

Methodology for assessing supply and demand

Previous approaches to identifying need

- 3.1 The first attempt to establish a standard of provision for public open space and playing fields was made by the NPFA in 1925 and has been subsequently refined on a number of occasions. It is known as the '**Six Acre Standard**'.
- 3.2 The existing Swindon Open Space Audit and Assessment outlines a local standard of 3.2 ha of open space per 1,000 population. Of this, 1.2 ha per 1,000 population should be designated for pitch sports.
- 3.3 The open space audit also outlines recommended accessibility catchments (within 600m or 15 minute walktime to public pitches) and quality standards.
- 3.4 A new local standard for pitches will be considered later in this document and as mentioned previously, this new standard and audit information should complement the findings of the Open Space Audit and Assessment.

The Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM)

- 3.5 '*Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the Production of a Playing Pitch Strategy*' was launched in Spring 2003 and updates the previous methodology used to develop the Swindon BC Playing Pitch Strategy 2001 – 2006. This revised methodology was produced by PMP following widespread consultation on the 1991 methodology, in conjunction with a steering group comprising representatives from the Central Council of Physical Recreation, Local Government Association, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Loughborough University and Sport England.
- 3.6 The aim of the PPM is to determine the number of pitches required for each activity based on demand in an actual or predicted set of circumstances. The essential difference between the methodology and approaches based on standards is that, instead of using land area per head of population as the basic unit, it measures demand (at peak times) in terms of teams requiring pitches and then compares this with the pitches available, thus providing a tangible measure of the adequacy of existing supply.
- 3.7 The particular advantage of this methodology is that it is related precisely to the local situation and the very task of collating and analysing the information highlights problems and issues from which policy options and solutions can be explored.
- 3.8 The revised methodology detailed in Towards A Level Playing Field incorporates:
 - a more holistic view of pitch provision as one element of open space
 - the concept of 'team equivalents' and 'match equivalents' to reflect the requirements of the small-sided games
 - the refinement of team generation rates
 - the revised definition of a pitch
 - the refined quantitative audits of pitches by the use of multiplication factors for:
 - availability / accessibility
 - quality (to include the importance of ancillary provision at pitch sites as well as pitches themselves)
 - carrying capacity.

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- 3.9 The Playing Pitch Methodology (PPM) comprises eight stages. Stages 1 to 6 involve numerical calculations, whilst Stages 7 and 8 develop issues and solutions. The methodology is employed to analyse the adequacy of current provision and to assess possible future situations, in order that latent and future demand (identified through Team Generation Rates), and the problems with quality, use and capacity of existing pitches can be taken into account.
- 3.10 PPM calculations take into account only those pitches that are secured for community use, in line with Sport England guidance.
- 3.11 The Football Association (FA) has recently begun collecting participation data through the County Administration System (CAS), enabling accurate benchmarking against similar authorities and more robust assessments of latent demand. The information available has been used to add value to the findings of the strategy, facilitating more detailed investigation of the reasons behind key issues.

Our approach

- 3.12 The success of the methodology outlined above depends largely on obtaining as accurate a tally as possible of the number of teams and pitches within Swindon. To achieve this, a full audit of pitches, users and providers within the authority boundary was conducted. Questionnaires (which can be found in Appendix A) were sent to:
- all known football, cricket, rugby and hockey clubs based within (or close to) the authority boundaries (identified in governing body and county association handbooks, league handbooks, pitch booking records, websites, local press, the previous PPS or local knowledge)
 - all known Parish Councils within the borough
 - all known schools and colleges within the borough.
- 3.13 In order to gauge wider public opinion, information regarding the strategy was also made available on Swindon Borough Council's website. This provided a dedicated email address and telephone number for local people to voice their opinions about pitch provision in their local area.
- 3.14 Table 3.1 overleaf summarises the response rates from the postal questionnaires. It was of paramount importance that a 100% response rate was received from providers of playing pitches. For this reason, all non-responding schools, colleges and known Parish Councils providing pitches were contacted by telephone.
- 3.15 A 100% response rate was not needed from clubs. This is because missing club information was attained through a variety of sources including:
- telephone calls to league secretaries, clubs and schools all providing qualitative information as well adding to the quantitative detail. The league secretaries were particularly helpful in attaining the missing club information.
 - current league handbooks
 - extensive internet research, through national databases including the Football Association, Rugby Football Union, England and Wales Cricket Board and England Hockey, league websites and clubs own websites
 - council pitch booking data

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- previous Playing Pitch Strategy data
- audit undertaken as part of the PPG17 study.

3.16 The purpose of the club surveys was to crosscheck information and gather qualitative information (i.e. comments) from clubs, providing all clubs with an opportunity to input their views into the study. To increase response rates, a reminder card was sent a week before the original posting deadline.

Table 3.1: Consultation audit response rates

Organisation Type	Number of Surveys Sent	Number of Surveys Returned	Response Rate (%)
Schools	89	54	61
Football Clubs	144	36	25
Rugby Union Clubs	6	1	17
Cricket Clubs	17	4	24
Hockey Clubs	2	0	0
Parish / Town Councils	15	10	67
Total	273	105	37%

- 3.17 The total response rate for the number of returned surveys is 37%, which is higher than average for postal surveys (25% is normally considered 'good'). While the response from schools and Parishes was particularly pleasing, the level of returns from rugby and hockey clubs was disappointing. Many non-responding clubs were telephoned in order to obtain key information and to provide a further opportunity to input into the study.
- 3.18 In addition to the distribution of postal surveys, extensive consultation has been undertaken with internal officers, league secretaries, national governing bodies and other external agencies for all sports.
- 3.19 A summary of key consultations undertaken, along with emerging issues from early consultations can be found in the progress report contained in Appendix B.
- 3.20 An assessment of the data obtained from the above research and consultation is detailed in section four.