### Sports & Recreational Amenity Assessment

| There is currently no specific guidance on how to assess the effects of development on the sporting activity and recreational amenity that may take place on neighbouring land. Direct effects can result from shadows thrown across sensitive sites, noise, odours and the visual distraction or looming presence of a development. Indirect effects can result from loss of attendance and revenue and the wider socio-economic effects. Despite the lack of guidance, an assessment of amenity needs to address each effect not only in isolation but also cumulatively. | While there is Government guidance establishing acceptable levels of noise ensuring protection of residential amenity, there is no equivalent statutory or stakeholder guidance for sporting activities or recreational facilities. |  |
| **Shadow Throw** The sun’s passage across the sky throughout the year can be accurately predicted. Screening effects of development can be modelled to reveal the duration, time of day and time of year when shadow throw or flicker would occur under optimal climatic conditions. These theoretical results then need to take account of actual climate conditions providing more accurate and realistic estimates of likely incidence of shadow throw or flicker. Further qualification can be made by correlating predictions against the timing of activities in question. For example shadow throw may predominantly occur early in the morning when a facility is not in use. | In its absence the fallback position is to consider the effects of development using residential amenity criteria as a start point. Guidance provided by The World Health Organisation recommends that few people are moderately annoyed at LAeq levels below 50dB(A) a level equating to a ‘quiet suburb’, or a ‘quiet conversation’. A 50dB(A) threshold can be considered an acceptable start point. However, the assessment of effects requires professional experiences in the context of the site and activity in question. |  |
| There is no industry or Government standard that establishing acceptable thresholds of shadow throw effects. What is considered acceptable will vary depending upon the sensitivity of the receptor and should be the subject of informed opinion derived from assessments in the field and professional experience. | **Odour** The Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) issued relevant guidance in May 2014. Methods of assessment vary and must be proportionate to the likely level of effects. The guidance provides a suggested matrix for assessing the level of effect when predicting odour exposure assuming that the odour in question is offensive. Receptor sensitivity varies as does how unpleasant an odour is and professional judgement needs to be applied. |  |
| **Noise Effects** Background noise levels can be recorded and the noise generated by operational development, plant and/or machinery can be accurately predicted. Therefore it is possible to accurately model the effects of development on sporting or recreational activities. | **Visual Distraction** Sporting participants are unique visual receptors whose purpose in travelling to and attending a venue is not appreciation of its landscape setting but the enjoyment of the activity it hosts. |  |
| When assessing visual effects, the methodology advocated within the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment – Third Edition 2013) is a useful start point. The matrix approach it advocates provides a structured and analytical framework to determine the sensitivity of participants to change and the ‘magnitude of change’ introduced by a proposal. |  |
The sensitivity of the receptor involved varies depending on the activity itself and the role of the receptor. Sensitivities of an active participant and spectator may differ. For example, the sensitivity of skate park users will differ from those of a cricket ground.

The magnitude of change experienced can vary depending upon:

1. **Separation:** the distance between the proposal and the facilities/activity;
2. **Orientation:** the angle of lateral separation (or off-set) between the proposal and the orientation of play, view or activity;
3. **Screening:** the influence of topography, vegetation or built form in the view;
4. **Lateral Spread:** the proportion of the view occupied;
5. **Setting:** the visual context of the background landscape; and
6. **Context:** the visual context of the foreground.

The assessment of visual distraction should not be regarded as a mechanistic test but one based upon objective professional opinion. This approach allows likely effects to be judged in the field taking into account the local experience and the judgement of participants.

**Summary**

The assessment of amenity needs to address each of the likely effects not only in isolation but also cumulatively before arriving at unique thresholds of acceptability specific to each location and the activities to which it plays host.

A challenge lies in assessing the cumulative effect of a variety of the above impacts occurring at the same time. How impacts in isolation are weighed and combined will need to be the subject of careful consideration and professional opinion. It will also be necessary to consider the likelihood of such effects coinciding with the times of sporting or recreational activities.

It may well be the case that the most effective mitigation will be the ability to delay, stagger or stall any adverse effects of development sufficient to create a mis-match with the times of sporting play or recreation.

3 Institute of Air Quality Management ‘Guidance on the Assessment of Odour for Planning’

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