

Setting Local Standards

6. The Government believes that open space standards are best set locally. National standards cannot cater for local circumstances, such as differing demographic profiles and the extent of existing built development in an area.

7. Local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas. Local standards should include:

- i. quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed);
- ii. a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities); and
- iii. accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).

8. Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and audits of existing facilities will form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process. Standards should be included in development plans.

9. Assessing needs and opportunities: A companion guide to PPG17 provides further guidance on setting local standards for open space, sport and recreation.

Maintaining An Adequate Supply Of Open Space And Sports And Recreational Facilities

10. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements. For open space, 'surplus to requirements' should include consideration of all the functions that open space can perform. Not all open space, sport and recreational land and buildings are of equal merit and some may be available for alternative uses. In the absence of a robust and up-to-date assessment by a local authority, an applicant for planning permission may seek to demonstrate through an independent assessment that the land or buildings are surplus to requirements. Developers will need to consult the local community and demonstrate that their proposals are widely supported by them. Paragraph 15 below applies in respect of any planning applications involving playing fields.