

Audit of Outdoor Recreation Facilities

June 2005



Exeter City Council

Exeter Local Development Framework

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Executive Summary

This is an audit of the outdoor recreation facilities available to serve Exeter. It has been prepared in accordance with Government guidance as background information in support of the Exeter Local Plan First Review and the Open Space Supplementary Planning Document. The information it contains has been collected through public consultation, site surveys and reference to recent work by consultants.

A main conclusion of the audit is that the City is well provided with open space but that it is not as well utilized as it could be to meet the full range of the City's needs and those of its extensive hinterland. Moreover some of the facilities would benefit from improvement.

Because the City is compact and sporting interests are diverse it is not essential that formal sports facilities are evenly spread throughout the City to enable access by sustainable modes. Informal recreation areas and children's play spaces are fairly well related to the areas they serve. As a result most people live within easy walking distance of them. Additional informal youth facilities, such as Multi-Use Games Areas and improvements to existing play areas or, in some cases, new provision appear to be desirable in some areas.

It is not the purpose of the audit to indicate how, and at what cost any identified deficiencies may be overcome. A parks and open spaces strategy and a play facilities strategy are being prepared to identify priorities and funding options.

Introduction

Introduction

- 1.1** Central Government advice concerning the provision of sport and recreation is largely contained within Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” published in 2002. PPG17 states that “open space, sport and recreation all underpin people’s quality of life”. It is essential that these areas and facilities are protected and enhanced for the local community and for this reason it is important to record and assess their levels with a comprehensive audit.

Aim

- 1.2** To provide a robust assessment of the existing and future needs of the community in terms of outdoor recreation facilities which will enable policies to be brought forward to:
- protect areas of open space facilities that perform a valuable role;
 - resolve deficiencies in the provision of open space and facilities by directing planning gain to the areas where it is needed.

Objectives

- 1.3** The main objectives of the audit are as follows:
- to identify, through public consultation and surveys the perceived amount and quality of the existing provision;
 - to identify areas of deficiency;
 - to have an up to date database on a Geographic Information System (GIS) of all areas of open space in the City.

Government Guidance

- 1.4** The audit has been prepared in accordance with Government Guidance provided by PPG 17, its companion guide “Assessing Needs and Opportunities” published in 2002 and PPG 3 on Housing. Summaries of the relevant parts of these documents are given by [Appendix IA](#)

Exeter Local Plan First Review

- 1.5** The First Review of the Exeter Local Plan was adopted on the 31st March 2005. Relevant policies are set out in Appendix IB.

Open Space Supplementary Planning Document

- 1.6** The audit will be used to inform the Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document which has been prepared to support the Local Plan First Review by providing amplification and clarification of relevant policies.

Background Information

- 1.7** Documents that the City Council has adopted which have been taken into account in preparing the audit include ‘A Leisure Strategy for Exeter (October 2001)’; the ‘Exeter City Council Allotments Strategy 2002/2007’; and the ‘Social Inclusion Strategy for Exeter Social, Health and Inclusion Partnership 2003-2006’.

Indoor Recreation Facilities

- 1.8** The audit relates only to outdoor recreation facilities. This is because resources are limited and priority has been given to the protection and provision of outdoor facilities. Data on built facilities was produced by consultants RQA and incorporated as part of the Leisure Strategy. The possibility of extending the scope of planning policy to include indoor facilities is being explored as part of the preparation of the City’s Local Development Framework.

Allotments

- 1.9** Allotments are not included in the audit because they are considered in sufficient detail by the Allotments Strategy. This strategy identifies a number of objectives including those aimed at ensuring that there are enough allotments at any given time and that they are fully utilized, as far as possible, in sustainable ways. Exeter Local Plan First Review Policy L10 opposes development causing harm to allotment provision in the area. In addition the City Council has a statutory obligation to provide sufficient allotments to serve the needs of local residents. There is no Local Plan First Review policy seeking allotment provision as part of new development but the possibility of introducing this requirement as part of the Local Development Framework is being considered.
- 1.10** Nationally the average provision for allotments is one plot for every 65 households but in Exeter the ratio is one plot for every 31 households. Over 95% of the City’s allotments have tenants and the demand for plots is increasing. Some parts of the City are not within reasonable walking distance of allotments but there are few opportunities for providing more allotments. Proposals to improve allotments include renewal of access arrangements, water supply, toilets and replacement of fencing.

Bowling Greens

- 1.11** Because a separate study of bowling greens is being prepared to clarify what is provided and how well it is used bowling greens are not included in the audit.

Cemeteries and Churchyards

- 1.12** The audit does not cover these areas because they have a fairly limited recreational value and there are no relevant Exeter Local Plan First Review policies relating to them.

Civic Spaces

- 1.13** The audit does not include hard surfaced civic spaces in the City Centre. Their provision and improvement is being considered as part of wider efforts to improve the quality and functioning of the centre.

Classification

- 1.14** The audit considers all other types of outdoor recreation facilities. The following classification has been adopted for its purposes:

- Natural Green Space;
- Informal Recreation Areas;
- Formal Sports Facilities;
- Informal Youth Facilities;
- Equipped Children's Play Areas.

- 1.15** Several facilities of the same or different types are located on the same site. Typically a city park may include play areas, formal sports facilities and informal youth facilities within an extensive informal recreation area. Similarly the City's valley parks include woodlands, other natural green space; formal sports facilities and, in one case, a city park. All the key terms used by the audit are defined by the glossary in Appendix II.

Method

- 1.16** The approach to carrying out the audit was derived from "Assessing Needs and Opportunities" the companion guide to PPG17. In summary the following steps have been carried out:-

1. Identify Local Needs	Consider local needs in relation to the City's physical character, national standards, Council objectives and the results of consultations
2. Set Provision Standards	Set out the standards which will be used to measure the quality of the City's provision bearing in mind the appraisal of the City's needs.

3. Audit Local Provision	Undertake audit using departmental knowledge, site surveys and the result of consultations.
4. Apply the Provision Standards	Identify deficiencies against quality and accessibility standards.

Consultations and Surveys

- 1.17** A review has been undertaken of relevant recent information sources. These include an audit of all outdoor formal sports facilities following consultation with users in 1999/2000. This has been brought up to date using the council's records and site surveys. Questionnaire surveys have been undertaken seeking information about the use and attitude towards city parks and the quality and accessibility of open space generally. Questionnaire surveys were also undertaken with the assistance of local businesses and the internet. A focus group of users and a meeting was held with the main disabilities umbrella group in the City. Information about consultations and survey work and the key results are set out in Appendix IC

The Plans

- 1.18** The City has been divided into a number of sub-areas ('neighbourhoods') to provide a basis for assessing the extent and quality of open space provision at each local level. These are, as far as possible, roughly square in shape and no more than one sq kilometre in extent. Some boundaries are provided by the edges of existing and proposed residential areas and barriers to movement such as the river valley, railways and busy roads. Others are more arbitrary in nature reflecting minor physical divisions and indications of local identity including social boundaries. In practice it has sometimes been necessary to separate larger, seemingly self-contained, residential areas.
- 1.19** Links between neighbourhoods are made as clear as possible in the way in which they are presented on the plans. In the City Centre and some other areas it has been necessary to devise neighbourhoods which have some value for the purposes of the audit even though their residential areas are not continuous and are extensively divided up by busy roads.
- 1.20** The Key Plan shows the location of each of these neighbourhoods. Plans 1A and 1B between them show the whole City and the location of valley parks, city parks and formal sports facilities. Informal youth facilities are shown on plans 2A and 2B. Plans 3 to 28 show the neighbourhoods to a larger scale highlighting existing and proposed play areas as well as other open spaces. They are accompanied by a brief description of each neighbourhood.

Contacts

If you need more information or copies of this or the other documents referred to, please contact the Council's Planning Office on the 4th floor at the Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter EX1 1NN . Telephone 01392 265223. E-mail: planning@exeter.gov.uk. Area Planners will coordinate advice in relation to the audit affecting the area each is responsible for.

Accessing Information via the Internet

This document (and the others referred to) can also be accessed by computer via the Council's web site www.exeter.gov.uk. On entering the site, to open this document click on Planning and then Open Space Audit. To view an appendix or plan click on the reference to it e.g. Appendix IVA or Plan 26 When looking at a plan you can focus on a small area by delineating and clicking on it.

Step One: Identifying Local Need

Consider local needs in relation to the City's physical character, National Standards, Council objectives and the results of consultations

Introduction

- 2.1 In addition to the commentary on the physical character of the City set out in paragraph 2.2 below, the information sources used to assess local needs are as follows:
- *National Standards:* The National Playing Fields Association and English Nature provide the most widely used national standards that are applicable. These are included in the text where relevant.
 - *City Leisure Strategy:* The Council's Leisure Strategy published in 2001 seeks to secure a role for the City as a major regional centre for athletics, rugby, hockey and tennis. It aims to establish the City as a home for major sporting and social events, including national and international competitions.
 - *Consultation:* Details of consultation and individual surveys carried out are listed in paragraph 1.17 above and summarized in appendix 1C. The information in the audit is continually being brought up to date by inspections and from on-going Council records.

The City

- 2.2 Exeter has a population of 113,000. It is a free-standing compact urban settlement occupying a very roughly circular area of around 70 sq kms. In practice most residents live within 5 kms of the majority of the facilities they use. Because of this and the availability of high frequency bus services along main radial routes, access to a private car is not generally essential to meet individual recreational needs.
- 2.3 Exeter is the commercial and cultural capital of a rural sub-region with a population of up to 550,000. The nearest towns, such as Crediton, Tiverton, Honiton, Exmouth and Newton Abbot, are small in comparison and have a fairly narrow range of sporting facilities.
- 2.4 The City has a lower proportion of children but a higher proportion of people of working age than adjoining districts, Devon County or England and Wales.
- 2.5 The character of different parts of the City and the way in which it is divided up by natural and other features is made clear by the neighbourhood plans and associated descriptions.

Natural Green Space

Amount

- 2.6 *National Standards:* English Nature believes that local authorities should consider the provision of not less than 2ha of accessible natural green space per 1000 people.
- 2.7 The glossary in Appendix II describes the characteristics of the City's valley parks. Not all the land in the valley parks comprises natural green space or is accessible to the public. On the other hand, the valley parks, with the Exe estuary and associated areas, meet the requirement for a mix of natural green space providing for a range of recreational needs identified by English Nature. Some enhancement of the standard might be reasonable because only parts of the valley parks are accessible to the public.

Location

- 2.8 *National Standards:* English Nature suggests that all people should live within the following distances from accessible natural green spaces:
- 300m from any site;
 - 2km from one 20 Ha site;
 - 5km from one 100 Ha site;
 - 10km from one 500 Ha site.
- 2.9 Whilst the Council is in a position to protect existing natural green space in its area it would be unrealistic to seek provision of additional natural green space in the absence of relevant planning policies. In practice informal recreation areas such as valley parks meet the requirement for accessible natural green space. The 2km from a 20 ha and 5km from a 100 ha natural green space standard listed above are appropriate for the City subject to some adjustment reflecting differences in rights of access. The requirement for a 500 ha site within 10 km is not reasonable or practicable. The City is surrounded by open land which, via a dense network of lanes and public footpaths, is readily accessible.

Quality

- 2.10 *National Standard:* The only possibly applicable standards are ones introduced by English Nature for assessing the quality of designated Local Nature Reserves.
- 2.11 It would be very difficult to formulate standards applicable to the valley parks given their varied character and multiple roles. The LNR standard has a specific and fairly limited role in this context.

Informal Recreation Areas

Amount

- 2.12 *National Standard:* The National Playing Fields Association advises that 0.4 – 0.5 ha of casual/ informal children's play space should be provided per 1000 population.

2.13 The national standards should apply.

Location

2.14 *National Standard:* The most applicable national standard is provided by the National Playing Fields Association for provision of unequipped Local Areas of Play with its proposal that these should be within 1 minutes walking time of home – (e.g 80m). In addition there is the English Nature suggestion that no person should live more than 300 m from an accessible natural green space. Other sources advocate walking times of 5 minutes (400m) as appropriate for residents to reach local facilities. (e.g Sustainable Settlements - Severnside Research and Consultancy Unit 1995).

2.15 A standard in the middle of the 80 – 400m range would appear to be sensible.

Quality

2.16 *National Standard:* The most relevant national standards are provided by the Civic Trust Green Flag Award Criteria, recommended in PPG17 Accompanying Guide: Assessing Needs and Opportunities (Annex B) adapted, where necessary, to reflect the result of consultations.

2.17 Priorities for improvement of the city park network also, however, require understanding of the role of each of the parks and the cost of undertaking and maintaining any desired improvements to them. It would be difficult and inappropriate to assess the smaller and far more numerous informal open spaces using the Green Flag Award criteria. Suitable standards need to be applied.

Formal Sports Facilities

Amount

2.18 *National Standard:* The National Playing Fields Association recommends that a minimum of 1.6-1.8 ha of playing fields should be provided per 1000 population. Of this 1.2 ha per 1000 should be playing pitches.

2.19 *Leisure Strategy:* See paragraph 2.1.

2.20 The national standard is appropriate to the City except insofar as it should, as a sub-regional centre, provide additional facilities required to serve this wider area as a whole.

Access/Location

2.21 The City is compact and has a good public transport network. Playing fields tend to be concentrated in certain areas. This is partly for historical reasons. Concentration also has practical advantages allowing supporting facilities, such as changing rooms, to be shared thus reducing costs of provision. The need to travel within the city to reach sports facilities arises primarily from the way in which sport is organized.

- 2.22** Formal sports facilities include a wide range of activities some of which have only a few participants and need only one or two facilities in the City. Football, the most popular sport, makes use of a large number of pitches but clubs do not necessarily use pitches close to the area in which members live. Most local football games are played between clubs from throughout the City. The result of this is that one of the two teams involved in a game has to travel to a pitch they do not usually use. For these reasons it is sensible to regard formal sports facilities as a City wide resource and not introduce standards covering travel distances to them.

Quality

- 2.23** *National Standard:* The Civic Trust Green Flag Award Criteria are the most relevant available.
- 2.24** These criteria do not, however, assess the quality of the surface provided by playing pitches or of the changing facilities available at formal sports facilities. Both are of crucial importance and both can be very expensive to improve. The cost of significantly reducing a drainage problem may be prohibitive. The usefulness of a playing pitch would be greatly improved if it was provided with synthetic turf and floodlighting but again this would be very costly.

Informal Youth Facilities

Amount

- 2.25** *National Standard:* There are no standards relating specifically for facilities of this kind but the National Playing Fields Association recommendations referred to in paragraph 2.18 for all youth and adult provision should be noted.

Location

- 2.26** Some informal youth facilities, such as BMX tracks and skate parks should be regarded as city wide facilities because they are fairly specialized and can only therefore be very limited in number. Others, such as Multi-Use Games Areas have more general appeal so that viable facilities can be provided to meet local need. Facilities like these should have a catchment area that is wide enough to support a good range of activities but not so large that it is difficult for young people to reach them travelling independently on foot or bike.

Quality

- 2.27** *National Standard:* Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 30 and PAS 35 provide guidance on the design of Multi-Use Games Areas and Wheeled Sports Facilities respectively. The Green Flag Award scheme can be used to assess some minor facilities.
- 2.28** National standards should be applied where they exist. Elsewhere facilities will need to be judged in the light of local practice.

Equipped Children's Play Areas

Amount

- 2.29** *National Standards:* The National Playing fields Association considers that a minimum of 0.2 – 0.3 ha equipped/ designated children's play space should be provided per 1000 population.
- 2.30** The National Playing Field standard appears to require more space for equipped children's play areas than is justified by likely use even when considered in relation to its own accessibility standards as summarized in paragraph 2.31 below. The results of consultations and the Council's own site surveys suggest that the amount of equipped children's play space in the City at the moment is appropriate especially bearing in mind that most play areas are within larger informal recreation areas which children also make full use of. However, dog free areas around small play areas should be extended whenever suitable opportunities arise.

Type and Location

- 2.31** *National Standards:* The NPFA suggests that children's play areas be categorised into three different groups;
- LAPs- Local Areas for Play – minimum area of 100m² - within 1 minutes walking time of home - no fixed play equipment;
 - LEAPs – Locally Equipped Areas of Play – minimum area 400m² - within 5 minutes walking time of home - minimum of five different activities;
 - NEAPs – Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area – minimum area 1000m² - within 15 minutes walking time of home - minimum of eight different activities.
- 2.32** Use of the NPFA distance and equipment standards provide rigid definitions allowing no flexibility when considering demographic issues and social class divides. Standards achieving a similar level of provision as the one suggested by the NPFA but reflecting local requirements would be more appropriate subject to additional facilities being available to areas with especially large numbers of children.

Quality

- 2.33** *National Standards:* The British Standard providing technical compliance standards for play area equipment is BS EN 1176. BS EN 1177 provides the standard for impact absorbing playground surfacing. These standards give technical information for the safety areas around equipment and safety requirements for impact areas together with other information.
- 2.34** National or equivalent standards should be applied.

Step Two: Setting Standards

Set out the standards which will be used to measure the quality of the City's provision bearing in mind the appraisal of the City's needs

Introduction

3.1 The standards are introduced in italics

Natural Green Space

Amount (see paragraph 2.7)

3.2

- *The valley parks should have a combined area of not less than 3 ha per 1000 population.*

Location (see paragraph 2.9)

3.3 *Dwellings should be less than:*

- *2km from a valley park of 20 ha or more;*
- *5km from a valley park of more than 100 ha.*

Quality (see paragraph 2.11)

3.4 Standards not proposed.

Informal Recreation Areas

Amount (see paragraph 2.13)

3.5

- *0.4 – 0.5 ha or more of informal recreation space should be available per 1000 population.*

Location (see paragraph 2.15)

3.6

- *Dwellings should be no more than 250 m by a convenient and safe pedestrian route from an informal recreation area which is at least 500 sq m in extent and in no place less than 10 m wide.*

Quality (see paragraph 2.17)

3.7

- *City parks should score at least 70% according to the criteria in Appendix IIIA(i).*

- *Other informal recreation space that serves residential areas should satisfy the requirement set out in Appendix IIIA(ii).*

Formal Sports Facilities

Amount (see paragraph 2.20)

- 3.8**
- *1.8 ha of playing fields to be provided per 1000 population for formal sports together with any further space necessary to enable the City to serve as the sporting centre for its sub-region effectively.*

Access/Location (see paragraph 2.21 & 2.22)

- 3.9**
- *Formal sports facilities should be readily accessible on foot or cycle.*

Quality (see paragraph 2.24)

- 3.10**
- *Sites to be well drained and provided with satisfactory changing facilities.*
 - *Sites to score better than 70% in accordance with the criteria set out in Appendix IIIB.*

Informal Youth Facilities

Amount (see paragraph 2.25)

- 3.11** Additional facilities required but space requirement not quantified.

Location (see paragraph 2.26)

- 3.12**
- *Informal Youth facilities should be readily accessible on foot or cycle.*
 - *Multi Use Games Area or similar facilities for young adults should be within 1500m easy walking distance of all dwellings in the City.*
 - *Where Multi-Use Games Areas or similar facilities cannot realistically be provided on the above scale, youth needs should be met by introducing more limited amounts of equipment, e.g football practice goals or basketball hoops serving residential areas within 1000m easy walking distance.*

Quality (see paragraph 2.28)

- 3.13**
- *New informal youth facilities should score 85% or more using the criteria set out in Appendix IIIC.*
 - *Existing informal youth facilities should achieve quality targets identified for them in the audit Appendix IVC.*

Equipped Children's Play Areas

Amount (see paragraph 2.30)

- 3.14**
- *0.1 to 0.12 ha equipped/designated children's play space should be provided per 1000 population depending upon site conditions and the proportion of family housing in the area.*

This standard allows for a range of provision around the City average of 0.1 ha per 1000 population.

Type and Location (see paragraph 2.32)

- 3.15**
- *Children of 12 years old and under should live within 1000m of a play area equipped to meet the needs/interests of their age group and be able to reach it safely and conveniently on foot.*
 - *Children of 8 years and under should live within 500m of a play area equipped to meet the needs/interests of their age group and be able to reach it safely and conveniently on foot.*
 - *Play areas meeting the needs of different age groups up to and including 12 year olds should be provided as far as possible on the same site in accordance with the pattern of provision set out in Appendix IIID(i).*

Quality (see paragraph 2.34)

- 3.16**
- *New children's play areas should score 85% or more points using the criteria set out in Appendix IIID(ii).*
 - *Existing play areas should achieve the quality targets identified for them in the audit Appendix IVD.*

Step Three: Auditing Local Provision

Undertake audit of open space using departmental knowledge, site surveys and the result of consultations.

Introduction

- 4.1 Key information is presented in italics. Other text provides extra information needed and introduces links to the supporting material. Included in the audit are proposed facilities subject to firm commitment as a result of Council programmes or because they are required by a planning agreement.

Natural Green Space

Amount

- 4.2 *The valley parks comprise 662 ha.*

Location

- 4.3 The valley parks are shown on plans 1A & 1B and on plans 3 to 28.

Informal Recreation Areas

Amount

- 4.4 *There are 229 ha of casual informal open space (excluding valley parks) in the City.*

Location

- 4.5 The city parks are shown on plans 1A and 1B. All informal recreation areas are shown on plans 3 to 28.

Quality

- 4.6 Appendix IVA is an appraisal of all the City's parks on the lines indicated by paragraph 3.7 above and Appendix IIIA (i). No appraisal of the quality of other informal recreation areas has been possible. These will have to be assessed on the ground as and when necessary.

Formal Sports Facilities

Amount

- 4.7 *There are 253 ha of formal sport facilities.*

Appendix IVB(i) lists the facilities available. Appendix IVB(ii) groups facilities by the sport which uses them.

Location

- 4.8 Plans 1A and 1B show the location of all formal sports facilities.

Quality

- 4.9 Appendix IVB(ii) gives an assessment of the quality of formal sports facilities on the basis provided in paragraph 3.10 and Appendix IIIB. The main commitments arise from the re-organization of the City's primary and secondary education system. This will create an extra four artificial turf pitches suitable for training and casual games but not for league games.

Informal Youth Facilities

Amount

- 4.10 Appendix IVC(i) lists informal youth facilities provided in the City.

Location

- 4.11 Plans 2A and 2B show the location of existing and proposed informal youth facilities, and their type. A list of proposed informal youth facilities is provided by the introduction to Appendix IV.

Quality

- 4.12 Appendix IVC is an assessment of all existing facilities giving a % score for each site against the criteria set out in Appendix IIIC. This should be considered against a target score given for the site reflecting what is both feasible and desirable.

Equipped Children's Play Areas

Amount

- 4.13 *There are 12.2 ha of equipped/designated children's play space.*

Type and Location

- 4.14** The neighbourhood Plans 3 to 28 show the location of all existing and proposed play areas indicating the age groups they cater for. A list of the proposed equipped play areas is provided by the introduction to Appendix IV.

Quality

- 4.15** Appendix IVD is an assessment of all existing equipped play areas giving, in relation to each site, a % score against the criteria set out in Appendix IID(ii). This should be considered against a target score given for the site reflecting what is both feasible and desirable.

Step Four: Applying Provision Standards

Identify deficiencies against quality and accessibility standards. Identify deficiencies against quantity standards

Introduction

- 5.1 Factual information is presented below where this is possible. The text also gives an indication of parts of the City where local provision falls below the standards set out in Step 3 above. To understand the deficiencies in the pattern of provision which might have to be addressed by a particular development it is necessary to look at the plans and the information in Appendix IV.

Amount of Open Space

- 5.2 The table indicates the amount of open space required in each case if the standard is applied to the City and the amount, according to the audit, which actually exists.

<i>The Standard</i>	<i>Amount in ha</i>		
	<i>Required*</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Surplus /deficit</i>
Natural Green Space 3 ha of valley park per 1000 people	339	662	+323.2
Informal Recreation Areas 0.4 to 0.5 per 1000 population.	45 to 57	215	+158 to 170
Formal Sports Facilities 1.8 (+)ha per 1000 population.	203	253	+50
Equipped Children's Play Areas 0.1 to 0.12 ha per 1000 population.	11.3 to 13.6	12.2	+ 0.9 to – 1.4

*This is calculated by multiplying the City's population (estimated to be 113,000 in 2004) by the standard above..

- 5.3 The City as a whole is clearly well provided with open space. .

Range and Type of Facilities

- 5.4 The need for facilities to meet local needs such as equipped play areas are considered in paragraphs 5.8 to 5.10 with reference to the plans and information on what is available.

- 5.5** Appendix IVB(i) lists all the outdoor formal sports facilities in the City. The construction of the new county rugby ground at Sandy Park, north of Old Rydon Lane will significantly improve facilities available for local people to watch the game. The number of synthetic turf pitches in the City will increase substantially in the next few years as part of the reorganization of its school system. The cycle network is steadily being expanded through implementation of the Local Transport Plan.
- 5.6** There is no overall shortage of land to provide additional formal sports facilities needed and make good any shortages of particular types of playing pitch but only some of it is likely to be suitable without improvements that may be expensive.

Location

Natural Green Space

- 5.7** A small part of Pinhoe is not within the distances from valley parks suggested as desirable by paragraph 3.3. but this area is on the fringe of the City adjoining open countryside.

Informal Recreation Areas

- 5.8** Plans 3 to 28 and accompanying notes draw attention to areas in which housing is not within 250m of suitable informal recreation areas. Most significant of these are parts of the following neighbourhoods: St James, Topsham (South), Digby, Stoke Hill, St Leonards, Newtown, Pennsylvania, Alphington Village and Exwick. (see Section 6 on Implementation)

Informal Youth Facilities

- 5.9** The north of the City including Pennsylvania, Mincinglake, St James and parts of St David's, Newtown, Polsloe, and Whipton wards are not readily accessible to an existing or proposed Multi-Use Games Area. This is also true of Topsham, and Alphington Village. (see Section 6 on Implementation)

Equipped Children's Play Areas

- 5.10** Plans 3 to 28 show the location of play areas and the age groups they serve. There appear to be particular gaps in accessibility to play areas in parts of the Redhills, Alphington (North), Riverside, Haven Banks, Pennsylvania, Polsloe, Heavitree (West), Whipton and Countess Wear neighbourhoods. In most cases the gap can be filled by improving existing facilities rather than creating new ones. (see Section 6 on Implementation)

Quality

Informal Recreation Areas

- 5.11** Pinces Garden is the only City Park to score more than the 70% target using the Green Flag based criteria set out in Appendix IIIA(i) . Heavitree, Rougemont Gardens and Northernhay are the three most popular parks in the City. Heavitree and Northernhay have scores slightly below the target. The 61% score achieved by Rougemont Gardens is probably a reflection of their special role as historic gardens closely associated with Rougemont Castle

Formal Sports Facilities

- 5.12** The following conclusions can be drawn from considering the information provided by Appendix IVB(ii) in relation to the standards set out in paragraph 3.10 and Appendix IIIB:

- The quality of City Council playing fields varies considerably but, in most cases, improvements are desirable;
- The Cowick Barton, King George V and Exhibition Fields provide good quality pitches and changing facilities achieving scores above the 70% target set in relation to the Green Flag based criteria;
- Exwick, Bromham's Farm, and Grace Road playing fields have particular drainage problems. The last two lack satisfactory changing facilities.

Informal Youth Facilities

- 5.13** The assessment of Informal Youth Facilities provided by Appendix IVC indicates a number of sites where significant desirable improvements can be made. These include Cowick Barton and the Ludwell Valley.

Equipped Children's Play Areas

- 5.14** The information about the quality of play areas given by Appendix IVD should be considered in relation to the neighbourhoods they serve as shown on Plans 3 to 28. The audit identifies a number of neighbourhoods where improvements to existing play areas or, in some cases, new provision seems to be desirable.(see paragraph 5.10)

Implementation

- 6.1 The audit sets out to provide an objective assessment of the provision of open space and the sports and recreation facilities they provide. It is kept up to date as far as possible both in the light of investments in new and improved facilities and changes in the value of existing facilities arising from wear and tear and from obsolescence.
- 6.2 Any measures to remedy gaps in provision must take into account the following:
- some problems identified, for example the visibility of the entrance to a park, are almost impossible to resolve however important;
 - in many cases substantial investment would be needed to overcome a major disadvantage, e.g poor drainage, which would not be justifiable by the need for it;
 - the distribution of local facilities depends very much on the availability of sites to provide them. In some areas gaps in play area provision can only be filled if a new development comes forward in the right place;
 - funding for the provision of equipped play areas and, to some extent, their improvement is dependent upon funding from new development. A new development in one area creates opportunities for enhancements which may be needed much more by another area where development does not take place.
- 6.3 The audit nevertheless has four essential roles:
- it supplies, in conjunction with cost calculations, the basis for evaluating priorities for the improvement of the facilities, such as playing fields, needed by the City as a whole;
 - it provides an assessment of the value of existing open space facilities informing decisions as to whether they should be protected and, if not, what compensatory contributions would be reasonable;
 - it facilitates decisions as to the way in which local open space needs can best be met by identifying areas of deficiency and the extent to which they might be met by new development;
 - it makes clear to prospective developers what improvements to the open space and play provision in the vicinity of the site they may be expected to contribute towards.

- 6.4 The improvement of open space provision depends on a variety of funding sources including contributions from developers; central Government, the National Lottery; the voluntary sector as well as from the Council's own resources. A parks and open spaces strategy and play facilities strategy are being prepared taking into account the results of the audit. They will identify priorities and suggest appropriate funding options.