

West Dorset District Council

**PPG17 Study: Audit and
Assessment of
Open Space, Sport and
Recreation Facilities**

A Final Report

By

Strategic Leisure Limited

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SECTION I - INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- 1.1 Strategic Leisure Limited was appointed in March 2006 to undertake an audit and assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities (PPG 17¹ compliant) to identify local needs for provision, and opportunities for enhancement, development or replacement of current facilities.
- 1.2 West Dorset District Council's Corporate Plan (2006) sets out the intention to undertake this PPG17 study, in order to guide future planning policy on open space and recreation provision and ensure appropriate provision across the district. This will support the Council's corporate objectives of promoting recreation and community fulfilment, and promoting healthier communities. The study will help the council to plan positively, effectively and creatively to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality greenspaces, sport and recreation facilities and civic spaces that meet the needs and aspirations of local communities, local people and people who work or visit the District.

Aim of the Study

- 1.3 This study has been prepared with the following aims
- To provide networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sports and recreation provision in both urban and rural areas for existing and future needs
 - To provide an appropriate balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision
 - To enable clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and landowners in terms of the local authority's requirements for such provision
 - To ensure the provision of space which is economically and environmentally sustainable

Scope of the Study

- 1.4 The study adheres to the guidance detailed in "Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17". PPG17 requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of provision of open space, indoor facilities and outdoor sports provision. This study has reviewed existing strategies and has undertaken consultation with the local public as part of the audit.
- 1.5 The study follows the model as set out in the five recognised steps advocated in the Companion Guide. These are broadly:
- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
 - Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
 - Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
 - Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
 - Step 5 – Policy Recommendations
- 1.6 The study has included an audit of all existing indoor and outdoor open space, sport and recreational facilities in terms of:
- Quantity
 - Quality
 - Accessibility

¹ PPG17 – Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities, 2002, ODPM (now DCLG)

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Study Objectives

- 1.7 This study has been prepared with the following objectives:
- To identify any deficiencies or surpluses in provision and options for dealing with them now and in the future
 - To use the audit and assessment to set locally derived open space and recreation provision standards, addressing accessibility (including disabled access), quality and quantity
 - To provide a robust and comprehensive evidence base to enable the Council to develop planning policies as part of the future Local Development Documents, sufficient to withstand scrutiny at an Examination in Public
 - To provide information to enable the Council to make decisions on the distribution of developer contributions
 - To inform future decisions about the provision and funding of recreation facilities
 - To provide evidence for the need to maintain and enhance existing and new provision
- 1.8 The study has also given consideration to the following factors:
- Different uses of facilities
 - Classification and differing typologies of provision
 - The scale and availability of resources for maintenance / management
 - Natural England's (formerly English Nature) "*Natural Accessible Greenspace Standards*"
- 1.9 The study undertaken has included:
- A review of existing open space, leisure and recreation policies contained within West Dorset District Council strategic documents
 - A range of consultation exercises to ascertain the views of the local community, key interest groups and wider stakeholders
 - Consideration of all appropriate facilities within the District including provision by the local authority (including education), private and voluntary sectors
 - An assessment of playing pitch provision using the methodology detailed in "*Toward a Level Playing Field: A Guide to the Production of Playing Pitch Strategies*" (Sport England, 2002)
 - Recommendations for local standards of provision with regard to quantity, quality and accessibility for inclusion within the developing Local Development Framework
- 1.10 Individual site auditing has resulted in over 280 sites being categorised into 7 Typologies. These open spaces, along with 5 built indoor facilities and leisure facilities, have been audited in terms of their quantity, quality and accessibility.
- 1.11 A steering group of District Council Officers from the Planning Policy, Community Enabling and Information Management Systems divisions was set up to oversee the development of this study.
- 1.12 PPG17 includes other sport and recreation facilities in addition to sports pitches. Its main thrust is a requirement that all local authorities undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. This is to be achieved through an audit of existing supply and demand, the production of a strategy and publication of locally derived standards for the various types of sports facility based on local need.
- 1.13 There has been a change of emphasis from previous guidance, from a quantity-based approach to provision to an approach that also embraces quality and accessibility. A full audit of all such spaces and facilities will provide a sound evidence base for service provision, site improvement and policy making.

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The Vision

- 1.14 It is important that a vision is adopted to reflect the aspirations for open space, sport and recreation in meeting the District Council's corporate objectives. The vision as detailed in the Council's Community Plan (2006-2010) has been adopted:

“Bringing people together to make West Dorset a better place in which to live and work”.

- 1.15 The vision below has been developed for open space, recreational and sporting facilities in support of the Council's corporate objectives

“The Council will aspire to deliver an accessible network of high quality, clean, safe and attractive green spaces and facilities which allow people to improve their health and well being through recreation and sport now and in the future”

Rationale: Why Develop a Strategy?

- 1.16 The provision of good quality, accessible open spaces, sport and recreation facilities can make a positive contribution to a number of key social objectives. These include:
- 1.17 **Promoting and supporting the urban renaissance** agenda through the provision of local networks of well maintained and well managed open spaces, sports and recreational facilities. This can help to create urban environments that are safe, attractive and clean. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality.
- 1.18 **Supporting rural renewal** – the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sport and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and well being of those people who live in the remoter areas.
- 1.19 **Promoting social inclusion and community cohesion** – well planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of well being in the place they live. As a focal point for community activity, they can bring people from deprived communities together providing opportunities for wider social interaction.
- 1.20 **Health and well being** – open space, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.
- 1.21 **Promoting more sustainable development** – by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking or cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned in locations well served by public transport.
- 1.22 **Improve open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and to encourage greater use** - by all members of the community. A key driver for this is to provide the residents of the District with safe, accessible, attractive provision and facilities that are of the right type and meet the needs of the communities that use them.
- 1.23 **Protect valuable provision from development**, ensuring that new landscape schemes contribute to improving an area and to ensure quality is maintained by making sure the correct levels of funding are in place.
- 1.24 **Identify processes for involvement** – the Council is keen to involve local communities in the management of green spaces and wishes to create opportunities for people to be involved and have ownership, working together to improve the green space.

SECTION I - INTRODUCTION

Key Principles

- 1.25 There are several key principles in the development of a strategy for open space, sport and recreation; these are:
- To concentrate on providing quality provision
 - To progressively improve existing provision
 - To identify, agree and set parameters for new provision
 - To establish a comprehensive audit of open space, indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities. This will cover both urban and rural areas
 - To identify the current quantity, quality and accessibility of open space, sport and recreation facilities against relevant standards
 - To assess community attitudes, expectations and vision for future provision and local needs
 - To develop wider use of facilities with restricted use e.g. school facilities
 - To secure high levels of access at a local level to a range of facilities (variety of greenspaces and sport/recreation facilities)
 - To identify opportunities for partnership working and encourage cross departmental working whilst also providing opportunities for the local community to be proactively involved in local facilities
 - To respond to local needs where there is a clear articulated consensus of opinion
 - To concentrate on providing sports pitches at strategic locations fit for purpose
 - To determine the current and future needs for open space, indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities whilst accommodating population change, existing and future patterns of participation and partner aspirations
 - To identify surplus and deficiencies for open space, indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities
 - To provide a set of standards and clear guidance including formulae for negotiating and setting developer contributions
 - To identify opportunities for innovative, new and high-quality public spaces and indoor sports facilities
 - To provide strategic options which identify and evaluate the protection, enhancement and relocation of existing sites or the provision of new open space, indoor and outdoor sport and recreational facilities
 - To develop local standards to meet local needs
 - To focus resources in most needed and appropriate areas
- 1.26 In order to assess in some detail the adequacy of open space, sport and recreation provision, it is necessary to consider the different types of provision and their primary role and function. Knowing why and what an open space or sports facility is there "to do" is critical to making judgements about its adequacy in respect of quantity, quality and accessibility.