

Recreational Open Space & Community Halls: Guidance Note

Introduction:

In the former Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) area the Council recognises the importance of community facilities in creating socially cohesive and inclusive communities; reducing inequality, promoting personal well-being, and sustaining a better quality of life for everyone both now and for future generations.

The former TDBC Council's Assessments and Strategies on Allotments, [Children's Play Areas](#), [Playing Pitches](#), [Green Spaces](#), [Built Sports Facilities](#), and [Community Halls](#) provide the latest local information on quantity and quality, shortfalls in and over supply of, as well as standards for new provision.

For the former Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) area the Council defines Recreational Open Space (ROS) as usable areas of formal and informal green space (above 0.4 hectares). The types of ROS include: allotments, children's play areas, provision for teenagers, parks and recreation grounds, outdoor sports facilities (i.e. playing pitches, courts and tracks), cemeteries and church yards, amenity open space, indoor and recreation facilities, woodlands, orchards, and semi-natural open space.

In the former West Somerset Council (WSC) area the Council recognises the formal sports facilities and informal amenity or open space and play spaces are a valued existing facility and an integral part of new development.

The Councils Pitch Assessment, Children's Play Strategy and [Sports and Recreation Study](#) provide information of existing provision, needs and demand.

Multi-functional green space, such as: sustainable urban drainage incorporated into public open space; children's play areas encompassed within general recreation area; and woodlands providing both habitat mitigation, children's play areas and recreational space; will be encouraged. The creation of sports hubs (multiple sports clubs in one location) will be encouraged to

enable the sharing of facilities (such as changing rooms, parking, spectator areas and function rooms) and maintenance costs (utilities, ground care, building repairs).

Applicants need to plan for onsite provision wherever possible, or financial contribution in lieu of that provision to be used for provision off site. The provision will be secured through planning obligations. A land-use budget accompanying pre-application requests and planning applications should set out the type and amount of community facilities envisaged on the development site.

Specific Information on Typologies

Green Space

TDBC - The Councils adopted [Core Strategy](#) sets a standard of 6.85 hectares of good quality green space per 1000 population. Green space can incorporate the typologies set out in the introduction. Development will be expected to show through a land-use budget the overall amount green space as well as the mix and amount of the different typologies within a development.

WSC – The Councils [Planning Obligations SPD](#) required accessible natural green space in accordance with Natural England guidelines - 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population. In addition no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace; and there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home. The Council asks that 20% of the green space should offer biodiversity benefits, and in particular woodlands.

Allotments

TDBC – The Councils [Site Allocations and Development Management Plan](#) sets out that 15.4 square metres of allotment land per dwelling is required for new development. A functional site is 20 full sized plots, with space for access between each plot. A plot in the former Borough is 290 square meters. This provides greater flexibility for subdivision - in half or quarters to provide “starter” plots for those new to allotmenting who are looking for something more manageable or for those who have less time than they would otherwise like to devote to growing fruit and veg - whilst still providing a reasonable growing area. Smaller allotment sites may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Allotment sites must be within 1km of new development, easy to get to on foot or by public transport. Expanding existing allotment sites in the area within a reasonable distance of the development will also be considered.

The Council recommends The National Allotment Society [South West Region Mentor](#) is asked to advise on the location, design and layout of allotment areas.

Children's Play

TDBC – The Councils [Site Allocations and Development Management Plan](#) sets out that 20 square metres of equipped children's playing area for all dwellings of two or more beds is required for new developments. Provision for young children is a minimum of 400m² and must be within 400 meters of new dwellings. Provision for both young and older children is a minimum of 1,000m², and within 1km of new dwellings. Combined play areas will be encouraged to enable children of all ages and families to play and learn together. Play areas should be overlooked by dwellings to reduce opportunity for anti-social behaviour.

Historically the council requires a minimum 5 items of play equipment, paths to equipment and landscaping for a young children's play areas and a minimum of 8 items of play equipment, paths to equipment and landscaping. The layout of play areas will need to be approved by the Council. Warranties or insurances will be required to cover the scheme for 20 years from date of implementation; alternatively commuted sums for the management and maintenance of the equipment will be required.

WSC – The Councils planning strategies support the improvement of play provision where developments generate demand

The Council recommends Play England [guide to creating successful play spaces](#) be used when designing the play areas.

In both Council areas where onsite provision is not possible financial contributions in lieu of onsite provision will be required to enable existing play areas sites in the area to be expanded or new sites to be provided within a reasonable distance of the development. Contributions are calculated annually, and the latest figures can be provided on request. Offsite provision may not be sought on developments of fewer than five dwellings, depending on existing play provision in the local area.

Playing Pitches

TDBC – The Councils [Site Allocations and Development Management Plan](#) is aiming for 1.8 hectares of equipped playing field space per 1000 persons. As a guide development should plan for 45 m² of playing field per dwelling. A functional playing field has two drained and constructed pitches (or in the case of cricket; one pitch and separate practice area) with associated parking and changing pavilion to the relevant national governing body standard (Football Association and Football Foundation, Rugby Football Union, England Cricket Board). It is acknowledged that only strategic sites will be able to provide on-site provision.

Playing pitches are destination facilities and therefore may be located off-site, ideally within 1km of the development. Expanding existing playing pitch sites in the area within a reasonable distance of the development will also be considered.

The TDBC Playing Pitch Strategy provides helpful supplementary information in the form of an audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing playing pitches, the current levels of demand (and therefore whether pitches are being over or under used) and demand likely to arise by the end of the strategy period, 2028.

Community Halls

Community Halls are multi-functional, multi-use, inclusive buildings used by the community, voluntary and charity sector as well as statutory authorities to provide for a range of facilities, activities and services which are vital for a thriving, sustainable and healthy community.

For new developments new provision will be sought in the form of either: a new hall or enhancement of an existing community building within 1 km of development, equivalent to:

For 1,495 people: one main hall (minimum 6.7m high x 9m wide x 16.4m long) with storage (20m sq), toilets (4 female wc's with 2 hand wash basins and 2 hand dryers; 2 male wc's plus 5 urinals with 2 hand wash basins and 2 hand dryers; 1 separate disabled wc; baby changing facilities) and a kitchen (40msq; suitable for catering large events); car parking; landscaped outdoor area.

For 1,496-2149 people: as above with the addition of one meeting room (20msq with storage of 15msq) or activity room (50msq with 20msq storage).

For 2150 people: as above with the addition of two meeting rooms or activity rooms, additional storage, additional toilets and larger capacity kitchen with a further meeting room or usable space for every additional 1,495 people.

The Council recommends adaptable, durable buildings which respond appropriately to their environment. General specification guide can be found in the Community Hall Strategy; you may also be interested in [ACRE Plan Design & Build](#) and [Sport England Village and Community Halls Design Guidance](#) (where the site is also supports outdoor sports).

Financial Contributions in-lieu of on-site provision

Financial Contributions in-lieu of on-site provision will be discussed on a case-by-case basis. The council will look for facilities to be secured and delivered through S106 or CIL.

May 2021

-END-