

Fields in Trust Standards

Creating great spaces for all

Planning Policy Context for

Wales



Introduction

This Planning Policy Context note for Wales accompanies the Fields in Trust Standards (the ‘FIT Standards’). It sets out the planning policy context for Wales and explains how to use the FIT Standards when preparing planning applications for new developments or as part of the community-led planning process.

Introduction to the Planning System

The Welsh Government is responsible for creating the laws and regulations that set the rules for the planning system in Wales, but local government administers much of the planning system, including preparing the local development plan for an area and determining most planning applications.

The planning system in Wales is ‘plan-led’. This means that proposals for new development must be determined in accordance with the development plan for an area unless ‘material considerations’ indicate otherwise.

Relevance of the Fields in Trust Standards in Planning

National planning policy in Wales recognises the importance of providing accessible, high quality open spaces to achieve sustainable development. The FIT Standards are recognised across the UK as a common approach for delivering accessible, high quality open space, sport and play provision in line with national planning policy. Using the FIT Standards from the beginning of the planning process embeds a focus on achieving better design outcomes from the start, and by incorporating benchmarks on quantity and accessibility as well as using the framework of 6 themes can help drive a broader agenda of quality and functionality.

Fields in Trust also work with developers, planners, community-planning groups and community councils to assess and analyse current provision levels using their [Green Space Index](#) and identify where this does not currently meet the FIT Standards.

Planning Applications and Appeals

The FIT Standards can be used to help developers and consultants in securing planning consent for new developments through demonstrating compliance with local policy requirements for open space, sport and play provision. Following the FIT Standards is a policy requirement in many local authority areas in Wales when integrating outdoor space into new developments. In many local authority areas guidelines and standards on open space in local policy are a derivation of the FIT Standards and in local planning authority areas where no guidelines are in place, the FIT Standards are a useful tool to demonstrate appropriate levels of open space are being provided.

The FIT Standards can also be used as part of negotiations with local planning authorities to determine the level and standard of provision required cognisant of the local context and other facilities.

The FIT Standards can also provide a robust basis for decision-makers in planning appeals to assess the provision of open space where it is a material consideration in an appeal.

Local Development Plans

The FIT Standards have been developed to be directly referenced in Local Development Plans setting out the types of open space, outdoor sports and play spaces (quantity, accessibility and quality) that should be provided for different scales of new development.

Community-led Planning

The FIT Standards can be used by local communities to help identify the appropriate level of open space, sports and play provision for an area to be set out in the Place Plan.

The FIT Standards can also be used to help identify suitable open spaces to protect and enhance. There is no specific designation for local green space in Wales but enhanced protection of green spaces for public recreational use can be achieved through Fields in Trust and a [Deed of Dedication](#) in partnership with the landowner. The FIT Standards can assist in defining the role of such spaces in meeting open space needs within the local community.

Policy Context

National Policy

Planning Policy Wales

[Planning Policy Wales \(PPW\)](#) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government and provides the national planning policy framework for Wales.

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation.

The provision of accessible and high quality green space is identified as one of the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes to be achieved through the planning system.

Chapter 4 (Active & Social Places) states that local planning authorities should provide a framework and develop clear policies for the provision, protection and enhancement of sport, recreation and leisure facilities. It identifies the FIT Standards as an important source for local planning authorities on providing open space and outdoor sport and play through the planning system.

Chapter 4 also sets out clear protection for existing open green spaces, including playing fields, from development based on the multiple social, health and environmental benefits these spaces provide.

Future Wales – the National Plan 2040

[Future Wales](#) is the national development framework for Wales, setting the direction for development in the nation to 2040. It is the highest tier of development plan in Wales and sets the framework for Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs) to build on at the regional and local level.

The first Future Wales Outcome is “A Wales where people live and work in connected, inclusive and healthy places”, which includes the provision of accessible green and open spaces. This chimes with the framework of Fields in Trust’s Standards and themes.



Ruby Loftus Garden © Pobl Group

Technical Advice Notes

PPW is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

TAN 16: Sport, Recreation, and Open Space (2009) advises on the role of the planning system in making provision for sport and recreational facilities and informal open spaces, as well as protecting existing facilities and open spaces in urban and rural areas in Wales.

TAN 16 provides guidance to local planning authorities on undertaking local assessments of need and audits of existing open space provision. These assessments, taken together, form an Open Space Assessment which is used to inform the preparation, monitoring and review of LDP policies.

TAN 16 points out that PPW does not prescribe particular standards of provision. Instead, these should be based on the results of the Open Space Assessment Process. However, the TAN does refer to the FIT Standards, stating these could be helpful for authorities formulating local standards of provision and for others with an interest in the provision and protection of spaces for sport, recreation and play.

Regional and Local Policy

Strategic Development Plans

SDPs will be prepared on a regional basis and will sit below Future Wales, addressing regional planning and development issues and providing a strategic context for the preparation of LDPs at the local level.

Local Development Plans

LDPs are the bottom tier of the development plan system in Wales and set out local planning policy. Developed by the local planning authority, they set out the vision and framework for future development of the area, addressing local needs and opportunities as well as setting safeguards for the local environment.

As noted above, the FIT Standards are referenced in policies within many Local Development Plans in Wales for developers and consultants to follow when integrating open space within new developments (and in other local authority areas local guidelines and standards are a derivation of the FIT Standards).

Place Plans

Place Plans are non-statutory documents which may be prepared at the initiation of the local community to improve well-being and placemaking. Place Plans are adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance and therefore cannot introduce new policy but should support the delivery of LDP policies, focusing mainly on land use and development issues, including the protection and enhancement of existing open spaces.

Open Space, Sports and Play Provision in New Developments

In Wales, open space, outdoor sports and play provision is secured through national and local policy requirements, with the FIT Standards providing minimum guidelines for provision.

Local planning authorities use planning conditions and/or planning obligations to ensure that any agreed open space provision is delivered.

Planning Obligations

Under [Section 106 \(S106\) of the Town and County Planning Act 1990](#), developers in Wales may be required to provide planning obligations. Section 106 agreements are legally binding agreements entered into to secure planning obligations. Planning obligations are an important mechanism used by local planning authorities to ensure that certain work and/or financial contributions required to reduce or mitigate the impact of the proposed development are carried out, for example securing the required open space provision. The FIT Standards provide a basis for design discussions with the local planning authority regarding the open space provision to be secured.

Developer Contributions

In addition to delivering new open space through their development proposals on site, developers may be required to provide financial contributions to help fund further local provision or to make improvements to existing provision.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows local planning authorities in Wales to raise funds from developers to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development. Introduction of the CIL by a local planning authority is voluntary, and only a small number of local planning authorities in Wales have introduced the levy. These funds can be used to fund local sport and recreation facilities. Most new development which creates net additional floor space of 100 square metres or more, or creates a new dwelling, is potentially liable for the levy.



Village pond at Ruby Loftus Garden.
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Swansea Coastal Park, Copr Bay.
© Paul Upward



Swansea Coastal Park, Copr Bay.
© Paul Upward

Local planning authorities are responsible for managing and allocating CIL contributions for public open space improvements or the provision of new facilities. The CIL Regulations require that at least 15 per cent of the levy collected is passed to Community Councils where development has taken place. If there is no Community Council, the charging authority will retain the levy receipts but should engage with the relevant communities and agree with them how best to spend the funding.

Fields in Trust's [Green Space Index](#) can help identify where developer contributions could be directed for community infrastructure by identifying where there is a lack of open space provision in an area.

Supporting biodiversity

Another key consideration for new developments is the enhancement of biodiversity. The [Environment \(Wales\) Act, 2016](#) introduced the Section 6 duty which requires planning authorities to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. Planning authorities must follow a step-wise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimised, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for.

There may be opportunities to create space for nature that also provides other recreational benefits - where properly designed and considered, recreational benefits can be a key wider benefit of the enhancement of biodiversity. The 6 themes in the FIT Standards are designed to help drive a broader agenda of multifunctional green spaces.



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