

Thanet District Council

PPG17 Open Spaces, Indoor
Sports and Recreation
Assessment

An

Executive Summary

By

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Introduction

Strategic Leisure Limited (SLL) was appointed by Thanet District Council (TDC) in July 2005 to undertake a Policy Planning Guidance Note (PPG 17) compliant assessment of open space, indoor and outdoor sport and recreational facilities. The objective of the study was to identify local needs for provision, and opportunities for enhancement, development or replacement of current facilities.

There are a number of main drivers behind this study; these are:

- a) The need to produce the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the District
- b) The need to develop a strategic policy framework for future provision, based on identified need, to ensure future provision is planned, co-ordinated, and appropriate
- c) The need to identify and provide evidence about the levels and nature of existing provision, to address issues of investment, support external funding bids, assist in planning for provision, and inform partnership working

The Thanet Methodology

Stage 1: Identification of local needs: The following key tasks have been undertaken:

- A review of the implications and priorities of existing strategies
- A review of existing policies and provision standards relating to open space, sport and recreation facilities
- Consultation with communities and stakeholders via Sports Club Surveys, School Surveys, Face-to-face meetings Freephone and email services.
- A 500 Door to Door survey was undertaken to identify the views of facility users and non-users; the addresses were identified and sampled by TDC, to ensure representative feedback from around the District

Stage 2: Audit of local provision: The following key tasks have been undertaken:

- Review of quantitative information held by the Council
- Site visits to the majority of all known open space, sport and recreation facilities with community use
- Qualitative assessments of all sites visited
- Consultation with facility providers
- Mapping facilities in respect of location and user catchment area

Stage 3: Setting Provision Standards: The following key tasks have been undertaken:

- Quantity Standards set using the findings of facility audits, local consultation and demand modelling
- Quality Standards set using the findings of facility audits and local consultation
- Accessibility Standards set using the findings of facility audits, local consultation and mapping catchment areas

Stage 4: Application of Provision Standards: Application of the proposed standards in relation to defined catchment areas, and the impact of poor quality, allows the:

- Identification of deficiencies in accessibility
- Identification of deficiencies in quality
- Identification of surpluses or deficiencies in quantity

Stage 5: Recommendations: The findings of the process undertaken have allowed a number of key recommendations to be made and the identification of a number of key strategic priorities for the future.

The assessment and strategy development have been undertaken to consider the **quantity**, **quality** and **accessibility** of facilities. The assessment of **quantity** was undertaken on the basis of:

- A review of the number of sites and size of provision, in relation to local population
 - Comparison of specific types of facilities e.g. playing pitches against known demand (from consultation)
- The assessment of **quality** was undertaken on the basis of:

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- Site visits to community accessible facilities to rate a number of key criteria affecting quality
- Quality ratings from key users, residents and specific user groups (from consultation)
Quality ratings have been applied using the individual scores from the site elements e.g. bins, seating and signage as appropriate to the typology assessed. The scoring system has been developed using national assessment schemes (e.g. Green Flag) and is rated out of 100.

The assessment of **accessibility** was undertaken on the basis of:

- Auditing factors known to affect the access to certain types of facilities
- Consultation with local residents
- Mapping exercises to identify catchment areas for different types of provision

The assessment has considered a number of key questions in relation to:

Audit Process

All known open spaces and parks in the district were audited along with the district's indoor sports facilities, using the quantity, quality and accessibility process. Each site was allocated into one of 8 different typologies (with appropriate sub-categories) for analysis and the production of provision standards for the district:

Typologies

- Parks, Recreation Grounds and Formal Gardens
- Natural/Semi Natural Open space
- Indoor Sports Facilities
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Informal and Visual Amenity Open Space
- Provision for Children and Young People
- Allotments
- Cemeteries, Churchyards and Closed Churchyards

The types of green space that have been excluded from the strategy are:

- a) Beaches and hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians. Although they provide many of the same benefits as green spaces, the inclusion of hard-landscaped areas is not compatible with a strategy concentrating on green spaces. Whilst beaches provide a valuable source of recreational green space in a district with a coastal setting, there are methodological difficulties in calculating the amount of space they provide (because of tidal differences) and physical access to some beach areas is problematic.
- b) Some private green spaces provide a degree of visual amenity and in a few instances may be available to the public on a paid basis; access is either restricted by cost or limited opening hours, thereby excluding the public from general use. However, bringing private green space into public use offers one option for making good deficiencies.
- c) Very small areas of public green space have been excluded on the basis that they are difficult to survey and map. However, they still serve valuable functions and the same planning provisions relating to larger green spaces will apply to them.

Setting, Developing and Applying Local Provision Standards

Standards for the open space typologies (as classified in Section I and applied throughout the study) consider surpluses and deficiencies in provision on the basis of quantitative, qualitative analysis and consultation undertaken. The door-to-door survey of local residents and other consultation findings have been used to inform the appropriate distance thresholds, which have been applied using GIS to demonstrate potential surplus/deficiencies in provision. In order to set provision by standards it is important to consider the standards previously applied by the Council and through the planning framework. The current standard for open space as applied by the Council reflects the National Playing Fields Association standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population. The location, accessibility and quality of open space is also important in ensuring that the areas are well used and appropriate to the needs of the community

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Setting distance thresholds for each type of open space for all areas is not easy to achieve, as many factors will influence travel times. The figures are based on generic average travel times. However the standards provided in the main report, as PPG17 recommends, provide guidance that help to identify gaps in provision and meet the local needs as identified through the sample door to door survey of local residents in Thanet.

Standards of Provision

In developing and applying standards of provision, it is important to be clear that:

- National standards of recommended provision have been used for comparative purposes only
- Existing standards of provision relate to the current level of provision of a specific typology
- Recommended standards of provision are based on local assessment and analysis, but may be the same as a national recommended standard if appropriate, and specifically where current levels of provision do not meet a nationally recommended standard as a minimum. Equally, the future recommended standard may be the existing level of provision, if it is particularly high, and to lose it would significantly change the natural character of the area

It is not appropriate to set local standards in the same way for each typology; this is because the majority of people access different types of provision in different ways, for example, walking to a park or children’s play area and driving to an indoor sports facility. In addition, the way in which people choose to access different types of provision may be influenced by location factors, for example, a high quality park may be within cycling, but not walking, distance in a rural area.

The recommended sustainable means of transport for each type of provision is set out below:

TYPOLGY	SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORT
Parks (Local Park/Recreation Ground/Formal Garden)	Walk Cycle
Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space	Walk Cycle Drive
Indoor Sports Facilities	Walk Cycle Drive
Outdoor Sports	Walk Cycle Drive
Informal Open Space	Walk Cycle
Provision for Children and Young People	Walk
NEAP	Walk/Cycle
LEAP	Walk
Allotments	Walk Cycle Drive

Applying the Standards

Future Needs: In the future, population across the district is projected to increase from 127,900 (Mid year 2004) to 134,300 (Kent County Council estimate) by 2016. It is important that existing levels of provision are maintained, in both qualitative and quantitative terms to continue to provide for the population level; only where there is a significant surplus of a specific type of provision should this be considered for alternative use. It is also particularly important to recognise that the district has a slightly higher number of young and older people compared to the national average. Equally, as these existing young people grow older, there will be a need to continue, as at present, to provide for a larger than average elderly population.

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It is also critical to recognise that there is currently a national focus on increasing activity levels amongst the general population; Sport England aim to achieve 70% participation, on a regular basis, amongst the population by 2020. If these figures are achieved, there will be an impact on the local levels of participation and the demand for provision. Equally, there may well be changes in the type of activity in which people wish to participate. There is therefore a need to retain flexibility in what is provided, and the levels of provision, to be able to respond to these participation issues.

Parks, Recreation Grounds and Formal Gardens

Developing and Applying Standards: Parks

Recommended Provision Standard

Quantity: There is an existing level of provision of 1.06 ha per 1000 population. The recommended minimum standard of future provision for Parks is 1.06ha per 1000 population across the District; to reduce the current level and location of provision, given the nature, natural environment and geography of the District, would significantly alter the local environment.

Respondents (86.72%) to the Door to Door Survey felt that the parks in their areas met the needs of their families for outdoor recreation.

Quality: The average quality score for all Local Parks, Formal Gardens and Recreation Grounds is rated as 'Good' facilities. Local residents (30.47%) considered the quality of parks near their homes to be above average 21.86% rated quality as good 10.04% very good and 5.38% as excellent. Two important issues for parks are dog fouling and the perception that some users and non users feel unsafe using parks.

Access: The consultation has revealed that the average walking distance travelled to a Park is 1 km.

Setting the Standard for Provision - Urban: The most sustainable location for new residential development is within 1km of a good quality Park, Formal Garden or Recreation Ground.

The rural areas (Villages) have Recreation Grounds within walking distance of the settlements in most parishes.

Applying the Standard: Map 3c shows the current provision of Large Urban Parks and Local Parks and Recreation Grounds with a theoretical catchment area of 1km based on the average walking travel time identified by residents as part of the door to door survey.

Recommendations: Parks

The Council should adopt a policy of providing "Good" sites as a minimum, rather than "Average" or "Poor". A 'Good' site is one which provides appropriate infrastructure to facilitate usage, for example, signage, seating and bins, is clean, safe, welcoming, and attractive.

- Continue to develop and support Friends Groups for key parks, and recreation grounds to increase local involvement and ownership
- Continue to develop parks to meet the needs of people with disabilities and continue working with the Thanet Access Group to identify what is required
- Continue to develop and improve Parks Management Plans and extend the practice of management planning to a greater range of parks.
- Test the quality and "performance" of parks through entering externally judged competitions and quality recognition schemes, for example, the Green Flag Award.
- Consider alternative sites for the community building at Pierremont Park, for example the tennis courts at the Memorial Recreation Ground or look at the whole building line within the park to see if the development could be contained within this to allow for no intrusion in to park space.

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Natural / Semi-Natural Greenspace – Countryside Woodland

Developing and Applying Standards: Natural / Semi-Natural Greenspace

Recommended Provision Standard

Quantity: There is an existing level of provision of 0.95 ha per 1000 population. This equates to 1.05 ha per 1000 population less than the national recommended level of provision i.e. English Nature Standard. The recommended minimum standard of future provision for Natural/Semi-Natural Greenspace is 2 ha per 1000 population; to raise the current level and location of provision, given the nature of the district, could be achieved by the introduction of the new community woodlands, consider the development of a country park at Quex and introducing semi natural greenspace into existing parks.

Quality: The average quality score for sites classified as natural greenspace is 59.24% "Good". Local residents (26.67%) made positive comments about quality, rating local provision as "Good".

Access: The consultation has revealed that the majority of residents walk to natural greenspace facilities. An average distance travelled to access natural green space of 2.25 kilometres has been calculated, based on the average travel time identified by local residents as part of the door to door survey.

Setting the Standard: All dwellings should be within 2.25 km of a **good quality** natural / semi-natural greenspace

Applying the Standard: Map 5c shows the current provision of sites categorised as natural / semi-natural greenspace with the recommended catchment area.

Applying the English Nature Standards

As reported earlier, an assessment has also been undertaken against the nationally recognised English Nature standards. These standards make recommendations for the quantity and accessibility of natural greenspace. It is acknowledged that other sites, particularly a number of sites classified as Informal Greenspace have elements of natural provision, for example SSSIs, but these may not be accessible to the public. Only sites which are accessible to the public have been included in the calculations for the English Nature standard. In addition the beach areas and coastal path have not been included in this calculation. Application of the standard reveals the following:

- There is insufficient provision to meet the quantitative standards set by English Nature, of 2ha of provision per 1,000 population.

However, the importance of nature conservation along the Thanet Coast must be noted. This is reflected in the number of different designations: internationally important candidate Special Ares of Conservation (Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay, Special Protection Area and RAMSAR site) It is appropriate to state that Thanet has two coastal SSSI Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes and Thanet Coastal, an NNR area Sandwich and Pegwell Bay, RAMSAR Thanet the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay, and sites of Nature Conservation Importance which are of County Importance.

The Thanet Coast has also been designated by English Nature as one of the 27 most sensitive marine areas in England. SSSIs cover most of the Thanet coastline, with the exception of Viking Bay, Broadstairs and some of the beach areas around Ramsgate, and are ranked Grade 1 in the Nature Conservation Review.

Leaving aside the intertidal habitats, only some 4% of the districts land area is comprised of semi-natural habitats. This does not compare well with other districts in Kent. This is due to the very high quality of agricultural land in the area which has meant that historically the island has been very intensively farmed leading to the low level of natural habitats. Agricultural land quality in other parts of Kent is lower.

There are features and areas within the District which provide a high level of landscape and public amenity value. This is especially true of Pegwell Bay and the former Wantsum Channel, where long views of the sea, the marshes and the attractive and undeveloped coastline exist towards Sandwich, the Ash Levels and Reculver.

Pegwell Bay is an extensive area of mixed coastal habitats including mudflats, saltmarsh and coastal scrub.

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Recommendations: Natural / Semi-natural Greenspace

A number of recommendations are made in response to the assessment findings. These are:

- The Council should adopt a policy of providing “Good” sites rather than “Average” or “Poor”. A ‘Good’ site is one which provides appropriate infrastructure to facilitate usage, for example, signage, seating and bins, is clean, safe, welcoming, and attractive.
- Prioritise improvements to quality of sites that fall below the District average.
- The provision of signage, bins and seating (where appropriate) are seen as key to improving the quality of current provision. There is a need to develop a rolling programme of renewal and improvements.
- Identify and develop circular routes for people with disabilities to enjoy
- Work in partnership to implement comprehensive habitat management plans
- Work in partnership to raise the hectorage of natural and semi natural green space per 1,000 population and where possible transfer existing park land and informal open space to natural and semi natural green space.
- Investigate further the development of the Quex as a Country Park.

Developing and Applying Standards: Green Corridors

Quantity: There is potential to formally designate a number of Green Corridors across the District, as discussed in Section III.

Quality: The designation of any formal Green Corridors should be undertaken with the aim of providing good quality provision, meeting the criteria for this typology.

Access: No accessibility standard is recommended as Green Corridors should be accessible from a number of access points to facilitate access across, and through a wide area. All Green Corridors should be of a high standard to encourage use.

Recommendations: Green Corridors

A number of recommendations are made in response to the assessment findings. These are:

- It has been identified that there are currently no formally adopted green corridors; identified opportunities to increase current levels of provision should be addressed as a priority through Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). The Council should adopt a policy of providing and facilitating access to additional routes catering for informal walking, cycling and riding looking particularly at the Green Wedge sites across the district.
- The two green corridors identified in this study should be formally proposed as green corridors (Pysons Road and Vere Road) and two others should be considered to be proposed as green corridors (St Peters Walk and Nash Road disused railway line).
- In the future green corridors can contribute to the Cycling Strategy and Pedestrian Strategy and they should be intrinsic to the promotion of cycling and walking in the District.
- Formal designation of Green Corridors in Thanet through the development of recreational routes. Such route-ways could tie into a Walking for Health agenda and also to developing a healthier workforce, for example, school students, TDC staff and other local business staff could be encouraged to walk to work using these route-ways
- Planners, Transport officers and Leisure Officers need to work together with communities and community organisations, other agencies, and land owners to designate appropriate green corridors within the towns and the countryside.

Indoor Sports Facilities

Recommended Provision Standard

Quantity: There is currently a need to provide two more additional badminton courts by 2021 which are accessible for community use. There is currently an under-supply of health and fitness stations across the district, and there is sufficient water space for the current and future population. The future recommended minimum standards for provision are:

- 462 Fitness stations
- 26 badminton courts
- 793 sqm of water space

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Recommended Provision Standard

The issue for future provision of indoor sports facilities is more about location and access than quantity. It will be critical to ensure that identified access issues are addressed at local level, to facilitate use of facilities, and increase participation, particularly amongst younger people.

Quality: The quality of the existing TDC facilities needs to be addressed; a new swimming pool to replace the Ramsgate Pool needs to be considered. It is advised that all future sports and leisure facilities are built to Sport England Guidelines and that any Sports and Leisure Management Facility Contracts in the future state a requirement that the Management must obtain and maintain Quest (Sport England's Sport and Leisure facility quality award) and or TAES (Towards and Excellent Service) as a minimum quality standard.

Access: PPG17 makes it clear that facilities should be located where they will be accessible on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

The Guidance suggests that instead of setting distance thresholds, it may be better to promote measures designed to improve accessibility, such as better public transport or cycling routes. The distance of a 20minute drive time for rural populations has been used and 20minute walking time for urban populations has been used. This meets the requirements of the CPA travel indicator.

In devising transport plans for the future there is a need to consider leisure facilities being placed on public transport routes.

Setting the Standard for Provision: All dwellings should be within 10.67km (20 minutes drive time) of a good quality indoor sports facility. (It will be important to work towards this, in partnership with other local providers, given the new Sport England Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) requirements that all residents have access to three good quality (accredited/assessed by recognised scheme) indoor or outdoor sport facilities within 20 minutes (walking time in an urban area, and driving time in a rural area).

Recommendations: Indoor Sports Facilities

A number of recommendations are made in response to the assessment findings. These are:

- It is important the Council establishes the likely levels of internal funding available for any facility development, given that external funding is unlikely to be attained.
- Seek to use Supplementary Planning Guidance in the future to meet sport and recreation facility needs of the community through Section 106 funding and developers contributions.
- Adopt the suggested minimum standards for sports and swimming facilities identified :
 - Standard for swimming pool water space = 0.0049sq m per person.
 - Standard for three court sports halls = 14,172 population per 3 court sports hall and 0.042 sq. m of badminton court space per person.
- Consider rebuild of Ramsgate Swimming Pool.
- If decision is taken to rebuild Ramsgate Swimming Pool:

Option 1 – Rebuild on existing site.

Option 2 - Consider relocating Ramsgate Swimming Pool to the Ramsgate Sports Centre site. The existing pool must remain open until a new pool is built. This is to satisfy existing demand and ensure demand continues through the rebuild stages. Once participants are lost it is harder to get them to participate in the future. The new swimming pool facility must include a 25m pool and a teaching pool.

Option 3 – Consider an alternative site for a new swimming pool for example Marlowe Academy/Jackey Bakers.

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- Consider refurbishing Hartsdown Sports and Leisure Centre and consider moving the Fit Force facility into Hartsdown Sports and Leisure Centre. Consider the sale of the existing Fit Force Facility for housing and the capital receipt used to develop a new fitness facility inside Hartsdown Sports and Leisure Centre.

Option 2 - If schools increase the number of sports halls in the Margate area and open these for community use then less badminton courts would be required at Hartsdown Sports and Leisure Centre. In this instance and in the interest of sustainability consider demolishing the sports hall saving on refurbishment costs but build a fitness facility alongside the swimming pool.

Consider using the subsidy from the existing sports hall to partnership manage the new school sports halls for community use. Discussions must be held with Kent Sports Development Unit and Education Department on future community use of school sports halls in the Margate area.

- Ensure that the Conditions of Grant requires any TDC provider of indoor sports and leisure facilities to obtain and maintain a suitable quality assurance standard (e.g. Quest Sport England's Quality award for sports and leisure centres) as a minimum standard.
- To encourage participation and achieve outcomes to lower cancer and coronary heart disease rates and improve well being ensure that any future community facilities built in regeneration and rural areas are designed and built to accommodate indoor sports such as badminton, gymnastics, dance, aerobics, fitness training etc. and a separate area that can be utilised as a crèche facility or an area providing parking for a mobile crèche facility.
- In partnership with Kent County Council seek to agree with schools and the County, management agreements on opening sports halls and swimming facilities to be programmed for community and club use and ensure sink funds are in place.
- Ensure through Thanet Transport Plans and Strategies that all Leisure Facilities are included on public transport routes and cycle paths.
- Ensure that all new builds and refurbishment of facilities meet Sport England and National Governing Body Guidelines.

Outdoor Sports Facilities

Playing Pitches - Quantity: The recommended standards are based on the results of the assessment, consideration of likely future demand and the number of pitches required to meet such needs. A significant amount of provision is located on amenity greenspace which serves wider needs than just sport, for example dog walking. A surplus of pitches does not therefore indicate that land can be sold for development, but rather that there may be potential for it to be used for alternative formal sport e.g. other pitch type/size, or alternative open space provision e.g. informal open space. The space itself is then not 'lost', and can be readily re-designated for formal use as and when appropriate.

PPG17 advocates that Councils move away from the NPFA standard and establish standards based on local need. It advocates the use of Sport England's 'Towards a Level Playing Field' methodology when assessing provision for playing pitches.

The recommended standards for playing pitches are based on the results of the playing pitch assessment and consideration of likely future demand.

Table 3.35 - Quantity Standards

Recommended Provision standard (based on Sport England methodology, Towards a Level Playing Field)
Senior Football Pitches: Recommended requirement for 30 pitches, based on the current population of senior football playing age (2005).
Junior Football Pitches: Recommended requirement for 22 pitches, based on the current population of junior football playing age (2005)
Mini Soccer Pitches: Recommended requirement for 19 pitches, based on the current population of mini soccer playing age (2005)
Cricket Pitches: Recommended requirement for 19 pitches, based on the current population of cricket playing age (2005)
Rugby Pitches: Recommended requirement for 9 pitches, based on the current population of rugby playing age (2005)

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Recommended Provision standard (based on Sport England methodology, Towards a Level Playing Field)

It is important to note that provision standards do not reflect the needs of teams to play locally and this needs careful consideration when planning future provision.

Quality

All pitch and ancillary provision should be of a "good" standard
All multi-pitch sites should be served by changing facilities

On the basis of the above table, there is a need for an additional 7 junior football pitches, given that there is a surplus of 4 senior pitches across the district, there is potential to re-designate these as junior to assist in reducing the identified deficit in provision. If this option is adopted, the priority areas where this should occur should be those areas which currently have an overall surplus of pitch provision. .

The above amount of provision is based on current population data (2005). Given that population projections (KCC) show an overall increase in population to 2021, there is unlikely to be additional demand for formal playing pitch provision. This is based on the detailed Team Generation Rates (TGRs) developed as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Playing Pitches – Quality: Quality varied across the district, but on the whole was rated good to excellent. The results of the quality audits undertaken should be treated with caution; a pitch scores highly if it is served by changing room provision, regardless of the quality of the pitch. Changing facilities are in need of refurbishment across the District.

Access: The assessment has not revealed significant issues relating to access. Hire fees and charges do not appear high especially in the Parishes and should not present a barrier to teams and clubs.

Application of the Provision Standard: Quantitative provision standards have been set based on the "playing population". This allows provision levels to fluctuate in accordance with the changes in the age group populations that could in theory play the sport, rather than the general population.

Qualitative deficiencies: Based on a standard that all provision should be rated as "good" or above, there are a number of deficiencies (as scored using the playing pitch non-technical visual assessment form

Bowling Greens: Quantity appears to be sufficient to meet formal bowling needs and cater for casual play. There is a mix of public and private provision. **The recommended standard is to reduce the current supply of greens through consultation with bowls clubs to enable fewer quality facilities to be sustainable.** This needs to be monitored on an annual basis. All greens should be of a "good" quality. On the basis of the audit undertaken, there are qualitative deficiencies at some sites with regard to ancillary facilities and pavilions.

Tennis Courts: Tennis Courts are provided through schools, private clubs and within parks. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) work on the basis of 2% of the population participating in tennis on a regular basis. This figure is used as a basis for their facility planning prioritisation on a national and regional level. An assessment of court provision in Thanet has been undertaken using the CACI participation level as a framework as this was considered to be more relevant locally, which sets broad standards for outdoor court provision with, and without floodlighting. These standards are:

- A requirement for 1 outdoor court per 45 players
- A requirement for 1 outdoor floodlit court per 65 players

It is recommended that the current provision of **49 courts provision be rationalised, to provide fewer, but better quality sites.** The Council should aim for all provision to be rated as "good". The audit identified a substantial amount of quality tennis facilities throughout the district, but some facilities need to be improved. Key reasons for some lower quality scores are lack of floodlighting, fencing and weeds and mould on hard courts. The recommended option is to reduce the number of courts, but improve the quality of the provision. **Specifically, it is recommended that 27 of the 39 courts are provided with floodlighting.** Those tennis courts surplus to requirement should be considered for alternative uses, for example MUGAS.

Golf: No quantitative standards are proposed on the basis that all of the provision is privately provided, and supplied in reaction to market forces. Quality is also high at most facilities across the district. The critical issue for golf provision in the District is accessibility, and the need to ensure that casual pay and play opportunities continues to be offered at the private clubs. Consideration should be given to an additional golf course in the District.

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Planning Standards

Given the generally close balance between the supply and demand of pitches and outdoor sports facilities in Thanet District Council, local minimum standards of provision have been calculated on the basis of dividing the number of existing facilities by the resident population of the district. This produces the following standards for outdoor sports facilities:

Playing Pitches

Table 3.36 Recommended Standards for Playing Pitches

Pitch Type	Towards a Level Playing Field (hectares)	Number of Pitches	Area of Pitches (hectares)	Area per 1,000 people
Senior Football	1.40	30	42	0.33ha
Junior Football	1.05	22	23.1	0.18ha
Mini Soccer	0.30	19	5.7	0.05ha
Cricket	1.60	19	30.4	0.24ha
Rugby	1.20	9	10.8	0.08ha
Synthetic Turf Pitch	0.9	1	0.9	0.007ha
TOTAL PROVISION AVAILABLE		100	112.90	0.87ha

a) **Playing Pitches:** A minimum standard of provision of 0.87 hectares of playing pitches per 1,000 people should formally be adopted by Thanet District Council.

Recommendations Outdoor Sports and Playing Pitches

The following recommendations have been identified from the assessment of key outdoor sports in the District. There are a number of solutions that need to be considered in relation to findings and issues identified. These can broadly be described as:

- Dual-use facilities and greater use of school pitches
- Enhancing carrying capacity through improving the quality of facilities
- Management options, including consideration to leasing
- Grounds Maintenance Issues
- Improvements of ancillary facilities

The following recommendations are made with consideration to the above policy options and provide a framework for prioritisation of resources.

General

G1

Develop and maintain a club directory which should be published on the TDC web site. Ensure that key information, including contacts and team information is available.

G2

Update the supply and demand information collated on an annual basis. A full playing pitch assessment should be repeated every 3-5 years.

G3

Review the Grounds Maintenance Contract covering all outdoor facilities in order to improve quality and improve facilities life expectancy.

G4

Develop regular consultation with pitch users to establish trend data in relation to satisfaction, ratings of quality and common pitch issues.

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G5

Ensure that partnerships developed to manage facilities, particularly for tennis, bowls and pitch and putt are effective through regular monitoring and reporting of usage. Mystery visits could also be programmed.

G6

Develop a set of criteria for use in decision making on sites which are suitable for long term leasing. These could include the following as a basis:

- Typically sites considered for leasing will currently be used by a single club
- Sites will not be leased unless there are other managed sites within the local area that can be used to accommodate new demand
- Sites will only be leased where they do not make a significant contribution to other typologies

Football

F1

Review the Grounds Maintenance contract to identify areas of improvements for pitch quality. It is important to balance the needs of pitch repairs and usage. There is also a need to consider drier summers when trying to establish grass on well drained sites.

F2

Work in partnership with local schools and other pitch providers to gain access to pitches in areas where there is deficiency in junior football. There are significant quantitative deficiencies in junior football pitch provision, which can be rectified by the supply increase from Margate AFC, the possible provision of community playing pitch facilities at Ursuline College, and community use agreements with other non community playing pitches currently unavailable at school sites.

F3

The assessment suggests that the senior number of teams will increase, and junior boys and girls teams will decline in the future. The Council must maintain its current level of senior pitches but in the mean time could transfer surplus senior pitches to junior pitches.

F4

The Council has to resolve the issue of junior teams who are able to book pitches at junior rates and then have them cancelled when an adult team needs a pitch.

F5

The Council should seek Football Foundation Funding at a number of sites in partnership with clubs, for example AFC Margate at Dane Park, Hugin Viking if they are successful in obtaining a lease at Warton Road and on improving ancillary facilities at Jackey Bakers. The proposed development at Jackey Bakers may involve a loss of 1 senior pitch. There may also be a loss of 1 senior pitch at Tivoli Park if Margate FC's plans for development affect this pitch.

F6

The proposed development at Jackey Bakers may involve a loss of 1 senior pitch. There may also be a loss of 1 senior pitch at Tivoli Park if Margate FC's plans for development affect this pitch. The Council must ensure that any pitches lost are replaced elsewhere with the use of developer contributions. There are a number of sites where this could be achieved, for example take out of use Hartsdown Pitch and Putt and replace with a football pitch and other sites such as Palm Bay Recreation Ground could be utilised.

Cricket

C1

Maintain the current overall levels of cricket provision across the District.

C2

Use the findings of the quality ratings (for pitches and ancillary facilities) to prioritise resource allocations, including those allocated from developer contributions

C3

The proposed development at Jackey Bakers may result in the loss of one cricket pitch. This pitch must be replaced somewhere else. It is possible that the upgrading of the artificial pitch at Hartsdown Park may be an appropriate relocation.

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Rugby

R1

Maintain the current level of rugby pitch provision within the District

R2

Consult with Thanet Wanderers in relation to the possibility of the club maintaining the pitches and undertaking the bookings at St Peter's Recreation Ground.

R3

Consider the future use of the unused grass courts at the Tennis Club at St Peters and decide if these would be better utilised as a car parking facility for the ever-growing rugby club.

Hockey

H1

Ensure prioritisation for hockey fixtures is maintained at Jackey Bakers.

H2

Investigate the issue relating to the infill sand compacting on the STP at Jackey Bakers

Tennis

T1

The Council should use the Propensity to participate 1.4% as the local standard for Tennis court requirements. This means there is a surplus of 10 tennis courts. It would be reasonable to consider turning these areas into multi use games areas providing clubs for additional training facilities for football etc.

T2

Review the management of the tennis courts in particular with regards to ground maintenance.

T3

Investigate the costs and restrictions of installing floodlighting at sites serving areas where there is a lack of floodlit courts. This could include working with local schools where provision is available to the local community and there are likely to be less planning restrictions

Bowls

B1

The Council should support the planning application by Margate Bowls Club for development of housing on its site.

B2

Negotiate with Margate Bowls club investment of development funds at St Georges Lawns

B3

The Council in partnership with Margate Bowls Club, the Indoor Bowls Club and other clubs using St Georges Lawns should discuss the opportunity to create a Centre of Excellence/performance at St Georges Lawns. Centres of excellence/performance may be based at clubs able or willing to upgrade their facilities. A Centre of Excellence would need to include a minimum of two greens, logically allied to an indoor playing facility and contain ample meeting, administrative, changing, and dining and car parking facilities.

B4

The greens should be reduced by two through consultation with the bowls clubs. Or clubs should be encouraged to operate independently of the Council and offered leases to maintain the facilities and greens.

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B5

In some instances it may not be financially viable for a club to take on a lease. In this instance the council will need to consider if it wishes to continue subsidising bowls greens in the future or alternatively move the club to another facility either seeking development for housing and using the proceeds to increase quality in other bowls facilities elsewhere or keeping the redundant bowls facilities and green as amenity space.

Athletics

A1

The Council must ensure development of the athletics facility at Jackey Bakers or the Marlowe Academy school site.

Croquet

CR1

The Council must work in partnership with Ramsgate Croquet Club to secure funding for the refurbishment or new build of the pavilion at the Ramsgate Croquet Club

Pitch and Putt

P1

The Council must decide if it should continue to provide Pitch and Putt facilities itself or should it lease or sell them to the private sector.

P2

If the decision is to lease or sell to the private sector and the private sector is not interested in these facilities then the Council should consider returning some of these facilities to open space, for example Hartsdown and Westbrook to amenity parkland and or natural semi natural green space.

Amenity Green Space – Informal and Visual Open Space

Recommended Provision standard

Quantity: Current provision of informal and visual amenity open space consists of **149** sites totalling 65.29ha. This equates to a **current provision level of 0.51 ha per 1000 population, which is just more than the national recommended standard (0.5ha per 1000 population) by 0.01 ha per 1000 population.** The future recommended standard is a minimum of **0.5ha per 1000 population.** This is made on the basis that the informal open spaces need to be maintained in Thanet and any surplus is transferred to other typologies.

Local residents (86.92% of respondents to the door to door survey) believe there is enough informal open space in their local area.

Quality: The average quality score for all informal sites is 48.25% which equates to 'good' facilities. All Thanet District Council and Parish managed / maintained sites should maintain quality scores of "good". (The audits identify slight variances in signage benches and bins, these should be addressed)

Access: The consultation has revealed that the majority of residents walk to **informal recreational open space and visual amenity greenspace sites**, which, given their purpose is to be expected. Based on the average (mean) travel time stated, an average distance travelled to access **informal recreational open space and visual amenity greenspace sites** of 0.82 km has been calculated, on the basis of the consultation undertaken.

Setting the Standard for Provision: The most sustainable location for new residential development is within 0.82km of **good quality** informal open space.

Given the nature of this type of provision, i.e. local to residential development, this is considered to be aspiration standards for the rural areas; However, recreation grounds in the rural areas also serve the purpose of informal amenity space.

Application of the provision standard: Map 6c shows the current provision of informal greenspace with a theoretical catchment area of 0.82 km. It is important to recognise the importance of visual amenity open space; this should occur even in those areas where there is no publicly accessible informal open space, or where there is limited informal open space; informal open space/visual amenity open space may be a hedgerow, or verge, rather than a large piece of land.

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Recommendations: Informal Open Space

The following recommendations are made in relation to informal open space:

- The Council should adopt a policy of providing “Good” sites rather than “Average” or “Poor”. The sites scoring “average” or below in the quality assessments are contained in Appendix 7a, Open Space Quality Ratings.
- Prioritise improvements to quality in the areas where quality is below the District average
- Consider the opportunity, where there is substantial provision, for change of use from **informal recreational open space**, to other types of open space. For example, children and young peoples provision and semi natural.
- The provision of signage, bins and seating (where appropriate) is seen as key to improving the quality of current provision. There is a need to develop a rolling programme of renewal and improvements.

Provision for Children and Young people

Developing and Applying Standards: Provision for Children and Young people

Recommended Provision standard
<p>Quantity: Currently there are 33 play areas across the district, providing equipped play, ball play, wheeled play and teenage shelters. The current level of provision equates to 0.2 ha per 1000 population (based on 0-15 age group population of District). This is well below the national recommended standard of 0.8 ha (NPFA) per 1000 population. The future recommended standard for play provision in the district is 0.7 ha per 1000 population (0-15 age group).</p>
<p>Quality: The average quality of play areas across the District is 26.12% which equates to a ‘Good’ rating. However, if the play areas were fenced in the urban areas this score would rise.</p>
<p>Access: The consultation undertaken suggests that most users walk to access local provision. Given the role and purpose of play areas, there is a need for facility provision close to home. The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) set a number of standards of provision for catchment areas to different categories of play area and these were originally used in Thanet to inform planning policies. Standards of provision has been based on local consultation, with a comparison shown against the NPFA standards. Based on the consultation results, the average walking distance equates to 0.87 kilometres.</p>
<p>The above standards will start to address the existing deficiency in levels of play provision across the District, against nationally recommended standards.</p>
<p>Application of the provision standard: Map 7c shows the current provision of facilities for children and young people with a theoretical catchment area of 0.87 km.</p>

Recommendations: Provision for Children and Young People

The following recommendations are made in relation to provision for children and young people:

- **Set a standard of 0.7ha of play space per 1,000 population of children and young people’s age.**
- Aim to provide **Good** quality sites as a minimum. A ‘Good’ site is one which provides appropriate infrastructure to facilitate usage, for example, signage, seating and bins, is clean, safe, welcoming, and attractive, and, in relation to this typology, provides the appropriate play facilities, play value and environment for the age group at which it is targeted..
- Undertake minor maintenance improvements to sites such as providing fencing and gates around play areas, the treating of benches & bins, increased provision of bins, tidying of entrances etc
- Remove evidence of vandalism quickly (within 48 hours)
- Introduce signage on all sites with site details and contact numbers
- Improve provision for Young People especially Teenagers and Toddlers through a more diverse range of design
- Develop a wheeled play facility for quad bikes and off road motor bikes for young people
- Develop equipment that caters for children and young people with disabilities
- Involve young people in the design and choice of provision

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- Continue to work with Friends Groups and Residents' Groups to ensure that refurbishment of play areas or provision of new play areas is in keeping with the communities' needs and desires
- Given that play in the rural areas is predominantly provided by the Town and Parish Councils, appropriate support is needed through TDC, to ensure a consistent approach to play value, safety and quality

Allotments

Developing and Applying Standards: Allotments

Recommended Provision Standard
<p>Quantity: There are 24.46 ha of allotments across the District, which equates to a current level of provision of 0.19 ha per 1000 head of population. This is just below the nationally recommended standard by 0.01ha per 1000 population. The future standard for provision of allotments is recommended as 0.19 ha per 1000 population. This standard is sufficient to provide for the District's population.</p> <p>Quality: The average quality score for allotments is 42.60% which equates to "Average" facilities.</p> <p>Access: Based on the consultation results, the average walking distance equates to 1.06 km. However, the rural areas in Thanet have no allotments so we are proposing a drive distance for the rural area of 1.83km.</p> <p>Setting the Standard for Provision: The most sustainable location for new residential development is within 1.48 km of a good quality allotment.</p>

Recommendations: Allotments

The following recommendations are made in relation to allotment provision:

- A programme of facility development including toilet, and supply of water provision needs to be established and prioritised. Facilities for users/potential users with a disability need to be further developed
- There is potential for the development of a number of partnerships to increase the value and accessibility of allotments that should be progressed. These include partnerships with allotment and gardeners societies, schools (where sites are close enough) and the development of health-related projects.
- Develop proactive marketing of the allotments with allotment holders and societies to help raise the profile of the sites and the benefits allotments can bring
- Produce an Allotment Strategy for the District

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Cemeteries / Churchyards

Developing and Applying Standards: Cemeteries / Churchyards

Recommended Provision Standard

Quantity: There are numerous churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds across Thanet. This provision is sometimes dependent upon the presence and location of a church. As a result, no quantitative provision standards have been set. Additionally, the residents' consultation suggests that this type of provision is not well used.

Quality: The average quality score for all assessed sites is 58.33% which equates to "Good" facilities.

Recommendations: Churchyards/Cemeteries

It is recommended that a quality standard be adopted based on the quality assessment results as an initial basis. The Council should in the near future develop management plans for the cemeteries and proactively promote them and consider submitting them for the Green Flag Award.

Generic Recommendations

A number of recommendations are made in relation to all sites, the audit and the assessment undertaken. These are concerned with the use of information gathered and the further development of the study in future years:

- Audit greenspaces on a regular basis (every three - five years) and publish findings. This will allow trend data to be collated and improvements to be tracked. It is important that findings are published to enable stakeholders to track progress.
- Develop a central record of all open space to include the findings of the assessment undertaken. Currently many sections of the Council hold information regarding open space. Often this information is not consistent (sites listed by different names etc). The central record should include access to GIS mapping.
- Continue to develop marketing information produced about the availability of parks and open space facilities available, key activities accommodated and access arrangements. The Council should seek to work with key partners such as the local PCT, in future marketing, to ensure that greenspace fulfils a valuable role in meeting wider social objectives (e.g. health improvement).
- Develop an access standard regarding physical access for existing and potential users with a disability
- Review maintenance standards for greenspace, and agree with local people e.g. Friends Groups any changes. Report on performance annually.
- For both formal and informal (Semi natural sites) ensure that all sites are safe, attractive and welcoming to visitors.
- Develop and fund a programme of signage installation, for example, appropriate way markers, information boards and interpretative panels, as well as additional entrance signage to those sites not yet improved.
- Continue to work towards the reduction of the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces.
- Accessibility – the issue of accessibility, particularly for young people needs to be addressed in partnership with, for example, transport providers.
- Accessibility for older people - wherever possible issues of time and cost need to be addressed to facilitate access to activities and provision across the district. In addition, it is important that all facilities across the district comply with the requirements of the DDA; even informal open spaces should provide some means of access to at least part of the site, to enable use by those with a disability.

Quality

It is envisaged that the site audits undertaken can be built upon and used as a benchmark against which to measure the condition of the sites now and the progressive improvements in quality in coming years. The assessment can be broken down into a detailed matrix covering all elements of the infrastructure.

Providers of greenspace and indoor and outdoor sports facilities should aspire to provide 'good quality facilities'. Thanet District Council therefore needs to allocate adequate resources to improve those open spaces and indoor facilities that fall below that standard to ensure equality of access for residents within the district boundaries. As a bare minimum every site that the public use and that is owned by the

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District Council should have signage; if the public use it for recreation it should have a bench and a bin, be clean and be well maintained as a minimum standard of provision.

Accessibility

Sustainable methods of transport such as walking and cycling are actively encouraged within PPG17, especially for any new open space provision or where existing spaces are being improved. Improvements to open space access made by providers should ensure that accessibility by environmentally friendly transport modes is encouraged.

The consultation undertaken with local residents through the door to door survey confirms that they are generally happy with the type of provision and amount of open spaces in their local area and that the time taken to travel to them is acceptable. Residents do however have concerns about personal safety e.g. fear of walking out alone in unlit spaces, which is more of a social issue than a physical access issue.

Facilities need to be compliant with the recommended Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) accessibility guidance; whilst this may not be completely achievable for an outdoor site, there should at minimum be the means provided for individuals to access the site, or parts of the site, and be able to park a vehicle.

The door to door consultation has provided specific accessibility information that has enabled accessibility standards and distance thresholds to be established for each open space typology as defined by the PPG17 Guidance. Respondents to the Door to Door Survey were asked about the time it took them to walk to facilities; this has been used as a guide in establishing accessibility standards; given that levels of car ownership are not 100%, it is important to establish how far local residents would have to walk to provision, if that were their only means of transport. In practice, people tend to access indoor and outdoor sports facilities by car. .

Setting distance thresholds for each type of open space for all areas is not easy to achieve as many factors will influence travel times. The figures are based on generic average travel times. However these standards, as PPG17 recommends, provide guidance that help to identify gaps in provision and meet the local needs as identified through the sample door to door survey of local residents in Thanet.

The recommended standards of provision are based on the above mode of travel to provision; it is important to note that it is the access to sports facilities, indoor and outdoor, which are based on drive times, as opposed to walking times; this is the means of travel most generally used to access this type of formal provision, given that participants have equipment and kit to carry. It is important to note that drive times are calculated on the basis of time; in an urban environment, the facilities may be closer, but it is likely to take longer to access them by car, given the traffic levels in the town. In a rural area, facilities may be further away, but it is likely to take less time to travel further. Walking times have been calculated as the same in rural and urban areas; the types of provision to which people walk are more local facilities e.g. parks, play areas, and they should be provided within the same walking distances of residential areas, irrespective of whether the setting is rural or urban.