



*Spatial Planning for Sport:  
Creating Regional Policy*

## **Aspirations and Objectives for Regional and Sub-Regional Policy**

Spatial planning at the regional scale is focussed on the new Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) that will be prepared in each English region, including the London Plan. The importance of addressing sport and active recreation within regional and sub-regional spatial planning has a clear grounding in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17), which specifically states that the guidance will need to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of Regional Planning Guidance (or any successor). Guidance on the content of RSSs, contained within PPS 11 reaffirms this position (PPS 11 Annex A page 49).

The key strategic objective that PPG17 aims to deliver is a:

*Network of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities, in both urban and rural areas, which meet the needs of residents and visitors, are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable (PPG17 Companion Guide para 1.3).*

In addition to promoting the guidance in PPG17 Sport England has a number of spatial planning objectives for sport and active recreation which provide a clear framework for engaging with the regional and sub-regional spatial planning process. These strategic objectives are an expression of the Guiding Principles for Sport and Active Recreation and draw on the strategic objectives described in Planning for Sport and Active Recreation: Objectives and Opportunities.

### **The Contribution of Sport and Active Recreation**

- Ensuring that the wide benefits of sport and active recreation and its contribution to environmental sustainability, community safety, local economic viability, quality of life, health and education standards is recognised within the long term spatial vision and strategy for the regions and sub-regions.

### **Protecting and Enhancing Sport and Recreation Resources**

- Encouraging the designation and protection of Significant Areas for Sport, which are of sub-regional, regional, national or international importance.
- Promoting the protection and enhancement of existing strategic open space and green infrastructure, including the protection of existing strategic recreation routes, networks or corridors.
- Encouraging the protection and enhancement of existing strategic sports facilities and sporting opportunities of sub-regional, regional or national importance including those within designated areas such as: National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belts, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Rationalising and investing in appropriate facilities for sport and active recreation in order that they are fit for purpose to meet contemporary needs.

### **Understanding Needs**

- Identifying the distinctive needs of the region or sub-region for open space and built sports and recreational facilities, taking into account an assessment of the need for strategic facilities for those working in and visiting the region, as well as residents, and how the level of provision will be maintained.

## The Provision of New Facilities and Opportunities for Sport and Active Recreation

- Ensuring adequate provision is made for sport and active recreation within strategic development and growth areas.
- Identifying strategic opportunities for new recreational routes, networks or corridors including improving access to the countryside.
- Identifying the opportunities for new strategic sports facilities and sporting opportunities of sub-regional, regional or national importance in line with identified needs and the Regional Plans for Sport.

These objectives are complemented by:

- A Stage-by-Stage guide to the consideration of sport and active recreation within Regional Spatial Strategies and related documents,
- A checklist which specifically indicates where Regional Spatial Strategies can help to deliver strategic objectives for sport.
- Examples of how Sport England has been engaging with the regional and sub-regional planning process.

### Stage-by-Stage Guide

This is a Stage-by-Stage guide to the consideration of sport and active recreation within Regional Spatial Strategies and related documents.

| <b>RSS Stage</b>   | <b>Issues Associated with Sport and Recreation Within Regional Spatial Strategies and Related Documents</b>   |
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| <p>Stage 1:<br/>Drawing up a Project Plan &amp; Statement of Public Participation</p>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of the needs and contribution of sport and recreation within the process of preparing RSS in each region.</li> <li>• The identification of key information sources and strategic sporting issues for the region.</li> <li>• Consideration of sport and recreation issues in sub-regional working groups.</li> <li>• Alignment of the RSS with the Regional Plan for Sport, and the targets for increasing participation in particular.</li> <li>• Identification of key partner organisations.</li> <li>• Establishment of baseline and evaluation criteria to be used in the sustainability appraisal.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Stage 2:<br/>Development of strategic options and policies (including the sustainability appraisal)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of existing sport and active recreation facilities and strategic areas of open space of regional or sub regional importance which should be protected.</li> <li>• Identification of opportunities for enhancing the quality or capacity of existing sport and active recreation facilities or areas of strategic open space which are of regional or sub regional importance.</li> <li>• Identification of areas where new sport and active recreation facilities and areas of strategic open space are likely to be</li> </ul>   |

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|   | <p>required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of opportunities where new or enhanced sport and active recreation provision could contribute to wider regional and sub regional objectives, such as for the promotion of sustainable communities.</li> <li>• Consider sport and active recreation participation rates and the implications for regional or sub regional needs assessments.</li> <li>• Needs and opportunities identified on the Key Diagram, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Sport and recreation considered in the sustainability appraisal process.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Stage 3:<br/>Publication of the Draft RSS</p>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of the checklist (see below) to appraise the content of the draft RSS.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for improving the clarity of the spatial implications in subsequent reviews of the Regional Plans for Sport.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Stage 4:<br/>Testing and the Examination in Public</p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the role of Sport England regional planning officers in supporting the testing/EiP process.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Stage 5:<br/>The Panel Report</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Panel Report and reflect upon the role of sport and recreation in the RSS</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Stages 6 &amp; 7:<br/>Publication of Proposed Changes and Issue of RSS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review proposed changes to the RSS and consider the need to make further responses to the Secretary of State.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Additional stage:<br/>Monitoring and review</p>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and, if appropriate, provide material for the annual monitoring report.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for linking the targets and monitoring of the RSS and Regional Plans for Sport outcomes.</li> </ul>  |

### Checklist - Delivering Strategic Objectives for Sport

| <b>Regional Planning Objective/Delivery Mechanism</b> | <b>Does the Strategy ...</b>  |
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| A guiding vision which reflects regional identity     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set out a vision which includes the contribution of sport and active recreation to regional identity and/or quality</li> </ul> |

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|   | of life?  |
| Objectives and policies resting on a robust evidence base                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an indication of how specific objectives and policies are based on an understanding of sport and active recreation needs and opportunities?</li> </ul>   |
| Connections made to other strategies  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make direct references to Regional Plans for Sport?</li> </ul>   |
| Promote policy integration, such as the contribution of sport to a range of policy objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the contribution of sport in broader economic, environmental and social objectives such as health improvement or regeneration?</li> <li>• Propose indicators which seek to measure and monitor the links between participation in sport and active recreation and changes in health?</li> <li>• Recognise the role of sport and active recreation in attracting visitors to the region?</li> <li>• Include a specific cross-cutting policy or a series of references which highlight the important contribution that participation in sport and active recreation can make to the creation of sustainable communities, health and well-being, social inclusion and educational attainment.</li> <li>• Advocate the role that LDFs can play in developing policies which are based on up-to-date strategies, promote suitable provision, encourage participation, complemented by Supplementary Planning Documents which set out specific aspects of planning for sport and active recreation, such as local assessments?</li> </ul> |
| Encourage regional and local distinctiveness  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how sport might contribute to the development of spatial and sectoral distinctiveness, capitalising on sporting assets and/or events, for example?</li> </ul>   |
| Promote sustainable development   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make explicit reference to the contribution that sport and active recreation can make to the realisation of the aims of sustainable development, such as meeting local needs locally and promoting physically active modes of travel?</li> <li>• Recognise the role of the urban fringe in offering a wide range of opportunities for participation in sport and active recreation, and the realisation of sustainable development objectives such as reducing the need to travel?</li> <li>• Highlight the contribution of sport and active recreation in realising aspirations for more sustainable travel options and habits promoted in Travel Plans?</li> <li>• Include indicators for sport and active recreation as part of frameworks for sustainability appraisal?</li> </ul>   |

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| Pay particular attention to designated and other 'special' areas                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make links between sport and tourism, e.g. water-based pursuits, natural geographic features and any related sub-regional distinctiveness?</li> <li>• Emphasise where a distinctive economic contribution is and can be made by sport to local economies, such as through the use of transferable skills and capacity-building?</li> </ul>  |
| Address regional or sub-regional issues   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where relevant, consider areas where management of access may be necessary e.g. coastal zones with natural/historic resources?</li> <li>• Identify the role of sport and active recreation in places of particular change, such as sub-regional growth areas, based on robust assessments of need?</li> <li>• Identify where Significant Areas for Sport should be protected and/or developed?</li> <li>• Emphasise the role of major sports events in contributing to economic health, regional identity and wider objectives for participation in sport?</li> <li>• Identify where strategic open space is to be defined and promoted?</li> <li>• Identify sport and active recreation needs and opportunities on the Key Diagram where appropriate?</li> </ul> |
| Ensure that monitoring and evaluation is appropriate, using specific indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include indicators for sport and active recreation, including participation, contribution to health improvement and other quality of life measures, as part of frameworks for monitoring and evaluation?</li> </ul>   |

## Examples of Sport England's Engagement with Regional Spatial Strategies

### *Engaging with the RSS Preparation Process*

In an effort to engage actively with the RSS preparation process, Sport England's Strategic Planning Manager in the South West has been seconded into the South West Regional Assembly's Regional Planning Team for one day a week during 2005. The purpose of this closer working relationship is to help ensure that the RSS provides a long term policy framework for developing and improving the sporting and wider cultural infrastructure in the region, particularly in the context of significant population growth over the 20 year period of the strategy.

### *Encouraging the RSS Process to Make Links Between Sport and Other Issues*

The development of Regional Spatial Strategies present opportunities for making connections between complementary areas of interest. Sport and culture are clear candidates for joint working, and regional offices have been pursuing these opportunities.

As part of the preparation for drafting the Yorkshire & Humberside RSS, a topic paper

on culture was prepared (Land Use Consultants, November 2004). This sought to: define the most significant cultural, sporting and historic characteristics of the Yorkshire and Humberside region; explore the benefits which can be provided; and identify the ways in which the RSS could potentially respond to the problems and opportunities associated with culture, sport and the historic environment, giving further consideration to the challenges which these policy aspirations present and considering further linkages which can be made between these aspects of the RSS and other policy sectors. The Topic Paper provides an overview, by seven geographical areas, of the principal cultural, sporting and heritage assets of the Region. A thematic approach is then adopted to identify key recommendations for the RSS, and in turn a series of challenges for those promoting the interests of culture, sport and heritage.

#### *Developing the Evidence Base*

Sport England Yorkshire & the Humber commissioned research to explore how the Regional Spatial Strategy could respond to the issues and opportunities identified for sport in the Region. A survey of regional significance and distinctiveness was undertaken to consider, in particular, the value of sport to the Region and how it contributes to other key themes to be addressed by the RSS. The spatial implications of the challenges set by the targets in the Yorkshire Plan for Sport are appraised in the report, namely increasing participation, improving levels of performance, widening access etc. The report provides a detailed sub-area analysis exploring the nature of the key facilities and natural resources, key issues and challenges facing sport in these areas and the spatial implications arising from these challenges. Typical spatial implications include:

- Interrelationships between remoter rural areas and market towns in terms of access to and provision of facilities.
- Opportunities to package the provision of a range of community facilities in multi-use buildings/sites.
- The sporting needs of non-resident visitors to the area.
- Overcoming physical barriers to participation amongst those groups where participation levels are lowest.
- Use of sport to improve the health and quality of the environment and reduce inequalities.
- The provision of new facilities and opportunities based on clusters, focusing on town and city centres, sports centres or complexes, secondary schools, and transport nodes and corridors.
- Reclamation of areas of derelict land with recreational use potential.

#### *Responding to Sub-Regional Strategies*

The preparation of sub-regional strategies provides an opportunity to integrate sports planning with major developments in areas of growth and regeneration, and with planning for infrastructure provision. A good example is Sport England's Involvement in Sub-Regional Strategies for the Milton Keynes-South Midlands Growth Area. Milton Keynes-South Midlands (MKSM) was one of the four major new growth areas identified in the Sustainable Communities Plan (2003). It is centred on Milton Keynes itself but also includes Northampton, Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Luton, Bedford and Aylesbury and straddles three regions, the East Midlands, the South-East and the East of England. The Region is expected to provide an additional 170,000 homes up to 2021. A MKSM Inter-Regional Board has been established to ensure delivery of the

objectives, policies and proposals contained within the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, which was published in its final form in March 2005 and constitutes revisions to the three relevant regional spatial strategies.

The outcome has been a greater emphasis on the role of 'green infrastructure' (including recreational and sports facilities, pathways and routes and multi-functional green spaces) as an integral component of delivering sustainable communities within the growth area. As active members of the 'Environment and Quality of Life' Sub-Group of the Growth Implementation Group of the main Board, Sport England has also contributed to the publication of two documents that seek to give policy guidance to local delivery vehicles:

- 'Living Spaces: Culture and Sustainable Communities in Milton Keynes and the South Midlands' (published March 2005); and
- 'Planning Sustainable Communities: A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes and South Midlands' (published April 2005).

These guides give information on the use of Sport England strategic planning tools such as the Planning Obligations Kitbag, the Sports Facility Calculator and the 'Towards a Level Playing Field' document as well as wider sporting and active recreational issues. The above projects and outputs demonstrate not only effective working across three Sport England regional offices but also the benefits of cross-agency partnerships at a strategic level and the contribution Sport England can make to sub-regional planning frameworks.

In the West Midlands, the preparation of the Black Country sub-regional strategy has provided Sport England with an opportunity to set up a cross-boundary sports facility analysis and strategic vision. The intention is build on the sport and recreation strategies which have been developed in order to respond to requirements to undertake robust assessments of existing and future community needs for open space, sports and recreational facilities. These strategies will feed into the Black Country Consortium vision and contribute to the delivery of healthy and vibrant sustainable communities. The potential strategic contribution of sport and active recreation has been identified in: helping to deliver regeneration, facilities in town centres, choice of employment sites, and environmental and accessibility improvements. A co-ordinated approach to sport facility strategy preparation is also seen as helping to deliver consistency across the sub-region.

For sport and active recreation, the Sub-Regional Strategy will consider regional and sub-regional sports facilities (reflecting the priorities within Whole Sport Plans, core community sports facilities, open spaces and playing pitches). It is anticipated that the Facilities Planning Model will play an important part in underpinning the place of sport and active recreation in the Sub-Regional Strategy.