

Stratford-upon-Avon and Main Rural Centres Open Space Audit



March 2005

Stratford-upon-Avon and Main Rural Centres

Open Space Audit

£10

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Summary of Open Spaces in Stratford-upon-Avon
4. Summary of Open Spaces in the Main Rural Centres (MRCs)
 - 4.1 Alcester
 - 4.2 Bidford-on-Avon
 - 4.3 Henley-in-Arden
 - 4.4 Kineton
 - 4.5 Shipston-on-Stour
 - 4.6 Southam
 - 4.7 Studley
 - 4.8 Wellesbourne

Appendix

1. Typologies and Standards
2. Schedule and Analysis of Sites
3. Publicly Accessible Sites for Active Recreation and Play
4. Site location and distribution maps

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Open Space is one of the District's most precious resources. Well designed open spaces can help to provide the wide variety of outdoor recreation facilities needed to meet the differing requirements of all sections of the community. The Government's vision for public open spaces is set out in the 2002 White Paper *Living Places Cleaner, Safer and Greener*. Appropriately located open spaces, assessed by means other than car, can also contribute to sustainable development objectives. Open space can also provide a network of habitats for wildlife and contribute to the character or visual amenity of a neighbourhood or urban centre.
- 1.2 The provision of open space through the planning system is now well established nationally and locally. National guidance is set out in PPG3 *Housing* and PPG17 *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, and the supporting guidance *Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17*. PPG17 states local authorities should undertake an assessment of the open spaces, sports and recreational facilities in their area and set standards, relevant to the local situation but drawing on national guidance. The local standards should identify how much new provision is required, a qualitative component to determine the need for enhancement of existing provision, and the degree of accessibility to the facility.
- 1.3 With regard to maintaining an adequate supply of open space, PPG17 indicates that established open space, sports and recreational buildings should not be built on unless it can be clearly shown that the use is surplus to requirements. It does recognise that all open space is not of equal merit and consideration of alternative use may be appropriate, or replacement provision secured elsewhere.
- 1.4 A range of policies addresses the provision and protection of open space supporting the aim and objectives in both the adopted Local Plan and Local Plan Review to gain improvement of current opportunities for recreation and leisure. Policies REC3, REC4, REC5, REC6 and RECS4, in the adopted Local Plan, relate to the standards, provision of new residential open space, and protection of existing open space respectively. These policies are reproduced in the Local Plan Review under Policy COM.4, COM.5 and COM.6 (Table 1).
- 1.5 The latter allocates proposals for new open space in both Stratford-upon-Avon and the Main Rural Centres (MRCs). In addition, Policy DEV.3 allows for the provision of amenity open space in the layout of all forms of new development. The Local Plan Review has now been through the Local Plan Inquiry stage and the Inspector's Report is expected in the spring of 2005.

Table 1 - Local Plan Standards of Open Space per 1000 population

	Youth & Adult	General/Amenity Space	Children's play areas	Total
Stratford-upon-Avon	1.7ha	0.5ha	0.8ha	3ha
Main Rural Centres	1.7ha	0.3ha	0.8ha	2.8ha
Other settlements	-	-	-	0.8ha

- 1.6 The Open Space standards were arrived at using the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) benchmark *The Six Acre Standard* relating to levels of outdoor sport and children's playing spaces from which Local Standards have been derived, as well as guidance in PPG17.
- 1.7 The provision of quality open spaces also contributes to meeting the aims and objectives of the adopted 2004 *Community Plan* for the District.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 This audit of open space provision has been carried out drawing on guidance in PPG17, and for the Main Rural Centres carries forward the assessment of Stratford-upon-Avon adopted by the District Council in December 2003. The methodology sought to assess the public open space provision against the NPFA standards and the typologies in PPG17 (Appendix 1). It has not been feasible to produce a quantitative figure of open space against the wider PPG17 typologies (para. 1.7), as the guidance does not include a standard in the same way as the NPFA, although an overall total figure is given.
- 2.2 The definition of open space applied in the audit has been adopted by the District Council, and reflect the PPG17 typology and NPFA definitions. It applies to greenspaces in the public and private realms with a primary purpose of providing safely accessible open space for leisure and recreation that is either formal or passive and providing a social benefit.
- 2.3 The audit enabled the identification of either a credit or deficit of public open space within the survey areas measured against the above definition. An assessment of each settlement, both on an individual site basis and overall provision, is provided in Appendix 2. A location map, for each settlement, illustrating the distribution and categorisation of existing and proposed open spaces is provided in Appendix 3.
- 2.4 It should be noted that for the purposes of the audit a number of small areas of amenity open space have not been included as they have a limited recreational function.
- 2.5 The audit also provides the basis for the operation of the adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) *Provision of Public Open Space* which applies to Stratford-upon-Avon and the MRCs. The SPG seeks to secure developer contributions from residential development for new open space provided either on-site or off-site depending on the nature of the development proposal in accordance with the provisions of the relevant policies in the adopted Local Plan and Local Plan Review. The robust methodology employed will provide a clear framework for all parties to agree on levels of realistic financial contributions towards open space provision.
- 2.6 The following sections provide a summary of provision for each main settlement, drawing on the information in Appendix 2. In addition, a brief assessment of the distribution and level of provision in each settlement is also provided. It is the intention to review the audit on a regular basis and the analysis of the open space provision in each of the settlements is based on information collected at the time. It is recognised that levels of provision may change from the publication of this document.

3. Summary of Open Spaces in Stratford-upon-Avon

- 3.1 The study area includes Stratford-upon-Avon wards and parts of adjoining parishes, covering the urban area and half a kilometre distance from the urban edge along the main footpaths and green corridors. The latter represents the distance covered in a casual walk in the countryside and reflects the Ramblers Association's assessment of the average distance undertaken whilst engaging in passive recreation.
- 3.2 Applying the standard in the policies of the adopted Local Plan and Local Plan Review for Stratford-upon-Avon the audit reveals an overall deficit across the town, against the criteria in the NPFA standard, of -10.59ha (Appendix 2). At the ward level this deficit is similarly acute in both the Mount Pleasant ward and the Avenue and New Town ward, with deficits of -8.25ha and -9.65ha respectively. Guild and Hathaway ward shows a -2.87ha deficit whilst Alveston ward is in credit at +12.48ha. However, in the latter the figure is enhanced by the Recreation Ground, and a number of playing fields in the restricted public access. In all wards, with respect to NPFA figures it is important to undertake a breakdown of provision based on the NPFA criteria, ie publically accessible playing fields, equipped children's play areas etc. in order to fully assess the underlying provision of open space. The various types of user are indentified in the site based analysis.
- 3.3 Overall Stratford is well served for PPG17 type open space, with a total for the town of 148ha (Appendix 2). However, the pattern of distribution is uneven with Mount Pleasant ward displaying similarly low level of 2.97ha. The other wards display a more generous provision, Guild and Hathaway at 20.09ha, Alverston 25.23ha, and Avenue and New Town contributing over 50% to the total figure with 83.8ha. The latter ward's total being significantly enhanced by the Welcombe Hills and Clopton Park sites.
- 3.4 The audit has identified a significant deficit for the town as a whole measured against the standards in Table 1. Alveston Ward is in credit, given the extensive playing field provision within the ward. However publicly accessible pitches are mainly available within the Recreation Ground in this area. Elsewhere across the town significant publicly accessible pitches are provided through an access agreement with Stratford High School in Stratford Guild and Hathaway Ward. The provision of accessible equipped children's play areas across the town could be improved, and there is potential for investment to upgrade existing, and therefore the geographical distribution is clearly uneven, as illustrated in the map in Appendix 3. The high level of provision in certain parts of the town reflects, for example, the extensive areas of open space adjacent to the River Avon and at the Welcombe Hills. However, neither of these areas is particularly accessible for residents living in the western and northwestern parts of the town. PPG17 stresses the importance of ensuring that the provision of public open space is not only sufficient in quantitative terms but is also accessible and serves the needs of all the community.
- 3.5 It is for this reason that the allocations of public open space in the Local Plan Review are located at Bishopton Lane (SUA.HA) and as part of the proposal west of Shottery (SUA.W). Both lie in within the Old Stratford and Drayton ward that abuts the northern and western edge of the town. Although both areas of land lie outside the wards showing a deficit of provision, there are no known opportunities to provide additional open space within this area of the town.
- 3.6 The Bishopton Lane allocation is designed to address a deficit of public open space for residents in the north west of the town, linking in with the existing footpath network and canal towpath. The provision to the west of Shottery is an integral element of the proposed housing development and will help to address the overall open space deficit in this area of the town. Both allocations have now been considered at the Local Plan Inquiry and the Inspector's recommendations are expected in the spring of 2005.
- 3.7 The allocation of a Community Woodland and Meadowland south of Kipling Road forms part of an existing allocation in the adopted Local Plan. It is the District Council's intention is to secure this open space as an integral element of the environmental improvements in the Bridgetown area.
- 3.8 In summary the audit of open space in and around the town of Stratford-upon-Avon gives a clear picture of the amount, type and distribution of provision. From this it is evident that there is a significant shortfall of open space serving the communities in the western and northwestern sides of the town. This reflects the overall deficit of provision across the town, particularly provision equipped children's play areas and the lack of convenient and readily accessible open space facilities serving the Bishopton and Shottery areas. The allocations in the Local Plan Review seek to redress this imbalance.

4. Summary of Open Spaces in the Main Rural Centres (MRCs)

4.1 Alcester

- 4.1.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 28.88ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 20.65ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.
- 4.1.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas amounts to 5.69ha. This produces a deficit of -14.96ha. A further 11.19ha of school playing fields have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.1.3 Alcester is reasonably well served for PPG17 type open space, with a total of 11.70ha for passive or informal recreation serving an important amenity role for local residents.
- 4.1.4 The River Arrow and River Alne influence the distribution of open space in the settlement with a significant amount of accessible amenity open space provided through meadowland and riverside walks. School playing fields provide an important amount of formal sports pitches of varying degree of quality but with limited public access. Public accessible playing pitches are provided on the Recreation Ground and off the Old Stratford Road. The distribution of children's equipped play areas is reasonably good, although there are opportunities for improving provision within the residential areas to the northeast and west of the Birmingham Road.

4.2 Bidford-on-Avon

- 4.2.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 18.80ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 13.52ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.
- 4.2.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas amounts to 4.03ha. This produces a deficit of -9.49ha. A further 1.20ha of school playing fields have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.2.3 Bidford is reasonably well served with PPG17 type open space, with a total of 13.57ha for passive or informal recreation an important amenity role for local residents.
- 4.2.4 The River Avon provides an important area of amenity open space and formal sports pitches adjacent to the riverside and to the south of the settlement. Other sports pitches form part of the school and there are tennis courts and bowling green available for public use. Smaller patches of amenity open space are distributed through the residential areas, with the opportunity to improve the provision of children's equipped play facilities throughout. The Local Plan Review allocation, to the west of the village, provides a degree of balance to this pattern and would also allow for the provision of children's equipped play space in an area currently under served. Allotment gardens provide an important resource, whilst the churchyard of St Laurence's offers a valuable area of open space in the village centre.

4.3 **Henley-in-Arden**

- 4.3.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 48.54ha is well in excess of the minimum standard of 8.20ha. The overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space a significant proportion of which are publicly accessible.
- 4.3.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas etc. amounts to 15.05ha. This produces a credit of +6.85ha. A further 5.55ha of school playing fields have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.3.3 Henley is poorly served with PPG17 type open space, with a total of 3.14ha for passive or informal recreation providing an important amenity role for local residents.
- 4.3.4 The generous provision of publicly accessible NPFA open space, including sports pitches is enhanced by the public access agreement with Warwickshire College. The sports club playing fields and Jubilee Recreation Ground provide other accessible sports pitches. The High School and primary schools complement the picture, although the pitches are currently restricted to public access.
- 4.3.5 The modest figure of PPG17 type open space is augmented by the area known locally as The Mount, across which there is public access via the public footpath network. Further limited permissive access over the The Mount itself has been secured through agreement with the landowner. Other areas of valued PPG17 open space are located to the rear of the High Street along the River Alne, and to the south of the Cattle Market. Amenity open space, as well as children's equipped play areas poorly serve the residential area to the west of the High Street and the Local Plan Review allocation seeks to redress the imbalance.

4.4 **Kineton**

- 4.4.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 18.77ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 6.37ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.
- 4.4.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas etc. amounts to 4.18ha. This produces a deficit of -2.19ha. A further 9.82ha of school playing fields have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.4.3 Kineton is well served with PPG17 type open space, with a total of 9.04ha for passive or informal recreation providing an important amenity role for local residents.
- 4.4.4 Significant playing fields provision comes from the Primary School and High School facilities although these currently do not enjoy unrestricted public access. Accessible playing pitches are provided through the Parish Council facilities and sports field. Allotments and amenity public open space follow the course of the River Dene, and the area known as Castle Hill provides an important area of PPG17 type space and the Local Plan Review allocation incorporates existing amenity open space owned or leased by the Parish Council. Improvements could be made to the provision of children's equipped play space, as current overall levels are poor.

4.5 Shipston-on-Stour

- 4.5.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 20.38ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 12.47ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.
- 4.5.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas etc. amounts to 12.37ha. This produces a modest deficit of -0.7ha. A further 4.72ha of institutional playing fields etc. have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.5.3 Shipston is poorly served with PPG17 type open space, in contrast with the other MRC, with a total of 3.29ha for passive or informal recreation.
- 4.5.4 Formal playing fields and pitches are polarised to the north and south of the town, with the High School and Rugby Club facilities and publicly accessible playing fields adjacent to the River Stour. Children's equipped play space is poorly distributed within the settlement. The residential areas to the north and south have local areas for play, but the overall provision could be improved by a facility on land adjacent to the PPG17 type space known as Horniblow Piece. The residential area to the northeast of the town is also poorly served for children's equipped play areas where provision is non-existent. A facility on the area of open space adjacent to the Ruby Club pitches could off set this imbalance.

4.6 Southam

- 4.6.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 26.90ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 18.22ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.
- 4.6.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas etc. amounts to 2ha. This produces a deficit of -16.22ha. A further 16.04ha of institutional playing fields etc. have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.6.3 Southam benefits from a limited amount of PPG17 type open space, given the size of the settlement, with a total of 8.86ha for passive or informal recreation.
- 4.6.4 The provision of open space is dispersed throughout the settlement, with accessible formal pitches provided in the recreation ground near the town centre and further south adjacent to the A423. Other formal pitches, of varying standard are provided through the three junior/primary schools and the High School facilities. PPG17 type open space is limited given the size of the town and the Local Plan Review allocation seeks to redress this imbalance. What PPG17 type open space there is, is located in the residential areas to the north east and east of the town. These areas are also reasonably well served by children's equipped play areas. Provision of the latter and general amenity open space is however limited to the residential areas to the west of the settlement and consideration could be given for improvement elsewhere in the town.

4.7 Studley

- 4.7.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 25.49ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 18.54ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.

- 4.7.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas etc. amounts to 3.84ha. This produces a deficit of -14.70ha. A further 8.73ha of institutional playing fields etc. have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.7.3 Studley benefits from a limited amount of PPG17 type open space, with a total of 12.92ha for passive or informal recreation.
- 4.7.4 The bulk of publicly accessible open space is located on the urban edge of the settlement to the north village centre. The recreation ground and school playing fields, the latter with restricted public access compliment this picture. The area known as Studley Common provides the significant proportion of PPG17 type open space and the Local Plan Review allocation seeks to compliment this pattern. The residential area to the south of the village centre lacks access to amenity open space and the distribution of children's equipped play areas is generally poor throughout the settlement.

4.8 **Wellesbourne**

- 4.8.1 The figure generated by the audit shows that the total amount of all open space, 11.49ha is in excess of the minimum standard of 15.93ha. However, the overall figure includes sites under the PPG17 typologies, as well as NPFA open space that are known to be both publicly accessible and for private use.
- 4.8.2 NPFA open space that has public access, including sports pitches and children's equipped play areas etc. amounts to 6.09ha. This produces a deficit of -9.84ha. A further 1.24ha of institutional playing fields etc. have also been identified, but are discounted from the overall figure as no formal public access agreements exist for these sites at the present.
- 4.8.3 Wellesbourne benefits from a limited amount of PPG17 type open space, with a total of 4.16ha for passive or informal recreation.
- 4.8.4 Publicly accessible formal sports pitches are provided in the sport/recreation ground and the Dovehouse Drive playing fields. These areas also include children's play equipment, and these facilities are provided within the residential areas to the north and south of the village. There is scope to improve this situation, especially in the residential area to the south adjacent to the airfield. PPG17 amenity open space is limited and the Local Plan Review allocation seeks to redress this imbalance.

Typologies and Standards

1. **PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)**

Range of open spaces that may be of public value:

- i) Parks and gardens – including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens.
- ii) Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces – including woodland, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land and rock areas.
- iii) Green corridors – including river and canal banks, cycleways and rights of way.
- iv) Outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned) – including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas.
- v) Amenity greenspace (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) – including informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens.
- vi) Provision for children and teenagers – including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and other informal areas (e.g. 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters).
- vii) Allotments, community gardens and urban farms.
- viii) Cemeteries and churchyards.
- ix) Accessible countryside in the urban fringe; and
- x) Civic spaces, including civic and market squares, and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians.

2. **NPFA Standards – 'The Six Acre Standard' (2001)**

Outdoor Sport 1.6 ha (4 acres)

- 1. Facilities such as pitches, greens, courts, athletics tracks and miscellaneous sites such as croquet lawns and training areas owned by local authorities, at all tiers;
- 2. Facilities described in (1) within the education sector which are available for public use by written agreement;
- 3. Facilities described in (1) within the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors, which serve the leisure time needs for outdoor recreation of their members, and the public.

NOTE: Included within the standard for outdoor sport is a specific allocation of 1.2 ha (3 acres) per 1,000 people for sport pitches.

Children's Playing Space 0.8 ha (2 acres)

- 4. Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play.
- 5. Casual or informal playing space within housing areas.