



## Summary

### What is Sport England seeking to achieve through planning?

Sport England aims to ensure positive planning for sport, enabling the right facilities to be provided in the right places, based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need for all levels of sport and all sectors of the community. To achieve this our objectives are to seek to **PROTECT** sports facilities from loss as a result of redevelopment; to **ENHANCE** existing facilities through improving their quality, accessibility and management; and to **PROVIDE** new facilities that are fit for purpose to meet demands for participation now and in the future. We work with the planning system to achieve these aims and objectives, seeking to ensure that they are reflected in local plan policies, and applied in development management.

### Delivering Sport and Recreation

Sport England promotes a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities to participate in sport, in doing so adding value to the work of others and helping to deliver sustainable development goals through:

- recognising and taking full advantage of the unique role of sport and active recreation in contributing to a wide array of policy and community aspirations, including leisure, health and education.
- using sport and recreation as a fundamental part of the planning and delivery of sustainable communities.
- the development of partnership working using sport and active recreation as a common interest.

In practice, our objectives are to:

**1. Protect existing facilities:** Sport England seeks to help protect sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, and expects these to be retained or enhanced as part of redevelopment unless an assessment has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and they are surplus to requirements or clear evidence supports their relocation.

Sport England is a **statutory consultee on all planning applications affecting playing field land** and will object to such an application unless one of five exceptions applies.

**2. Enhance the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities:** Sport England wishes to see the best use made of existing sports facilities through improving their quality, access and management. Sport England has developed a wide range of supporting advice on understanding and planning for facility provision, including efficient facility management such as community access to school sites.

**3. Provide new facilities to meet demand:** Sport England seeks to ensure that communities have access to sufficient, high quality sports facilities that are fit for purpose. Using evidence and advocacy, we help to guide investment into new facilities and the expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision.





## The Importance of Planning for Sport

The emphasis of the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on sustainable development being at the heart of planning policy and practice has important implications for sport. The protection and provision of opportunities to participate in sport is seen as fundamental to the health and well-being of communities (NPPF, section 8), meaning that local authorities must plan and provide accordingly through local planning policy and development management. Without robust and up-to-date evidence and policies, there is a risk that a local plan could be considered unsound. One of the NPPF’s core principles is that planning should:

*“take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.”*

Proactive and positive planning for sport is important both for its own sake and to ensure the benefits that it can bring to other complementary agendas, including those illustrated below, are realised.



*Sport contributes to many complementary agendas*

*The NPPF seeks to promote healthy communities through delivering “the social, recreational and cultural services the community needs”. (para 70).*

**Improving the health of the Nation** – physical activity should be a natural part of everyday life reflecting proven health benefits.

**Enhancing social and cultural well-being** – opportunities for sport and physical activity contribute to peoples’ perceptions and experience of well-being and sense of attachment to their surroundings.

**Creating and supporting economic growth** – sport directly and indirectly contributes to local and national economic vibrancy through employment and skills development.

**Providing new opportunities for children and young people** – the foundations of life-long health and sporting excellence lie in early opportunities for taking part in sport and active recreation.

**Efficient use of resources** – sport and recreation can demonstrate and contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources.

**Improving community safety** – sport can help to directly reduce social exclusion and disaffection.

Further information on sport’s wider benefits is available at:  
[www.sportengland.org/research/benefits-of-sport](http://www.sportengland.org/research/benefits-of-sport)  
[www.sportengland.org/our-work/local-work/local-government/in-it-for-the-long-run](http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/local-work/local-government/in-it-for-the-long-run)

### Further Guidance

Further guidance on Sport England’s approach to planning for sport is set out in the following complementary documents:

- Forward Planning
- Development Management
- Supporting Advice



## The Planning System and Sport England's Strategy

There are many shared agendas between the planning system, and Sport England's Strategy:

### The Right Facilities in the Right Place

Sport England's Strategy sets clear expectations for delivering greater participation and quality of experience in 'providing the right facilities in the right places'. Planning is fundamental to this through its role and ability to protect, enhance and provide sports facilities, both built and open spaces.

### Creating Real Opportunities for Communities

Delivery of opportunities to participate in sport through facilities which are fit for purpose means that the aspirations of local communities can be met as can the national and local goals for greater participation and the tangible benefits which that brings.

Robust policies in local plans, firmly applied in development management, and based on a robust and up-to-date needs assessment and clear strategy for provision, will help to deliver the commitments demanded through the NPPF to meet the current and future needs of communities. Facility provision and greater participation are closely connected, and local planning can help to achieve both.

### Working Together

The NPPF identifies the need for co-ordinated action in the delivery of planning through the Duty to Co-operate. For sport, this can be applied to a wide range of contexts, including facility catchment planning, strategic planning across boundaries, seeking community use of school facilities, and the involvement of a range of parties such as National Governing Bodies for Sport and Community Sport Partnerships.

### Supporting Local Authorities

Sport England's role as a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing field land is complemented by its role as advisor on sport and recreation provision more widely. We offer advice on needs assessment and strategy development, in particular the assembly and use of evidence in support of a planned approach to provision.

## Sport England Strategy 2012-17

### What do we want to achieve?

In 2017, five years after the Olympic Games, we want to have transformed sport in England so that sport becomes a habit for life for more people and a regular choice for the majority. Our strategy will:

- see more people taking on and keeping a sporting habit for life;
- create more opportunities for young people;
- nurture and develop talent;
- provide the right facilities in the right places;
- support local authorities and unlock local funding;
- ensure real opportunities for communities.

We are seeking a year-on-year increase in the proportion of people who play sport once a week for at least 30 minutes. In particular, we will raise the percentage of 14-25 year olds playing sport once a week and reduce the proportion dropping out of sport.





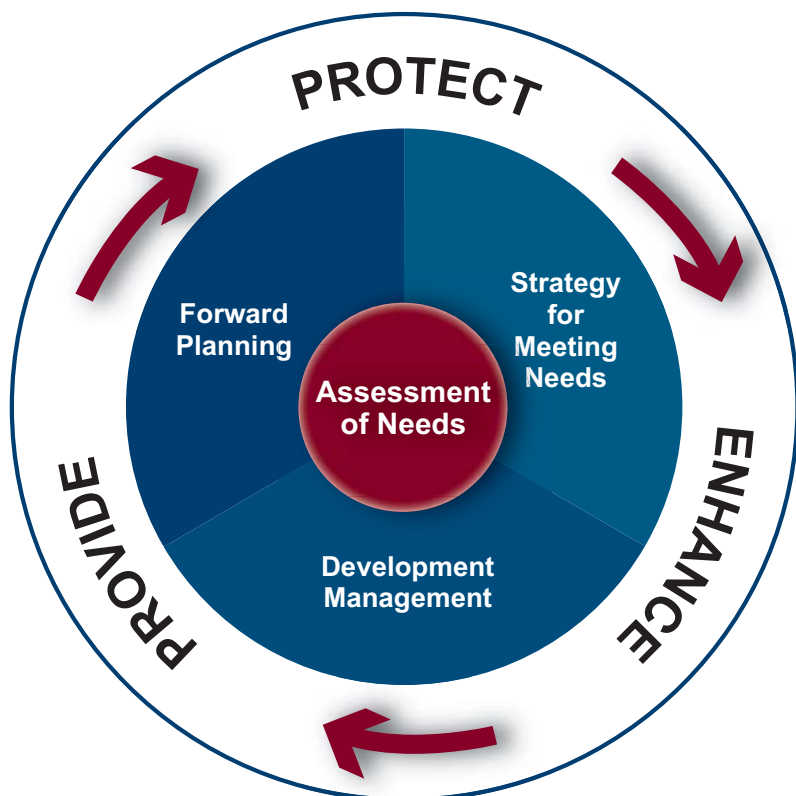
## Sport England's Aims and Objectives in Planning

Sport England promotes a planned approach to the provision of facilities and opportunities to participate in sport, in doing so adding value to the work of others and helping to deliver sustainable development goals through:

- Recognising and taking full advantage of the unique role of sport and active recreation in contributing to a wide array of policy and community aspirations, including leisure, health and education.
- Using sport and recreation as a fundamental part of the planning and delivery of sustainable communities.
- The development of partnership working using sport and active recreation as a common interest.

In line with the NPPF (para 73), and as presented by the diagram below, Sport England advocates that at the core of planning for sport should be a robust and up-to-date assessment of the needs for sport and active recreational facilities and opportunities for new provision. The results of the assessment should be developed into a clear strategy for meeting the identified needs and integrated into Forward Planning and applied within Development Management. By doing so the planning system will be able to meet the requirements of the NPPF, secure the considerable benefits that positive planning for sport can provide and help to meet Sport England's planning objectives which are to:

- Protect existing facilities
- Enhance the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities
- Provide new facilities to meet demand



*Sport England aims to ensure positive planning for sport, enabling the right facilities to be provided in the right places, based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need for all levels of sport and all sectors of the community.*



## **PROTECT:** Preventing the Loss of Sports Facilities

The protection of existing sports facilities and access to natural resources used for sport and recreation is vital for sports development, overall quality of life for communities and protection of the environment. Playing fields in particular are a scarce resource which, if lost to development, can be very difficult to replace. A robust and up-to-date needs assessment and related strategy for sport should underpin facility protection, justifying policy and decisions on development.

### **OBJECTIVE 1:**

To prevent the loss of sports facilities and land along with access to natural resources used for sport.

Sport England will:

- seek to protect all existing sites and facilities and access to natural resources which are important for sport and recreation.
- object to the loss of playing field land except where one of the five specific exceptions set out in its Playing Fields Policy applies.
- require at least an equivalent replacement in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility if the loss of a facility is unavoidable, unless a robust and up-to-date assessment of need has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and the facility is clearly surplus to requirements.

## How the NPPF Supports the Objective and its Outcomes

The NPPF expects sport and recreation facilities to be protected through policy and its implementation (paragraphs 70 and 74). There should be no unjustified facility loss, and where it does occur this should be based on a robust and up-to-date assessment of current and future community needs, with provision made for a suitable replacement. For more detail on the role of the NPPF in supporting this Objective, see complementary guides on Forward Planning and Development Management.

*The NPPF (para 70) identifies the need to “guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs.”*

*The NPPF (para 74) says that “existing open space, sport and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields should not be built on unless:*

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.”*





## **ENHANCE:** Promoting Better Quality, Access and Management of Existing Facilities

The best use should be made of current provision to meet the needs of communities and providing opportunities for participation. This can be achieved in a variety of ways including: improving the quality and capacity of provision (such as the drainage of natural turf pitches and, where appropriate, provide sports lighting of outdoor facilities); enhancing access to provision (such as the dual use of educational facilities); and the management of provision to make full use of facilities (such as accommodating the needs of multiple users of a sports hall).

### **OBJECTIVE 2:**

To ensure that the best use is made of existing facilities in order to maintain and provide greater opportunities for participation and to ensure that facilities are sustainable.

Sport England will:

- expect a robust and up-to-date assessment of need to identify and prioritise opportunities for enhancing existing facilities.
- promote the use of good management practices in order to help improve the quality and accessibility of facilities.
- encourage new and wider provision on existing sites and support wider community access, particularly of school facilities.
- promote the installation of sports lighting to help maximise facility use and its sustainability, whilst protecting residential amenity.
- seek to improve access to the countryside for sport, encouraging the best use of Green Belt locations and facilities to enhance opportunities for sport and recreation.

## How the NPPF Supports the Objective and its Outcomes

The NPPF recognises the part that planning can play in enhancing access to opportunities for sport, and the role of good management in securing this. In supporting this aspiration, the NPPF advocates: delivering multiple uses of land (paragraph 17); identifies the importance of sport development in rural areas generally (paragraph 28) and Green Belts in particular (paragraphs 81 & 89); and that good management and design should inform development (paragraphs 123 & 125).

The role that Green Belts can play in providing opportunities for sport is of particular note. The NPPF explicitly encourages the provision of opportunities for sport in Green Belt locations recognising that new or enhanced buildings and structures are acceptable where they are appropriate and do not conflict with wider Green Belt objectives.

*One of the NPPF's core planning principles is to "promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production)."*



## **PROVIDE:** Ensuring a Planned Approach to the Provision of New Facilities to Meet Demands

The provision of a range of opportunities to participate in sport is fundamental to sustainable development and helps to create balanced communities which fulfill the demands and expectations of their residents now and in the future.

### **OBJECTIVE 3:**

To ensure that new sports facilities are planned for and provided in a positive and integrated way and that opportunities for new facilities are identified to meet current and future demands for sporting participation.

Sport England will:

- support the development of new sports facilities which are fit for purpose, meet identified needs and complement existing provision.
- encourage the development and maintenance of robust assessments of need which identify the likely demand to be generated by new development and which take account of the adequacy of existing provision.
- seek financial contributions for the provision and maintenance of new facilities, particularly as part of new development through the use of s106 and incorporating the results of needs assessments into CIL and IDP schedules.
- identify partnership opportunities with organisations working in the natural environment to explore the provision of new sports facilities and access to natural resources.

## How the NPPF Supports the Objective and its Outcomes

As part of promoting sustainable development, the NPPF expects plans to meet objectively assessed needs (paragraph 14), and to plan positively for them (paragraph 70). Provision for sport and recreation in particular should be based on assessments of need and provision which must be both robust and up-to-date (paragraph 73) as the basis for setting strategic priorities and policies for the delivery of community infrastructure (paragraph 156). These should be based on joint working with health partners to deliver wider benefits (paragraph 171).

For more detail on the role of the NPPF in supporting this Objective, see the complementary guides on Forward Planning and Development Management.

*The NPPF (para 70) requires that “to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as ... sports venues) ... to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.”*

*The NPPF (para 73): “planning policies should be based on robust and up-to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision.”*





## Complementary Guidance

This guidance on Sport England's Aims and Objectives in Planning for Sport is complemented by guidance on Forward Planning, Development Management and the provision of Supporting Advice in the use of available evidence base tools and further guidance on needs assessments and sport-specific matters.

### Forward Planning

The importance of developing robust policies relating to sport and recreation which reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities is clearly set out in the NPPF. This guidance note sets out how local policies can be developed in order to help secure the best interests of sport.

### Development Management

Sport England, a statutory consultee on planning applications affecting playing field land, works with local authorities, developers, National Governing Bodies, sports partnerships and sports clubs to help ensure that the interests of sport are properly and fairly recognised in the development management process. This guidance note summarises how Sport England and other parties can seek to achieve this in relation to particular types of development and through the different stages of development management (pre-application, submission, determination and implementation).

### Supporting Advice

Sport England provides a comprehensive range of advice on the assembly of evidence to help support the development of policy for sport and its application. This guidance note summarises the material on our website including:

- Evidence-gathering to understand local needs and provision and to help justify policy.
- Design and cost advice for new facilities.
- Dealing with planning applications and securing the best interests of sport through planning contributions.
- Detailed technical advice on the needs of specific sports and facilities.

## Sport England's Role and Contact Details

Sport England:

- advises on the development of planning policy and the planning process insofar as it affects sport and active recreation;
- contributes to the development of policy guidance;
- advises local planning authorities on matters affecting sport and active recreation in development plans and related documents;
- advises on the development of assessments of need and strategies for sporting provision;
- advises local planning authorities on planning applications affecting sport and active recreation; and
- advises sports bodies on planning issues.

**Planning consultations and any correspondence relating to a consultation should be sent direct to our Planning Administration Team using one of the following email addresses:**

**North (North West, North East, Yorkshire)**  
[planning.north@sportengland.org](mailto:planning.north@sportengland.org)

**Central (West Midlands, East Midlands, East)**  
[planning.central@sportengland.org](mailto:planning.central@sportengland.org)

**South (London, South East, South West)**  
[planning.south@sportengland.org](mailto:planning.south@sportengland.org)

**General enquiries should be sent to:**  
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