

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Local Development Framework Working Party

16th March 2009

PPG 17 Open Space Sport and Recreation Study

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jill Dyer
Responsible Head of Service	Dave Hammond
Non Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings of the Open Space, Recreation and Sports Needs Study carried out to inform both the LDF and in particular the Core Strategy and also help the Street Scene and Community services formulate long term strategies for open space, sport and recreation needs across the district.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members note the conclusions of the study, the implications for Bromsgrove and its influence on the Draft Core Strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The planning system stresses that a strong evidence base is needed to support the production of development plan documents, such as the Core Strategy. The Council has therefore commissioned a study on open space sport and recreation which has informed the draft core strategy specifically Core Policy 11: Open Space and Recreation. The study has been carried out by PMP Consultants on behalf of both the Planning and Environment Services and the Street Scene and Community Services.
- 3.2 The Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, like supporting an urban renaissance, rural renewal, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being and promoting more sustainable development. To achieve this, local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreation facilities and by referring to this information, to set locally derived standards for the area. This study is therefore undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and the guiding principles in its companion guide: Assessing needs and opportunities. The assessment is an essential part of the evidence base

which underpins the core strategy, some of the first core strategies to be developed were found to be unsound as they didn't have a fully compliant PPG17 assessment to justify policies on open space.

- 3.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands (Jan 08) highlights that the region looks forward to improving people's quality of life, having successful rural renaissance, being recognised for its high quality natural and built environment, having an efficient network of integrated transport facilities and services in the most sustainable way. In accordance with PPG17, Policy QE4 Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces of the RSS also states that local authorities should undertake assessments of local need and audits of provision to ensure there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality urban greenspace in the district. The open space study can contribute to meet these aspirations and requirements. Also, the findings could be used to influence the regional recreation provision, which will be looked at in the RSS Phase 3 revision.
- 3.4 The study covers 10 types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Bromsgrove. They are:
- 1) *Parks and gardens* – areas that provide informal recreation and community events such as Sander's Park
 - 2) *Natural and semi-natural green spaces* – areas for wildlife conservation, biodiversity environmental education and awareness, such as Sycamore Drive Local Nature Area
 - 3) *Amenity green space* - green spaces providing informal activities close to home or work, children's play and enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas. Example includes the amenity green space on Barnsley Hall Road.
 - 4) *Provision for children* - areas for play and social interaction involving children under 12, such as Barnt Green Parish Council Park play area.
 - 5) *Provision for young people* – areas for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 or above, such as Stoke Prior Parish Playing Field Basketball Court
 - 6) *Outdoor sports facilities* – formal sports facilities like tennis courts and playing fields (including school playing fields). Example includes Wythall Park Bowling Green.
 - 7) *Allotments* – such as Hewell Road allotments
 - 8) *Cemeteries & churchyards* - place for burial and quiet contemplation, such as St. Laurence Parish Church
 - 9) *Green corridors* – areas for walking, cycling, horse-riding, leisure, travel or wildlife migration such as towpaths along canals, rights of way
 - 10) *Civic spaces* – places for community events and setting for civic buildings, these are hard surfaced areas usually located within town centre. Example includes Wythall War Memorial.

3.5 This study follows the PPG17 Companion Guide five-step process for local assessment and step 1 and 2 were undertaken simultaneously.

3.6 Step 1: Identifying needs

A series of local consultations were carried out across Bromsgrove. These include the *Household Survey* by which 5000 questionnaires to a geographically representative sample were sent to households across the District. The questionnaire provides an opportunity for residents to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space provision as well as identifying their aspirations for future provision. 481 postal surveys were returned, providing a statistically sound sample. Other consultations include *neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions* which was held in five locations, *internet survey for children and young people* where 314 responses were received, *external agencies questionnaire*, *internal council officers consultation* with 16 responses received, *parish council and elected members questionnaires*, *sports clubs survey* and *user group workshops* such as allotment users and older residents. The results of the survey have been used to inform the various elements of the study more feedback from the surveys can be seen in appendix G of the study (due to the lengthy nature of the PPG17 assessment a copy has been placed in the members room and not reproduced full on this summary report)

3.7 Step 2: Auditing local provision

PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space, sport and recreation facilities, irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access as all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs. 305 sites were identified during the audit and they were all classified by their primary purpose into one of the ten typologies listed above. Sites were assessed against accessibility, quality and wider benefits.

3.8 Step 3 and 4: Setting and apply provision standards

PPG17 recommends that local authorities use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (stage 1) to set locally derived standards.

3.9 *Quantity Standard*: the quantity standard is used to define the amount of each of the various open space types the district should be providing in different locations. At first, the current standard was measured against the existing population. Then by referring to the projected population growth up to 2026 and the level of satisfaction displayed in the household survey and other consultations listed in step 1, the recommended quantity standard is set. For example, if the satisfaction level is above 50%, the recommended standard will remain the same as the current standard. However, if the satisfaction level falls in between 40% to 49%, a 2% increase in the current standard will be suggested for the standard. Similarly, a 5% and 10% increase in the recommended standard will apply if the satisfaction level falls between 30% to 39% and 20% to 29% respectively. The percentage

increases have been derived from best practice of the consultants who have completed more than 60 similar studies for other organisations.

- 3.10 *Accessibility standard*: the aim of the accessibility standards is to identify how accessible sites are and how far people willing to travel to access open space. From the findings of the household survey and other consultations listed in step 1, the most popular expected travel mode and maximum travel time are recommended as the accessibility standard. This standard is then applied across the district to identify areas where the accessibility to open space needs to be improved.
- 3.11 *Quality standards*: in order to assess the quality, all sites were visited and assessed by the consultant. Each site was scored against four areas: cleanliness and maintenance, security and safety, vegetation, and ancillary accommodation. A weighting system is then applied to these scores to reflect the most important element of each site. Once this analysis has been done it is possible to see where quality can be improved.
- 3.12 Step 5: Drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities
The application of local standards enables the identification of deficiencies in terms of accessibility, quality and quantity and also enables analysis of the spatial distribution of unmet need.
- 3.13 As open space, sport and recreation facilities make a major contribution to the quality of life, the main role of the planning system is therefore to ensure that these facilities are sufficient, in the right place, of high quality and well maintained. The following summarises the main findings and their implications to the Local Development Frameworks

Priorities for the Local Development Frameworks

- 3.14 *Parks and Gardens*
Applying the quantity standard shows that there is a current shortfall of 0.21 hectares which will increase to 2.86 hectares in 2026. As, the overall shortfall is relatively small combined with the difficulties of providing formal parks and gardens it is suggested that new provision is unlikely to be required. Applying the walk time standard shows that the majority of residents in Bromsgrove East, North East, North and West are outside the catchment area, whereas the application of drive time standard shows that all residents can reach a park. The quality standard shows that cleanliness and maintenance are most important.
- 3.15 To meet the future shortfall, it is important to protect parks from development and consider the designation of pocket parks within settlements outside the catchment of a park such as Hagley. To improve the accessibility, a network of 'green linkages' as sustainable transport links is recommended.

- 3.16 *Natural and Semi Natural Open Space (NSN)*

Quantitatively, the current provision is insufficient to meet the needs of residents and the shortfall by 2026 is expected to reach 5.38 hectares. However, by its very nature, natural open space is difficult to create. For accessibility, all areas, particularly Bromsgrove East and North East have accessibility deficiencies. The quality of this typology is regarded as average and vegetation is regarded as the most important factor. For example, Newton Road NSN and Falcony Centre NSN are identified in need for improvement. It is also mentioned that consideration should be given to biodiversity conservation and promotion should opportunities arise.

- 3.17 Given the already existed provision shortfall, it is important to protect sites from development. Qualitatively, apart from enhancing the recreation values of the sites, opportunities for wildlife and habitats enhancement should be sought. Lastly, to meet demand effectively, maximising access to these sites should be a priority. Provision in Bromsgrove North East and in Stoke Prior is recommended.

Amenity green space (AGS)

- 3.18 Apart from Bromsgrove East and North East, the provision of other areas is insufficient to meet current and future demand. For example, settlements like Hagley which fall outside the catchments of a park and amenity space will need increased provision if possible. Accessibility is important in maximising usage. 61% of residents would expect to walk to amenity green spaces. This reflects that people considered amenity green space as local resources. The quality of sites is average and assessments reveal that a number of sites are in need of significant improvement such as Long Meadows Road AGS and Sharps Close AGS. Local consultation shows that only high quality and functional sites are valued.

- 3.19 To address quantity deficiencies, development of the amenity spaces into a network of green corridors and increased provision in smaller villages are recommended. It is also reminded that settlements with over 500 residents would require local access to amenity green space.

Provision for children and young people

- 3.20 Although current provision for children is sufficient and overlapping catchments can be found, application of the quantity standard indicates that there will be a shortfall of 0.26 hectares by 2026. In terms of quality, cleanliness and maintenance is considered as the most important factor. Almost half of the respondents of the household survey considered the quality of facilities to be good.

- 3.21 Apart from Bromsgrove Central, provision for young people is insufficient to meet current and future needs. Similar to provision for children, priority of provision should be given to areas without open space that can play the offsetting role, such as Hagley and Clent parishes. For quality, safety and security is considered very important. Many existing sites were criticised for their range of facilities and lack of innovative and exciting play equipment.

3.22 To help reduce deficiencies, re-structuring sites serving overlapping catchments and re-profiling sites serving indistinct catchments are recommended. For areas identified as devoid in provision, provision for new facilities should be sought.

Outdoor sports facilities

3.23 Apart from Bromsgrove East, existing provision is insufficient to meet future needs which will result in 19.59 hectares of shortfall by 2026. Applying the accessibility standard, all residents are found to have access to at least one outdoor sports facilities. Cleanliness and maintenance are considered the most important determinant of quality. The householder survey shows that 40% of respondents considered the quality of sports facilities as average and 30% considered that as poor.

3.24 Due to the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies, the protection and quality improvement of all outdoor sports facilities are recommended. Improving the accessibility to school-based STP facilities is also considered necessary to help meeting the local needs. It is also recommended that all sites should meet the National Governing Body criteria.

Allotments

3.25 There is currently a shortfall of 1.41 hectares and the deficiencies will increase to 3.35 hectares by 2026. Only Bromsgrove Central and West have sufficient provision to meet the current and future needs. Walking to allotments is preferred and applying the standard shows that no residents in Bromsgrove North East have access to an allotment. For Bromsgrove East, North and West, the majority of residents are outside the recommended accessibility catchment. Site visits suggest the quality of allotment is good overall. Security and safety is considered as the most important quality determinant.

3.26 Whilst protection of allotments is recommended, provision in areas of deficiencies is recommended. For areas currently without allotments, provision is recommended if evaluation of demand shows such needs.

Cemeteries and churchyard

3.27 PPG17 Annex states "As churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard which will be required is a qualitative one", whereas for cemeteries "every individual cemetery has a finite capacity and therefore there is a steady need for more of them". The council's cemeteries and churchyards officer indicates that there is sufficient burial capacity for the foreseeable future. There is no definitive national or local accessibility standards available and hence no realistic requirement to set catchments. Because very few people identified cemeteries and churchyards as their favourite open space, there was too few response to set a sound quality standard. But among the responses received, cleanliness, maintenance and perceived safety were considered most important.

3.28 The lack of standards means it is inappropriate to state areas of deficiency. Apart from protecting the current cemeteries and churchyard, the Council should ensure there is continued and sustainable land provision for cemeteries. In areas of limited open space provision, enhancement to accessibility and quality of cemeteries and churchyards should be prioritised.

Civic space

3.29 PPG17 suggests that it is not realistic to set a quantity and accessibility standards for civic spaces due to their specialist nature. Residents highlighted that cleanliness, maintenance and perceived safety are the most important quality determinants. Infrastructure (such as bins and seats) should also be provided.

3.30 It is recommended that new development should take into account the demand for new civic spaces from local residents. Creating green linkages to neighbourhoods will improve accessibility.

Green corridors

3.31 The Annex A of PPG17 states that “the need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport... This means that there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard”. Vegetation is considered as the most important contributing factor to quality. There is no accessibility standard available.

3.32 The lack of standards means it is inappropriate to identify areas of deficiency. But the aim of provision should be to provide opportunities for informal recreation, alternate means of transport and resources for wildlife. Protection and enhancement of the existing network (including the Public Rights of Way network) through the creation of additional linkages can help alleviating other open space deficiencies.

3.33 The recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards in the study are summarised as follow:

Typology	Quantity standard (per 1000 population)		Quality standard (most important feature)	Accessibility standard
	Current	Proposed		
Parks and gardens	0.26ha	0.26ha	Cleanliness and maintenance	Urban: 15 min walk Rural: 15 min drive
Natural and semi-natural green spaces	0.43ha	0.44ha	Vegetation	15 min walk
Amenity green space	0.40ha	0.42ha	Cleanliness and maintenance	10 min walk
Provision for children	0.027ha	0.027ha	Cleanliness and maintenance	10 min walk
Provision for young people	0.026ha	0.03ha	Security and safety	15 min walk

Typology	Quantity standard (per 1000 population)		Quality standard (most important feature)	Accessibility standard
	Current	Proposed		
Outdoor sports facilities	1.64ha	1.67ha (0.81ha for community pitches)	Cleanliness and maintenance	Grass pitches - 10 min walk Tennis/Bowling - 15 min drive/ public transport Synthetic pitches/Golf - 20 min drive/ public transport
Allotments	0.17ha	0.19ha	Security and safety	15 min walk
Cemeteries and churchyards	Sufficient burial capacity for foreseeable future		Insufficient response for standard setting	No realistic requirement as locations not dependant on population's location
Civic spaces	Not realistic to set due to its specialist nature		Cleanliness and maintenance	No realistic requirement as provision will not be appropriate in every environment
Green corridors	No sensible way to set as its provision arises from the need to promote sustainable form of transport		Vegetation	No requirement.

Conclusion

3.34 To sum up, the open space, sport and recreation facilities should be protected from development and only facilities serving overlapped catchments could be developed. But this must result in improvement in accessibility to and quality of the nearby site. An improvement in the green corridors network will improve the health of residents, address nearby deficiencies and promote sustainable transport. Also, apart from the recreational value, the biodiversity value of sites should be enhanced. To do so, planning contributions from developers must be maximised.

3.35 It is important to note that if the housing numbers proposed in RSS change (i.e. more than 2100 houses from 2006 to 2026), then the quantity standard recommended in the study may need revising.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The study was commissioned by Planning and Environment Services and Street Scene and Community services, from within existing budgets

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Under PPS12, the examination of a development plan document will involve the legal compliance check and an assessment against three tests of soundness: 1) justified; 2) effective; 3) consistent with national policy. This PPG17 study is done in accordance with the principles stated in PPG17

Companion Guide as well as policy QE4 of RSS. This study therefore will assist the Core Strategy in passing the soundness test in examination.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

Council Objective (CO)	Regeneration	Council Priority (CP)	1. Town centre 2. Housing
Impacts			
Sufficient open space provision will make a place more attractive and hence assist in regeneration.			

Council Objective (CO)	Improvement	Council Priority (CP)	
Impacts			
No impact			

Council Objective (CO)	Sense of Community and Well Being	Council Priority (CP)	4. Sense of community
Impacts			
Local standards on the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities will meet the needs and aspirations of local residents and will therefore enhance the sense of community and well being.			

Council Objective (CO)	Environment	Council Priority (CP)	5. Clean streets and climate change
Impacts			
Facilities such as waste bins and recycling bins in open space, sport and recreation facilities will encourage people to recycle and put rubbish in waste bins. This will contribute to clean streets and recycling. Improving the green linkages will encourage using sustainable transport and reduce emissions that contribute to climate change.			

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

The soundness of the Core Strategy is challenged in the future

7.2 The risks will be managed as follows:

Risk Register: Planning and Environment

Key Objective Ref No: 6

Key Objective: Effective, efficient, and legally compliant Strategic planning Service

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Incorporating the local standards recommended in the study, which was the result of extensive consultation with customers, will ensure customers' needs and aspirations in the district are met.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As stated in paragraph 3.6, a series of consultations were carried out at the needs identification stage. The household survey, neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions and internet surveys for children and young people, for example, would have included residents from all backgrounds. Also, this study will form part of the evidence base to inform the Core Strategy and consultation will be carried out with all sections of the community as the plan progresses.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This study was jointly commissioned by Planning and Environment Services and Street scene and Community, thereby using resources efficiently by spreading the costs between Services and carrying out a study of relevance to both Services.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues	None
Personnel Implications	None
Governance/Performance Management	None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	None
Policy	The study will support the core strategy. The core strategy forms an essential part of the LDF and the policies contained within the core strategy will shape future development.
Environmental	The study will support the core strategy. Core strategy will contain policies in relation to the

	environment.
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12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director - Partnerships & Projects	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All wards.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Local Needs Survey (A copy has been placed in members room or available electronically from the strategic planning team)

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