

1. Environmental Sustainability

Spatial Planning Aspects

- Encouraging travel reduction
- Design & construction
- Protection of existing resources
- Provision of new opportunities
- Maintenance of environmental quality through managed approaches to conflicting uses

Environmentally-Conscious Design of Sports Facilities

Sport England and CABE have produced guidance on securing the efficient and effective design and implementation of sports facilities. Quality in design and construction rests on a wide range of factors, with sustainability central to these considerations. Amongst the fundamental characteristics of a well-designed sports facility are a number of environmental sustainability issues:

Setting Sustainable Design Objectives for Project Design

- Are the sports development outcomes clear, and consistent with strategic plans?
- Have the relevant sporting National Governing Bodies, Local Authorities etc been consulted?
- Has design quality been given due importance?
- Has a whole life cost approach been incorporated?
- Are the design brief and objectives fully thought through and clearly stated?
- Have any potential hidden agendas or conflicting aims been resolved?
- Are the objectives compatible with local development plans etc, and likely to receive necessary permissions?

Characteristics of a Well-Designed Sports Facility

- A location allowing convenient use of all means of transport, and clearly identifiable entrances;
- Welcoming, accessible buildings which encourage both existing and new users to use the facility;
- Easily understood building organisation;
- Design for clear, easy, safe movement for all users of the facility;
- Positive contribution to the public realm, breaking down the scale and mass, and using social spaces such as café/bar or foyers to interface with the public realm;
- Good functional fit with the specific technical requirements of the particular sports use;
- Ease of cleaning/maintenance – robust, durable fixtures and finishes;
- Easily accessible storage;
- Careful control of daylight in internal spaces.

Sport England/CABE (2004) **Better Places for Sport: A Client Guide to Achieving Design Quality** at <http://www.sportengland.org/final-se.pdf>

Spondon Cricket Club, Derby

This case study provides a good example of how the relocation of a cricket club was used to improve the environment of the Derby greenbelt. Spondon Cricket Club are a well established club which over the years became surrounded by houses creating a very small and tight pitch. Due to persistent complaints from the surrounding residents about cricket balls going in to the adjacent gardens, the club wanted to move to a new ground where it would enable a full sized pitch to meet its sporting need.

The preferred location identified was in the Derbyshire greenbelt on the site of a disused nursery on Locko Road to the North of Spondon. The local planning authority at Derby City Council saw the move into the greenbelt as removing a non-compatible use (disused nursery) in to a compatible use compliant with greenbelt policy. The old ground was used for a housing development which funded the move, however in order to comply with playing field policy, the move was not permitted until the new ground was ready. Sport England considered it to be a good move, where although a sports facility was being lost, a larger, better facility was being developed. Permission was granted 24th December 2003 for the change of use of land.

Recreational Driving in the National Parks

There are longstanding concerns over the impact of recreational motor vehicles such as four wheel drives and trail bikes on the conservation and enjoyment on some of the National Parks. A survey found that several National Park Authorities consider this to be one of their most pressing issues and contrary to National Park purposes of conservation and enhancement of their natural and cultural heritage, and understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities. The legal and illegal use of recreational motor vehicles on rights of way and on open country is having a significant impact on the Brecon Beacons, Exmoor, Lake District, Northumberland, North York Moors, the South Downs and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

The impacts range from physical damage to green lanes and adjacent land, danger to and conflict with non-motorised users and land managers, and disturbance to the tranquillity, landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Parks. The reports of conflict and damage continue due to very few direct powers available to the Park Authorities, the difficulty of enforcing the law in remote rural areas, as well as confusion over the legal status of many routes. There are plans to change the law and introduce better guidance on enforcement.

Council for National Parks (June 2005) **Off-road or off-limits? Recreational driving in the National Parks**

The Ecology of Golf Courses

One in every 20 golf courses in England is an important wildlife site and SSSIs now cover all or part of nearly 100 courses in England. Nevertheless, golf courses have long attracted attention for their perceived unsound approach to ecological husbandry. Royal & Ancient have published research studies which seek to demonstrate that, given appropriate management, the ecology of golf courses can be enhanced and promoted as a positive characteristic. There are clearly opportunities for the planning system to ensure that early discussions in the planning process address these issues and, through the application of conditions, for example, an appropriate management regime is put in place. Several examples of management plans have been established (contact tom.tew@english-nature.org)

Source: Royal & Ancient course management at: <http://www.randa.org/index.cfm?action=coursemanagement.promotion>

Arnold Town FC, Arnold, Nottinghamshire

Arnold is a town within Gedling Borough Council to the North of Nottingham. It is home to Arnold Town Football Club, a semi-professional club, and Arnold Boys Football Club, a flourishing youth set up. There were problems with the grounds of both teams: first, Arnold Town FC's current ground didn't meet the league requirements, and second Arnold Boys FC were spread across five playing fields in the borough of Gedling, which was increasingly becoming a problem especially in trying to gain FA Community Club Status¹. Their recent sports development growth has necessitated using a number of different grounds as no one ground had the capacity to support the existing club.

Planning Background

Sport England first became involved with Arnold Town FC in October 2002 when the Club approached Sport England for help in finding an alternative ground. A meeting was held in which representatives from Arnold Boys FC also contributed outlining the nature of their problem. At the meeting it was decided that the best way forward would be to find an alternate site to meet both teams in terms of the league requirements of Arnold Town FC, and the pitch requirements for Arnold Boys FC.

Suitable land was suggested on the outskirts of Arnold for the change of use of land to 12 football pitches and associated car parking, which was subject to a planning inquiry held on 23rd and 24th November 2004. The case was called in to the Secretary of State, whose decision and report was issued on 16th March 2005.

The proposal conflicted with development plan policy in a number of ways, and the report outlined that although the application would accord with some of the aims of the development plan, it was contrary to development plan policies in terms of accessibility and sustainability, as it would be dependant on travel by car. Development within the greenbelt was also seen as inappropriate in terms of local plan policies.

However it was seen that Arnold Town FC and Arnold Town Youth are well supported clubs that make a significant contribution to the sporting and community life of Arnold. It was thought that failure to secure a suitable ground before the start of 2005/2006 season would have significant consequences for both football teams which may force the clubs in to decline. It was agreed that this would be a major loss for the community and would conflict with wider local and national objectives to encourage participation in sport. This was seen as a material consideration of significant weight.

Planning permission was granted. Although weight was placed on the inappropriateness of the development within the greenbelt, and accessibility issues by other modes of transport than the car, the substantial benefits that would arise from the proposal would only be achievable on that particular site. On balance the Secretary of State concluded that the strong need for the proposal and the benefits that would arise, together with the lack of alternative sites, were sufficient to outweigh the material considerations against the development.

Aspects of Spatial Planning Considerations

This case study shows the consideration of the wider benefits of sports for the local community can outweigh the disadvantages outlined through non-compliance of development plan policy. The football club's role in community life, along with the recognition of the wider benefits such as a reduction in car journeys by concentrating facilities in one area, are evident in the Secretary of State's Decision.

¹ **FA Community Clubs are recognised clubs at the pinnacle of the club development pathway that have a high quality, multi-team (10 minimum) set up with excellent social, training and playing opportunities for all. They must present opportunities for players irrespective of age, gender, religion and ability. In order to become a community club, there must be evidence of a commitment to providing a sporting facility for use by the entire community.**