

5.2.6 Playing fields

Sports pitches offer an ideal opportunity for both formal and informal sport, leisure and recreation. In Walsall, there is a range of organised sports clubs which promote a number of different sports and other activities which may include recreational and dog walking and might even include the flying of model aircraft.

There is often a pressure to release sports pitches for development. The role of these facilities in maintaining and improving health should always be considered when such development is being proposed. The default position should be to retain and improve leisure facilities including sports pitches, however in the context of economic pressures for development and the paucity of capital funding, a pragmatic approach may be needed. Only where viable alternatives are available nearby should capital receipts be used and earmarked towards appropriate leisure and recreation developments where a net benefit can be evidenced. This approach is supported by Sport England through their statutory role.

Indicators:

- *Through Sport England statutory consultation, protect sports pitches from development wherever possible.*
- *The number of Green Flags in the borough's Premier Parks*
- *The number of play areas, multi use games areas and skate park facilities*

Priorities for action:

- *Where possible retain, improve or replace leisure facilities including sports pitches*
- *Increase the number of Green Flags in the borough's Premier Parks*
- *Increase the number of play areas, multi use games areas and skate park facilities for pre-school, school and youth age children*