residents when trying to use facilities at a local level.
- 6.3 The following recommendations are made to address the findings of the assessment undertaken. Specific recommendations are made for the development of planning policies to help address the findings of the audit. A number of recommended actions are then proposed relating to sites in general, and finally, recommendations are made in relation to specific typologies.

### **Planning Policy**

#### **Context**

- 6.4 The Companion Guide to PPG17 suggests that planning policy needs to:
- Enhance or protect existing open spaces or sport and recreational facilities of value to the local community. The guidance stipulates that this needs to be the key driver that influences planning decisions regarding provision
  - Ensure that new provision fills identified deficiencies in existing provision
  - Develop planning policy that clarifies the circumstances in which the authority may consider allowing the redevelopment of existing provision
  - Set clear guidance on developer requirements for both onsite/ off site contributions complete with the methods for calculating any necessary future maintenance or establishment costs
  - Develop the principles for relocating necessary provision that is poorly located
- 6.5 Strategic policies and standards need to be set out in the council's Local Development Framework. Not all housing development will require or justify additional recreational facilities, but it is important to recognise that all new residents will have needs and place additional demands on existing provision and collectively the impact of major housing allocations will be significant. This means that to meet the needs arising from some developments, improvements to existing facilities may need to be provided even if additional facilities are not required.
- 6.6 The guidance also identifies the need to produce new policies or clarify existing policy to ensure that developers contribute to strategic greenspaces (those used by people over a wide catchment area) in addition to local provision (that provides for the local town or parish needs). Therefore developers will be expected to contribute financially to the improvement of existing facilities or provision as the residents of the properties they develop will add to the wear and tear of existing strategic provision This needs to include all the typologies considered:
- Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds
  - Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace (including Local Nature Reserves)
  - Amenity Greenspace
  - Provision for Children and Young People
  - Outdoor Sport
  - Allotments
  - Indoor Sports provision
- 6.7 Government planning policy set out within the PPG17 guidance makes clear that local authority standards covering the provision of all open space, sport and recreation facilities, as a minimum, should be able to satisfy or to help answer the questions:
- How much is needed?
  - What quality should it be?
  - How easy should provision be to reach and use for those for whom it is designed?

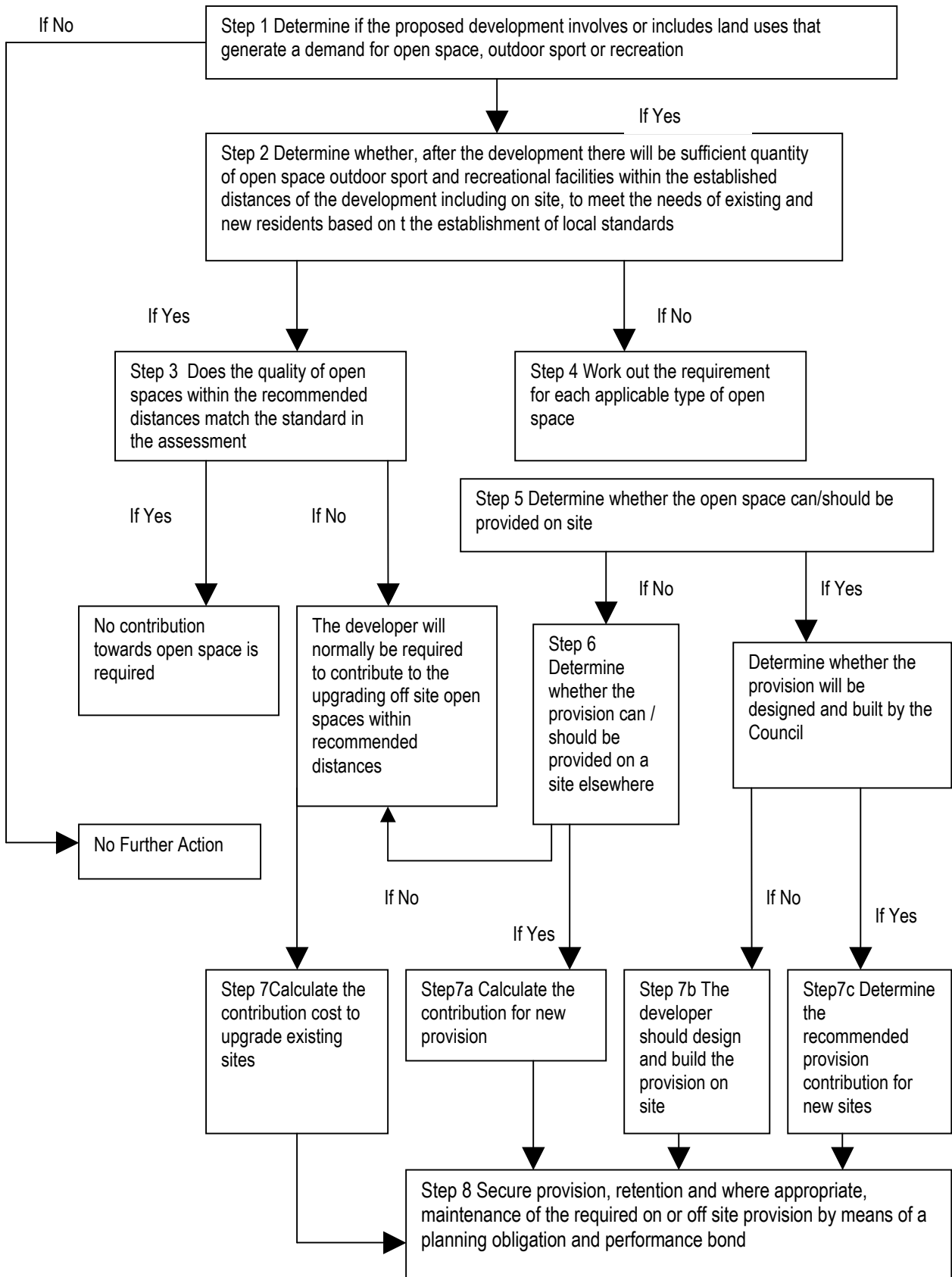
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- 6.8 The Companion Guide to PPG17 identifies five stages which need to be completed when undertaking local audit assessments of provision for open space, sport and recreation. Step 5 of the guidance involves providing advice on drafting future planning policies.
- 6.9 The guidance also suggests that four strategic options need to be identified when considering planning policies:
- Existing provision to be protected
  - Existing provision to be enhanced
  - Areas in which new provision is required
  - Opportunities for new, enhanced or relocated provision.
- 6.10 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) reformed the planning system, replacing district level Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The LDF will consist of a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs) which may be prepared at different times. There are two main types of LDDs, namely,
- Development Plan Documents (DPDs): these form part of the statutory development plan, replacing local plans. They include the Core Strategy (which sets the broad vision and policy framework), Development Control Policies, Development Allocations, a Proposals Map and any Action Area Plans the authority chooses to prepare.
  - Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) do not have full development plan status but still carry significant weight as part of the LDF. These may include development briefs for particular sites, or more detailed guidance on certain topics.
- 6.11 In addition to these Local Development Documents setting out future policy, the new legislation also requires that local planning authorities prepare a Statement of Community Involvement, setting out how the local community and stakeholders will be consulted on planning policies and applications, an Annual Monitoring Report reviewing the effectiveness of policies and the progress on the LDF, and a Local Development Scheme which sets out the work programme for preparing the LDF, and which is reviewed annually.
- 6.12 The Council's strategic planning policy on open space, sport and recreation will be set out within the Core Strategy of the LDF.
- 6.13 A more detailed Development Control policy is likely to be required to indicate how open space standards will be met on new development sites, and in future a Supplementary Planning Document may also be necessary to explain in more detail how these policies will be implemented, providing developers with a clear framework and formulae to identify the scope and scale of on-site and off-site financial contribution requirements.

### Best Practice

- 6.14 Outlined below is a proposed process for determining open space requirements that has been highlighted as a best practice model employed by other authorities such as Fareham BC.

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- 6.15 When considering the implementation of planning policy that seeks the provision or enhancement of open space as a consequence of development, it is worthwhile reviewing how other authorities determine when provision should be on the development site and when contributions towards off-site provision or enhancement are appropriate. Outlined below are examples of other local authority guidance:
- Fareham Borough Council favours on site provision, dependent upon a number of factors that include the size of the development site and whether the site is in close proximity to existing good quality provision. The Council guidance also includes a matrix to identify when on/ off site contributions are appropriate in accordance with the number of dwellings and provision type
  - Stockport / Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council seek commuted sum payments for small scale developments, with the funds being held in an investment / interest earning account to accrue funds to enable improvements
  - Harrogate Borough Council seeks provision on site whenever possible: if provision falls below a specified size the Council seek off site contributions
  - Worcester City Council seeks on-site provision, with any shortfalls in provision not accommodated on-site being met through commuted sum payments that are then allocated and spent on identified projects
- 6.16 Maintenance sums are also an important consideration when dealing with developer contributions. Research of other councils' practices has revealed that this varies significantly across local authorities:
- Fareham Borough Council – maintenance payments to the Council 12 months after a site or provision is transferred to the Council. Maintenance is calculated on the number of bed spaces the type of provision and is updated annually
  - Stockport / Knowsley MBC – Maintenance payments to the Council 12 months after handover, maintenance sums are calculated using current rates with a multiplier and are for 15 years
  - Harrogate Borough Council - the Council revise the maintenance payments required on an annual basis by adding 10% contingencies to the annual cost and multiplying by the number of years, maintenance is normally required for 5 years
- 6.17 The PPG17 Companion Guide identifies that the simplest way to express the requirements for future maintenance is to express it in terms of a sum per unit of provision such as £/ hectare or £/ sqm.
- 6.18 The general approach, which has been the norm for many local authorities, has been to multiply the typical cost of annually maintaining a facility by an agreed number of years. The guidance advocates that a fair way to negotiate with developers is to calculate the net present value of the anticipated revenue payments. The commuted sum payment is then based on
- The estimated cost of annual maintenance- this needs to be established not so much on the current cost of maintenance but after consideration as to whether the current level of maintenance is adequate to maintain the provision to the standards required. This removes the opportunity to under price the commuted sum payment and transfer historic budgetary constraints or budget reductions onto new provision.
  - It is good practice to work to a more appropriate cost with an assumed rate of inflation.
  - An agreed time period for which payment is to cover (research undertaken as part of this strategy has shown that the time period expected varies from 5-25 years)
- 6.19 The Council should ensure that developers with permission for new developments make contributions towards the capital expenditure that is initially required to provide and enhance provision (i.e. capital contribution), whilst also contributing to the ongoing revenue cost of maintaining the provision ( i.e. revenue contribution).
- 6.20 This contribution needs to be guided by the evidence of the standards of provision at parish levels in comparison with the District level of provision and the standards set in this report. There are two calculations that can be made:
- Where deficiencies exist in open space in the area which cannot be provided for on site and the District Council will accept a contribution in lieu of new open space provision from a developer
  - Where the contributions are to be used to improve the quality of existing facilities (This requires an estimated standard cost to be calculated, using existing best practice maintenance rates and in consultation with the parish and town councils)
- 6.21 The costs for the above are calculated dependent upon the situation i.e. whether there is a requirement to improve existing facilities only or whether there is a need for land acquisition and/or the construction of new facilities.

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- 6.22 Cost will include ensuring the site is of the appropriate size, laying out the facility, levelling and drainage, landscaping, any special surface requirements, car parking and other implementation costs (which will include fees for the design of the scheme, land surveys, drainage and landscape advice) plus a handling fee.

### Planning Agreements

- 6.23 PPG17 Guidance advocates a new approach to the use of Section 106 agreements as a means of achieving environmental improvements as part of new residential developments.
- 6.24 This study provides the framework for the District Council to establish developer contributions by identifying where contributions are needed and what needs to be improved.
- 6.25 A review of best practice case studies advocated through Sport England has identified the following formula for establishing quantity standards and contribution levels from developments.

Open Space requirement = A x B x C		
Open space requirement = A number of people in development	x B level of open space per person (m <sup>2</sup> )	x C cost of open space per person (£)
The number of people in a development is based on an assumed occupancy rate for the District. This is normally established through the number of dwellings and the overall population to establish an average of people per dwelling. (Factoring in a vacancy rate can help make this calculation more robust and accurate).	Open space provision levels (ha) have been identified through the quantity analysis within this report and can be incorporated into the Council DPD and SPD. The standards reflect provision per 1000 population. To identify provision per person the overall hectares per type is divided by the overall population and is then x 10,000 <b>For example</b> Natural and Semi natural greenspace in West Dorset is 1071.1 ha The current population is 100,172 The Ha per 1000 population is 10.69 The provision per person = 106.9m <sup>2</sup>	This cost relates to off site provision per person. In accordance with the best practice guidance this requires a further calculation to establish the cost of open space per person. This cost is directly linked to the quantity standard so for natural and semi natural greenspace it is based on a cost of 106.9m <sup>2</sup> per person. According to the guidance the cost of open space needs to follow best practice and should reflect the cost based on what elements of open space provision to include within the costing, for example, whether the cost of a facility should include site preparation, drainage, special surfaces and levelling and also what ancillary facilities to include within costings, what level of equipment and land costs.

- 6.26 A recommended approach that is in keeping with Circular 05/2005 is to develop a costings spreadsheet that is included as an appendix to the Supplementary Planning Guidance and update this annually. It is a more open approach that speeds up the planning process by allowing developers to predict the likely contributions they will be asked to pay.
- 6.27 Outlined below are general associated costing for different open space elements. These costs are identified through best practice from Sport England Toolkit 1st quarter costings 2005 (cost of providing a good quality community sports facility), advice taken from National Organisations and Governing Bodies including recent Lottery Funded Projects.

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6.28 Outlined below is an indication of costs taken from recent best practice:

Typology		Cost of Provision		Detail
Parks and Gardens		£2-4million		Requires a site by site costing with detailed requirements & costings. Indication of cost based on information from Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of a medium sized park.  Funding is clearly dependent upon the design, style and infrastructure
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace				Requires a site by site costing. Cost is dependent upon infrastructure design and layout and improvement to habitat, it is important that new provision is supported by a costed future management plan
Amenity Greenspace		£10k upwards		Dependent upon design and layout price indicated is for a minimum layout of 2000 sqm
Outdoor Sport	Grass Pitch	£30k-60k		Dependent upon location, drainage requirement etc. Site needs to accommodate two senior sized pitches and cricket square to include car park, services, connections and drainage to playing surfaces
	Cost of Changing Room	£250k-£350k	2 Room	Cost dependent upon material, layout and design, higher end specs have separate changing for match officials, first aid room and social area
		£300k-£450k	4 Room	
		£450k -£600	6 Room	
		£650k- £1.2million	12 Room	
STP	£300-£800k		Wide range in cost due to type / choice of surface. 3g rubber crumb is more expensive than more traditional sand based surface also need to consider cost of floodlighting and changing	
Cricket Square	Cricket Square	£6k-£40k		Cost dependent upon level of play intended
	Bowls	£70k-£100k		Cost dependent upon level of preparation, surface type (grass/ synthetic)
	Tennis	£30k-£150k		Cost dependent upon surface choice and perimeter fencing type need to consider cost of floodlighting and changing. Cost based on four court unit
Indoor Sport	Indoor Bowls	£1.5million( 6 rink)		Sport England can provide detailed costs for a number of specific facility projects( <a href="http://www.sportengland.org/kitbag_fac_costs.doc">http://www.sportengland.org/kitbag_fac_costs.doc</a> )
	Sports Hall	£2.5 million ( 4 court hall)		
	Swimming	£3million+ (6 Lane 25m)		
Provision for	LEAP	£25k-£50k		Wide variance in figures clearly cost is related to choice of material, equipment, size and surface.
	NEAP	£45k-£200k		

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Typology		Cost of Provision	Detail
Children and Young People	MUGA	£45k-£55k (40/18m) plus £50k for floodlighting	Fencing , layout and drainage
	Skate	£100k-£200k	
Allotments		£1million +	For purpose built site with security fencing, accessible plots, water, shop, car-parking and plots for people with disabilities. North Dorset have built a new site at Blandford Forum that cost in the region of £1million in 2005

- 6.29 The District Council needs to be clear in scheme costings that the land for additional provision is not to be provided at residential prices. The funds need to be held in an open space fund and when this reaches an appropriate level the funds would be released by the District Council to the parish and town councils for approved refurbishments or new provision.
- 6.30 For sports pitch provision the District Council recognises that many of the proposed residential developments will not be large enough on their own to generate new pitches for sport such as cricket or football. The District Council also recognises the benefit of dual use facilities as a means of catering for community needs and demonstrating best value. As such the District will seek to require a minimum size of 2.1ha for new sports pitch provision. The minimum of 2.1 ha is seen as an appropriate size to accommodate two senior football pitches and a cricket square with changing rooms and car parking.
- 6.31 The District Council needs to link improvement contributions to the number of dwellings being proposed, based on the average number of people per type of dwelling, and to calculate contributions based on ha per 1000 per typology. This needs to consider the current maintenance cost of existing facilities.
- 6.32 The formula for working this out needs to follow best practice. One such example is outlined below
- The number of people per dwelling
  - The quantity standard per 1000 population (by typology)
  - The level of open space required = number of people in development x provision per 1000 (or m<sup>2</sup> per person)
  - (If provision is off site the estimated cost for the provision of amenity greenspace is £10,000 minimum, on the basis of a 0.2 ha minimum size as advocated by PPG17 - e.g. £10000/2000m<sup>2</sup> gives provision per m<sup>2</sup> x provision per person)
  - West Dorset has an average size of amenity greenspace of 0.36ha and this could be used as the minimum size for future provision on the basis that larger sites are easy to maintain and serve a wider purpose as they enable wider a wider range of use and provide a focal point.
- 6.33 It is important to note that there are also maintenance considerations that need considering if new open provision is made through new development. A commuted sum for future maintenance, to cover the future cost of maintaining the provision, should therefore be made in addition to the provision of the land and facilities.
- 6.34 The Council should use the audit findings as a means of identifying where provision and quality improvements require further investment in conjunction with the town and parish councils.

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### Conclusions

- 6.35 Analysis of existing guidance on open space, and the results of the audit, lead to the conclusions that:
- The Council should establish and set standards for the different types (typologies) of provision (Local standards for the district are proposed in this report).
  - Whilst it is recognised that that this is the first time the Council has identified standards of provision for each type of open space, the Council needs to take a logical approach to future provision. For example the Council may wish to achieve the standards set by Natural England for accessible natural and semi natural greenspace by ensuring that the requirement for Local Nature Reserves is met and to recognise the role of the coast and cliff tops in providing many people with access to natural and semi natural greenspace.
  - The Council needs to ensure that all new housing development contributes to open space and recreation provision, including developments of single dwellings.
  - Development contributions may justifiably be used to enhance the quality of existing provision as well as to provide new areas. In parts of the district there may be adequate quantity of provision to meet the needs arising from a new development, but the pressure of the additional use could lead to the need for quality improvements.
  - The Council should seek provision, or contribution towards provision, from development on the basis of the district wide open space standard. This should be divided between the various typologies taking account of whether there are deficiencies or surpluses in that area currently, in both quantity and quality, and whether the additional population from the development will result in deficiencies. If there are deficiencies in particular typologies then more of those typologies and less of other typologies may be sought.
  - Where the audit has shown that there is extensive over-provision of a typology in an area, and where this would still be the case after the population arising from a new development in that area has been taken into account, then provision of new space of this typology should not be sought. Contributions towards quality improvements, or contributions/provision of other typologies depending on identified need should be sought instead.
  - The Council should give consideration to the development of a district-wide open space fund (pooled fund). This would be established to ensure contributions are always sought and create the means whereby funds could be used to enhance and improve existing provision or provide new provision to address deficiencies and need. This would prove useful especially in the rural areas and in order to address the cumulative impact of small developments, which on their own generate insufficient funds to provide anything of purpose. In order to ensure that funding is used for improvements that will benefit the population of the new development, a series of area-based pooled funds could be set up – or development contributions could go partly towards local improvements and partly to the district-wide improvements fund (e.g. 75% local and 25% district wide).
  - A Supplementary Planning Document should set out a list of priority projects and wherever possible contain costing detail which can be annually updated. The initial priorities should be linked to priorities identified in the audit to bring sites up to a good standard.
- 6.36 Government policy in Circular 05/2005 specifies that contributions from developers should only be sought where they are directly related to the proposed development. This leads to pooled funds needing to be carefully administered and ring fenced within particular areas. Pooled funds can be based around the accessibility standards identified earlier within this strategy although this can be restrictive in rural areas. The same applies to off site contributions.
- 6.37 The improvements that can be provided to open space should be detailed within the SPD and could include improvements to access to facilities. It has to be recognised that the exact improvements to provision may not have been identified at the outset and therefore it may be more appropriate to use the parish level rather than the accessibility standards as the area to ring fence in more rural areas. In urban areas the accessibility thresholds can be applied.
- 6.38 Further consultation with the local community will take place as planning policy is developed, as this is a requirement of the national planning system. This will provide further input into the agreements of standards and approaches, helping to that local people have access to a network of good quality facilities within their local area.



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### Generic Recommendations

- 6.39 A number of recommendations are made in relation to all sites and the assessment undertaken. These are concerned with the use of information gathered and the further development of the study in future years, and indicate current best practice. The following recommendations are made:
- a) Develop a greenspace working group that consists of representatives who have an interest in the provision of open space, outdoor sport and recreation across the District. This should include both providers and user group representatives. The role of this working group would be to prioritise improvement programmes, co-ordinate funding applications and work with developers to ensure provision meets local requirements. This group should be established to utilise the evidence gathered within this report and develop a greenspace strategy at the parish level. The group should share, and utilise the expertise of leisure and planning officers, to ensure that specific site development issues are fully considered, and the implications shared, before a planning decision is made.
  - b) Work with Town and Parish Councils to ensure that sport, leisure and open spaces are monitored on a regular basis (every two/three years) and publish findings in terms of the quality and quantity of provision. It is important to monitor the quality of sites on a regular basis to ensure that the quality issues identified are improving and to act as a guide in determining where priorities for investment have changed. This will allow trend data to be collated and improvements to be tracked. It is important that findings are published to enable wider stakeholders to track progress.
  - c) Develop a central record of all sports and leisure facilities (indoor and outdoor), and open space to include the findings of the assessment undertaken. Currently many different sections of the Council, Town and Parish Councils hold this information; this information is not always consistent (sites listed by different names etc). The central record should include access to GIS mapping.
  - d) Establish a central consultation database for the Council, using the data and contacts gathered through this study. This information is held currently by a number of different sections/individuals in the Council; in the course of this study, a number of inaccuracies/wrong contact details etc have been identified; establishing a central database, which is regularly updated, will address these issues for the future.
  - e) Continue to develop the marketing information produced about the parks and open space facilities available, key activities accommodated and access arrangements. The Council should seek to work with key partners in future marketing, such as the local Primary Care Trust (PCT), the wider voluntary sector, education, the Youth Service etc to ensure that open space fulfils a valuable role in meeting wider social objectives (e.g. health improvement, increased active participation).
  - f) Develop an access standard regarding physical access for those users and potential users with a disability in agreement with local providers.
  - g) The absence of signage or the presence of outdated signage was found to be a key weakness of many sites audited. Develop a consistent approach to the provision of signage at all sites, through encouraging signage improvement with key providers. All sites should have a sign with site details, ownership and contact numbers. This can address a number of issues including helping with the reporting of vandalism and improving community safety.
  - h) Continue to work towards the reduction of the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces.

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