

# Appendix F: Quality Standards

## Introduction

This appendix sets out the quality standards we recommend that the District Council should adopt. We have derived each of them from examples of best practice, such as the Green Flag Award criteria for parks, or published advice. For consistency, we set out them out using six standard headings:

- General characteristics
- Accessibility
- Planting and biodiversity
- Facilities and features
- Management and maintenance
- Minimum size requirements

## Accessible Natural Greenspace

### General Characteristics

- Open naturalistic appearance which blends into the surrounding countryside
- Only limited internal areas of poor visibility
- Distinct identity
- Good use of views out of or across the site
- Good use of topography, space and planting

### Accessibility

- Entrances or access points linked to rights of way, bridlepaths, quiet lanes and cycling routes and water courses to create wildlife corridors and a network of greenspaces
- Accessible from the adjacent road or car park area by walking or in a wheelchair where appropriate
- Good network of internal paths, linking to rights of way, bridle paths, quiet lanes and cycling routes in the vicinity

### Planting and Biodiversity

- Good mix of native species and habitats, depending on site characteristics
- Dense, bushy hedgerows
- Wildlife protection areas
- Clearings or gaps in tree crowns to allow light penetration to woodland floor, where appropriate
- Well developed shrub, field and ground layers and wide, species rich edge, where appropriate

## Facilities and Features

- Built heritage structures and natural features conserved
- Interpretation of flora and fauna as appropriate
- Litter bins and seats at key points
- Signs requiring dogs to be kept under control and fouling disposed of to "pooper" bins
- Adequate safety measures adjacent to areas of water (will depend on size, depth and current, if any)
- "Way marked" routes, where appropriate

## Management and Maintenance

- Managed primarily for wildlife and nature conservation
- Litter clearly under control with litter bins emptied regularly
- Limited evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- Very little or no evidence of dog fouling and "pooper bins" available at various points, plus notices relating to the avoidance of dog fouling
- No or very little evidence of flytipping and rapid, effective removal of tipped material
- Wooded areas well managed
- All paths kept clear of debris; surfaces in good condition and repaired as necessary

## Minimum Size Requirements

English Nature's Research Report 153, *Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities* (1995), concludes that size is not as important in terms of species richness as other factors such as habitat diversity, management, vegetation structure and topography. Its guide to *Providing Accessible Natural Greenspace in Town and Cities* (English Nature) recommends a minimum size of 0.25 ha (2,500 sq m).

## Allotments

### General Characteristics

- Screen planting to provide some privacy
- Clear separation between adjacent allotments
- Signage at site entrances giving details of ownership and how to apply for an allotment; also emergency telephone numbers
- Securely fenced with lockable gates

### Accessibility

- Linked to pedestrian and cycle path systems
- Adequate parking close to entrance to the site (but not necessarily on-site)
- Site entrance not more than 400 m from nearest bus stop and preferably not more than 250 m
- Adequate paths, suitable for people with disabilities

### Planting and Biodiversity

- Good mix of species in planting around and within the site
- Dense, bushy hedgerows (where present)

#### **Facilities and features**

- Water point serving each group of allotments

#### **Management and Maintenance**

- Litter clearly under control
- Limited evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- All paths kept clear of debris; surfaces in good condition and repaired as necessary
- All facilities in clean, safe and usable condition

#### **Minimum Size Requirements**

- In spite of metrication, allotments are still measured in rods (1 rod = 30.25 sq yards or 0.84 sq m) and allotment plots are normally either 5 rods (roughly 126 sq m) or 10 rods (roughly 253 sq m). There is no need for any minimum number of plots on an allotments site.

### **Amenity Greenspaces    General Characteristics**

- Part of a network of greenspaces providing traffic segregated routes through residential or other areas which link to major walking and cycling routes and bus stops
- Designed to create a sense of place and complement and provide a setting for adjoining buildings, with “sun traps”
- “Cared for” general appearance
- Views out of or across the space, ideally to local landmarks

#### **Accessibility**

- Traversed by hard surfaced paths, where appropriate, which are suitable for wheelchairs, wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass and broadly following desire lines (but avoiding straight lines wherever possible)

#### **Planting and biodiversity**

- Good balance of mown grassed areas, in varying widths or sizes (large enough for informal recreation such as kickabouts or mini-soccer where appropriate) and mixed indigenous and ornamental species and ages of trees or shrubs, but with a predominantly open character
- Range of habitat types eg woodland, ponds, grasslands, hedgerows
- Buffer or shelter planting as necessary

#### **Facilities and Features**

- Field drainage and/or soil amelioration designed to ensure that spaces do not become waterlogged after heavy rain

- May incorporate provision for children or teenagers but such facilities should not be central to or the main focus of the spaces
- Adequate litter bins
- Signs indicating that dog fouling should be picked up and disposed of responsibly
- May incorporate public art or heritage features (eg statues)
- Seats, in both sunny and shaded areas
- Adequate safety measures adjacent to potentially dangerous areas of water (eg rivers, canals)
- Path lighting where appropriate
- Passive surveillance from nearby properties, but in a way which respects the privacy of occupants

### **Management and Maintenance**

- Litter clearly under control
- Limited evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- Very little or no evidence of dog fouling and “pooper bins” available at various points, plus notices relating to the avoidance of dog fouling
- Grassed areas to have a low preponderance of broad leaved weeds; they must be cut to an even length and if clippings are left in place after cutting they must be short so as not to have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area
- Horticultural areas and flower/shrub beds weed free and ideally mulched
- Flowering plants dead headed and pruned as necessary
- All paths kept clear of debris; surfaces in good condition and repaired as necessary
- All facilities in clean, safe and usable condition
- Path or other lighting adequately maintained and working

### **Minimum Size Requirements**

- Areas of AGS should be at least large enough to be used by local young people for a kickabout without creating a nuisance for the residents of neighbouring dwellings. The smallest size of mini-soccer pitch is 27 x 18 m with margins of at least 3 m all round (minimum 33 x 24 m overall). This can be therefore taken as a guide to the minimum size of an area of AGS.

## **Local Equipped Play Areas**

### **General Characteristics**

- Located beside a well used pedestrian pathway
- Activity area of at least 400 sq m with a buffer zone, possibly with appropriate planting, between the play area and nearest dwelling boundary of at least 10 metres on all sides. There should be at least 20m between the activity zone and the nearest dwelling window.
- Ample space for children to run around and play games such as “tag”
- Passive surveillance from the windows of nearby buildings is desirable

### **Accessibility**

- Accessible to children or adults with disabilities
- Linked to the local footpath and cycleway network

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Good mix of “child-friendly” (ie not sharp, spiky or poisonous) plant and tree species in the vicinity, but in positions which will not result in major leaf drop within the play area

### **Facilities and Features**

- At least five types of play equipment, designed to provide opportunities for balancing (eg beams, stepping logs, clatter bridges); rocking (eg see-saw or spring animals); climbing/agility (eg frames, nets, overhead bars); sliding (eg straight slides); and social play (eg sheltered areas or children’s seating)
- Dog-proof fencing, at least 1 m high, fitted with at least two outward-opening, self-closing gates
- Seats for parents or carers
- Litter bin(s)
- Signage to indicate that the area is intended for children; dogs should be excluded; the name and telephone number of the District or Parish Council
- Suitable safety surfacing beneath and around play equipment
- Effective drainage of all surfaces

### **Management and Maintenance**

- Litter clearly under control
- Very little or no evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- No dangerous litter such as broken glass
- Safety surfacing in good condition
- Play equipment in safe and usable condition
- Dog-proof fencing safe and effective at excluding dogs
- Seats for children or parents/carers in safe and usable condition

### **Minimum Size Requirements**

- See above

## **Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas**

### **General Characteristics**

- Activity area of at least 1,000 sq m, with a range of equipment designed for children of different ages and incorporating separate areas for younger and older children
- Surrounded by a buffer zone, possibly with appropriate planting, between the play area and nearest dwelling

- boundary of at least 30 metres on all sides.
- Suitable safety surfacing beneath and around play equipment
- Accessible to children or adults with disabilities
- Effective drainage of all surfaces

### **Accessibility**

- All parts of the site fully accessible to people with disabilities
- Linked to local footpath and cycleway network
- Accessible by public transport – nearest bus stop within 400 m of entrance/access points, but preferably 250 m

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Good mix of “child-friendly” (ie not sharp, spiky or poisonous) plant and tree species in the vicinity, but in positions which will not result in major leaf drop within the play area

### **Facilities and Features**

- At least eight types of play equipment, designed to provide opportunities for balancing (eg beams, stepping logs, clatter bridges); rocking (eg see-saw or spring animals); climbing/agility (eg frames, nets, overhead bars); sliding (eg straight slides); and social play (eg sheltered areas or children’s seating). At least five of the eight pieces of equipment should encourage adventurous climbing, single point swinging (eg in a car tyre on a rope), balancing, rotating or gliding (eg an aerial runway).
- Dog-proof fencing, at least 1 m high, fitted with at least two outward-opening, self-closing gates
- Seats for parents or carers
- Adequate litter bin(s)
- Signage to indicate that the area is intended for children; dogs should be excluded; the name and telephone number of the play area owner
- Parking for bicycles

### **Management and Maintenance**

- Litter clearly under control
- Very little or no evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- No dangerous litter such as broken glass
- Safety surfacing in good condition
- Play equipment in safe and usable condition
- Dog-proof fencing safe and effective at excluding dogs
- Seats for children or parents/carers in safe and usable condition

### **Minimum size requirement**

- See above

## **Sports Pitches (grass and artificial turf)**

### **General Characteristics**

- External lighting in car parking areas
- External lighting on pavilions with PIR detectors
- Signs indicating that dogs must be kept on a lead and any fouling picked up and disposed of responsibly
- Rows of more than eight parking spaces to be separated by soft landscaping
- Adequately separated from adjoining residential properties
- Adequate measures in place to control light spill from floodlighting to adjoining properties and related land

### **Accessibility**

- Accessible by public transport: nearest bus stop within 400 m of entrance/access points, but preferably 250 m
- Convenient car parking
- Good connections to paths and cycling routes in the vicinity of the site
- Wide access routes with clear sight lines at site entrance/egress
- Hard surfaced paths following desire lines from parking to pavilions
- Paths and buildings fully accessible by wheelchair where appropriate
- Path system appropriate to the circulation needs of players within the site, with wide, hard surfaces in heavily trafficked areas (to avoid constant muddy areas) and from changing pavilions to artificial surfaces
- Path system approximating to desire lines for those crossing the site, but avoiding straight lines wherever possible (note that this can have implications for pitch layout)

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Strong structure planting around the perimeter of the site using native species (designed as buffer planting to reduce wind on pitches and noise or light spill as appropriate to the site and adjoining properties or roads and also to promote biodiversity)
- Internal structure planting where appropriate
- Amenity or naturalistic landscaping in the vicinity of buildings and car parking

### **Facilities and Features**

#### *Changing pavilions*

- Changing rooms (with the number of rooms appropriate to the number of pitches or other facilities on site) consisting of changing spaces, showers and drying area, plus separate changing for match officials where appropriate
- Capable of simultaneous male and female team and/or officials' use, where appropriate
- First aid room (essential only for pitch sports and athletics)

- Space for refreshments with kitchen
- No rooflights in flat roofs on single storey buildings
- Adequate secure maintenance equipment storage
- Lockable security shutters on all pavilion doors and windows
- Passive surveillance from nearby properties

#### *Pitches, practice areas and other facilities*

- Correct orientation (pitches generally between 35 degrees west and 20 degrees east of N-S; athletics tracks generally oriented so the finishing straight is not in line with the prevailing south-westerly wind)
- Playing facilities meeting relevant governing body requirements in terms of length, width, even-ness of surface, boundary distances (cricket) and side clearances or safety margins
- Artificial surfaces in good overall condition, free from tears and uneven areas
- Floodlighting to relevant governing body requirements for the standard of play
- No end to end slope on pitches greater than 1:40 (1:80 preferable); no side to side slope greater than 1:40 (1:60 preferable)
- No pitch more than 200 m from nearest changing pavilion
- Well drained pitch surfaces
- Winter sports grass pitches to have pipe drains plus sand slits where necessary (note: sand slits to be renewed every 10 years)
- Artificial surfaces to comply with relevant governing body requirements and BS 7044: Artificial Sports Surfaces
- All artificial surfaces (and any safety surround areas) to be fully enclosed within lockable chain link fence at least 3.0 m high

#### **Management and Maintenance**

- Grass lengths appropriate to sport with full grass cover on grass pitches
- Posts and goals safe and free from rust or sharp edges, with hooks for nets where appropriate
- Line markings straight and easily seen
- Surface repairs carried out quickly and effectively
- Surround netting and entrance gates to artificially surfaced areas in good condition
- Floodlights in full working order
- Information on site ownership and the facilities available at the site entrance
- Contact details for emergencies at any pavilion

#### **Minimum Size Requirement**

- Single pitch sites are uneconomic to maintain. Accordingly we recommend that there should be a minimum of two pitches on all sites.

## **Bowling Greens**

### **General Characteristics**

- Green, banks and ditches to meet relevant governing body standards
- No broad-leaved trees overhanging the green

### **Accessibility**

- Accessible by public transport: nearest bus stop within 400 m of entrance/access points, but preferably 250 m
- Convenient car parking
- Linked to local footpath network
- Hard surfaced path all round the green
- Site and pavilion to be fully accessible to people with disabilities

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Shelter planting/screening to provide summer time shelter from wind, privacy for bowlers and support biodiversity

### **Facilities and Features**

- Greens to have at least six rinks (to allow play along and across the green to even out wear)
- Changing pavilion with at least male and female changing rooms and social area

### **Management and Maintenance**

- Grass sward kept short and clear of weeds

### **Minimum Size Requirement**

- One green

## **Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs) or Multi-courts and Tennis Courts**

### **General Characteristics**

- Reasonably sheltered from the wind
- A free-draining or drained impervious surface
- Surrounded by netting which prevents balls escaping from the court(s) area
- Courts oriented roughly north-south

### **Accessibility**

- Accessible by public transport: nearest bus stop within 400 m of entrance/access points, but preferably 250 m
- Convenient car parking
- Linked to local footpath network
- Site and pavilion to be fully accessible to people with disabilities

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

Amenity planting composed mainly of native species to improve appearance, provide shelter, reduce noise transfer and promote biodiversity

### **Facilities and Features**

- Posts and tennis nets in good condition, without large holes through which the ball can pass
- Clearly marked courts with adequate safety surrounds
- Basketball hoops and football goals, if present, securely fixed with no sharp edges
- Floodlighting (if present) to meet governing body requirements

### **Management and Maintenance**

- Litter clearly under control
- Very little or no evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- Very little or no evidence of dog fouling
- No dangerous litter such as broken glass
- Court(s) surface in good condition

### **Minimum Size Requirement**

- One court

## **Urban Parks**

### **General Characteristics**

- Well defined boundaries or perimeter, preferably enclosed with railings or walls
- A welcoming appearance at the entrance and therefore well maintained, free from litter and graffiti, with good views over an attractive parkland landscape with clear points of interest to draw visitors in
- Range of natural and man-made structures of heritage features such as ponds, statues, buildings and ornamental railings
- Good use of topography so that slopes are gentle, views across and out of the park are attractive and visitors can get a sense of scale
- Reasonable privacy for the residents of nearby dwellings; ideally, houses should not back on to the park, but be on the other side of the road

### **Accessibility**

- Clearly visible entrances, ideally signed on nearby roads and pedestrian or cycling routes
- Park entrances linked to safe pedestrian and designated cycling routes (where they exist)
- Secure bicycle storage at the main entrance to the park, at least, and ideally secondary entrances as well
- Adequate parking adjacent to at least the main entrance (can be on-street) and ideally secondary entrances as well

- Main entrance, and ideally secondary entrances, within 400 m, at most, of the nearest bus stop, but preferably 250 m
- Internal path system which links up with adjoining roads and pedestrian or cycling routes; preferably at the junctions of streets, rather than in the middle of them, and provides a number of “short cuts” across or through the park
- All paths hard surfaced, well drained and suitable for wheelchairs and baby buggies; maximum slope not more than 1:12 and then only for short distances; otherwise not more than 1:24
- Path network linking points of interest within the park
- No areas within the park accessible only by ascending or descending steps; where there are steps there should also be an easily found ramp

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Diverse species of flowering and non-flowering trees, of various ages, including native species; also shrubs and plants providing a wide range of habitats
- Hedgerows, where present, reasonably dense, thick and bushy so as to provide habitats
- Some areas of dense planting, difficult for people to penetrate and in areas where they will not provide hiding places, but providing habitats for small animals and birds
- Woodland areas to have clearings or gaps in crowns to allow light penetration to the woodland floor and development of undergrowth

### **Facilities and Features**

- Field drainage and/or soil amelioration designed to ensure that grassed areas do not become waterlogged after heavy rain
- Equipped play areas for young children (under 10), where present – see separate quality standard
- Provision for teenagers, where present – see separate quality standards
- Sports facilities, where present – see separate quality standards
- Adequate litter bins – well designed, located adjacent to the path system, bird/squirrel/rat proof and cleared regularly
- Examples of public art, linked to the path system
- Bandstands, if present, well maintained
- Ornamental fountains, if present, in good working order and well maintained
- Café facilities in larger parks
- Good views through and across the park so that each visitor is providing a form of informal surveillance of other users
- Adequate safety measures adjacent to areas of water which might be dangerous (eg notices regarding depths, life buoys)
- Adequate lighting for appropriate paths
- Informative interpretation signs or other material relating to natural features (eg geology, land form); heritage features (eg statues, historic/listed buildings, bandstands); wildlife

(eg details of the main birds and animals to be seen in the park); landscaping (eg information on trees and other planting and especially horticulture areas)

- Adequate signage giving directions both within the park and to nearby streets or features of interest outside it

### **Management and Maintenance**

- Litter clearly under control
- Limited evidence of vandalism or graffiti, and rapid and effective removal
- Very little or no evidence of dog fouling and “pooper bins” available at various points, plus notices relating to the avoidance of dog fouling
- Grassed areas to have a low preponderance of broad leaved weeds; they must be cut to an even length and if clippings are left in place after cutting they must be short so as not to have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area
- Horticultural areas and flower/shrub beds weed free and ideally mulched
- Flowering plants dead headed and pruned as necessary
- Woodland areas maintained and thinned to provide easy access
- All paths kept clear of debris; surfaces in good condition and repaired as necessary
- All facilities (especially toilets) in clean, safe and usable condition
- Path or other lighting adequately maintained and working

### **Minimum Size Requirement**

- Minimum size depends on the context

## **Youth Activity Areas (age 12-16 years)**

### **General Characteristics**

- Located close, but not immediately adjacent, to a well used pedestrian route
- Located well away from the nearest dwellings

### **Accessibility**

- Accessible by public transport: nearest bus stop within 400 m of entrance/access points, but preferably 250 m
- Linked to local footpath and cycle path network
- Fully accessible to people with disabilities

### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Tough, but not prickly landscaping in the immediate vicinity of the area

### **Facilities and Features**

- Mix of facilities such as skateboard/BMX ramps, basketball goals, teenage shelters

- Casual seating
- Low level lighting with both light and dark areas
- Adequate provision of litter bins
- Field drainage and/or soil amelioration designed to ensure that grassed areas do not become waterlogged after heavy rain

#### **Management and Maintenance**

- Graffiti regularly removed from more visible, high profile areas
- All paths kept clear of debris; surfaces and structures in good condition and repaired as necessary
- Path or other lighting adequately maintained and working

#### **Minimum Size Requirement**

- 1,000 sq m – equivalent to a Neighbourhood play area in the NPFA's Six Acre Standard

## **Indoor Sports Halls and Swimming Pools**

#### **General Characteristics**

- External lighting, with movement or passive infra-red (PIR) detectors
- Entrance clearly identifiable from the car park
- No landscaping in which potential attackers could hide

#### **Accessibility**

- Linked to the local footpath and cycle path network
- Accessible by public transport: nearest bus stop within 250 m of entrance/access points
- Adequate parking for the range of facilities available, with a tarmac surface in good repair and at least two designated disabled spaces close to the main entrance
- Site and building fully accessible to people with disabilities
- Cycle parking

#### **Planting and Biodiversity**

- Attractive landscaping to the site and building, incorporating native species where possible

#### **Facilities and Features**

##### *Internal Support Areas*

- Reception desk immediately inside main entrance and clearly visible
- Disabled toilets
- Baby changing facility in male and female changing areas or toilets
- General accessibility for people with disabilities – see separate checklist
- Décor and finishes in good condition

- Clear route from reception to changing and activity areas

#### *Activity Areas*

- Meeting appropriate governing body or Sport England standards
- Adequate storage, accessed from activity areas
- Mat storage, where required, physically separate and vented to outside air
- Décor and finishes in good condition

#### *Changing Areas*

- Separate male and female changing (although mixed sex villages desirable for pools)
- Adequate locker provision
- Adequate shower and toilet provision
  - Décor and finishes in good condition

#### **Management and Maintenance**

- Professionally managed

#### **Minimum Size Requirement - Pools**

- Main pools should be not less than 20 m x 4 lanes and learner pools not less than 9 x 7 m

#### **Minimum Size Requirement – Sports Halls**

- A hall with three badminton courts is needed if it is to be suitable for other indoor sports such as volleyball