

# COMMUNITY HALLS

## Community Hall Provision

Community halls are multipurpose buildings provided by the community for the community. They provide space and facilities for a range of local activities and increasingly for community services, such as:

- Social activities
- Sports and recreation activities
- Arts activities
- Local democratic engagement
- Educational activities
- Local services, such as library or retail

Community halls are important to rural areas and residential neighbourhoods for promoting health and well being, sustainable communities and community cohesion. They meet a local need in an ever changing society, and often reflect the history and tradition of that local community. The main impetus for the provision of community halls came after the First World War.

In 2009, ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England) produced findings from their third survey of the state of rural community buildings, which provides detailed information on the benefits of community hall provision. The results show that in today's society, rural community buildings have a multi purpose role, serving as a social centre, arts centre, sports centre and, in some cases, providing education, health or retail services. The survey also found that 90% of these rural halls are charities run by local volunteer trustees, yet an increasing number are being used to deliver mainstream public services. This also applies to halls in more urban environments. This together with the widespread decline of other rural community facilities, such as schools, shops, and pubs has, in many communities, left the community hall as the main focus for community activities and services.

Buildings falling under the banner of community halls can include rural village halls, town halls, neighbourhood centres in urban areas, Women's Institutes, British Legion halls, memorial halls, and halls belonging to uniformed groups, churches and chapels.

## Identifying Local Needs and Opportunities

The consultation processes used to support the development of this PPG17 assessment and strategy identified the need to increase facilities in rural areas of the district and provide more multi use indoor space throughout the district.

South Somerset District Council has been supporting community halls with capital grants for many years. It also provides officer support to committees towards the provision of new halls, improvements to existing halls and the development of new activities. It also indirectly supports their management through its annual Service Level Agreement with the Community Council for Somerset which employs a county wide Village Halls Advisor. The Council also supports community halls through the provision of discretionary and charitable rate relief.

When the first phases of the Abbey Manor Park development, in Yeovil were built in the 1990's, the Council negotiated planning contributions for the provision of a community hall, but since then there have been few developer contributions towards community hall provision across the district.

## Audit of Local Provision

This section identifies the baseline of community hall provision. There are over 100 community halls in South Somerset. This assessment however only includes facilities such as community centres, village/town halls and memorial halls, which meet the supply parameters listed below. Buildings used by the community as secondary to their main purpose such as single interest group buildings (WI, clubs etc), church and school halls, licensed premises etc are excluded for the analysis unless they are the only community building in the parish.

In conducting the audit of community hall provision, the Authority has used the following supply parameters. These are:

- Halls must be open and accessible to all
- Halls must have a primary purpose of being a multifunction community building for the use of the communities they serve.

During 2008/9 the Council sent questionnaires to all the community halls in the district and supplemented this with information gained from the Somerset Community Council, and further audit work in 2010/11. Information has been obtained on the size, usage, accessibility and improvement plans of each hall.

This information identifies **120 community halls** which meet the supply parameters, and therefore represent the true supply picture for South Somerset.

**Map 1** identifies the number of community halls across the district by parish.

### Map 1: District wide Existing Community Halls

(Map to be inserted)

## Quantitative Audit

In 2010, quantitative data for each hall was obtained, in order to set a standard for inclusion in the Council's draft Core Strategy. The figures are based on the total size of the hall, including the main hall, toilets, kitchen and any other sub halls and ancillary facilities. It must be noted that a few halls also contain changing rooms, usually as an extension to the main hall. Currently, the figures shown in Tables 2,3,4 and 5 include changing accommodation. When the Council has completed its audit of sports changing rooms/clubhouses, some of these figures may need to be adjusted to ensure there is no double counting.

During 2011, a few halls were identified that were missed off the 2010 audit and these have been included in **Tables 2,3,4 and 5** below, which summarise the number of community halls and their total size for each area.

**Table 2: Audit Summary for Area East**

Type of settlement	No of community halls	Total size (sq m)	Average hall size (sq m)
Market towns and rural centres	7	2,297	328
Rural settlements	33	7,525	228
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>9,822</b>	<b>246</b>

**Table 3: Audit Summary for Area North**

Type of settlement	No of community halls	Total size (sq m)	Average hall size (sq m)
Market towns and rural centres	13	2,735	210
Rural settlements	26	6,162	237
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>8,897</b>	<b>228</b>

**Table 4: Audit Summary for Area West**

Type of settlement	No of community halls	Total size (sq m)	Average hall size (sq m)
Market towns and rural centres	7	2,430	347
Rural settlements	19	4,355	229
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>6,785</b>	<b>261</b>

**Table 5: Audit Summary for Area South**

Type of settlement	No of community halls	Total size (sq m)	Average hall size (sq m)
Yeovil	10	3,822	382
Market towns and rural centres	0		
Rural settlements	5	1,578	316
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5,400</b>	<b>360</b>

**Tables 2,3,4 and 5** show that there is a total of **120** community halls in South Somerset providing a total area of **30,904 sq m** in 2011.

### Qualitative, Accessibility and Usage Audits

The Council has also collated information on the quality, accessibility, usage and planned improvements of each hall, using data from the:

1. Community Council Hallmark scheme
2. South Somerset Disability Access Audits (2005)
3. Parish Plans
4. Community Hall surveys 2010/11

This information has been used to inform the setting of the standards and the Council will maintain a database showing this information.

### Setting Provision Standards

In determining standards of provision, PPG 17 states that local standards of provision should include:

- A **quantitative** component (how much new provision may be needed). This is generally expressed in terms of the number of people served by each facility type (e.g. sq m / 1,000 people).
- A **qualitative** component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing sites). The development of objective, measurable quality standards is important in determining where improvements are most needed.
- An **accessibility** component (principally concerned with distance thresholds to a site). For local authorities serving both urban and rural areas, both urban and rural distance thresholds may be used.

### Setting a Quantity Standard

In order to develop a quantity standard of square metres of community hall space per 1,000 population, the authority has assessed 3 different methodologies using a population of 161,033 (ONS, 2009), unless otherwise stated:

- Comparing the quantity of community hall provision in the District with the current population.

- Comparing the current level of provision of with standards from other similar authorities.

There are no National Standards for community halls.

Whilst assessing the level of provision across the district, it became apparent that there were significant differences between the urban and rural areas. Analysis was therefore undertaken using the draft Core Strategy settlement hierarchies: Yeovil (strategically significant town); market towns and rural centres; and the rural settlements (smaller villages).

The calculation for the comparing the current level of provision was undertaken in 2010 in order to develop a quantitative standard for inclusion in the Council's draft Core Strategy. These calculations were based on a total supply for the district of **28,145 sq m**, with the breakdown by settlement type as shown in **Table 7** below. As outlined earlier, these figures are slightly lower than those updated figures shown in Tables 2,3,4 and 5, which give a total supply in 2011 of **30,904 sq m**.

**Table 7** shows the results emerging from each methodology.

**Table 7: Quantity Standard Comparisons**

Methodology		Size (sq m)	Equivalent Standards	
			Sq m per 1,000	Sq m per person
1	Current Supply to Current Population – Yeovil, Market Towns and Rural Centres	9,040 sq m	85 sq m	0.085 sq m
2	Current Supply to Current Population – Rural Settlements	19,105 sq m	353 sq m	0.353 sq m
3	Other Authorities:			
	Wycombe DC		140 sq m	0.14 sq m
	Taunton Deane BC		204.65 sq m	0.205 sq m
	Harrogate DC		310 sq m	0.31 sq m
	Colchester BC		316.5 sq m	0.317 sq m

These results are then assessed against the local community views as to the adequacy and details of levels and types of use. It is recommended that there are two standards to reflect differences between village halls and community halls serving larger villages/towns or urban neighbourhoods.

Yeovil, market towns and rural centres - recommendation to base standard on an average hall size of 400 sq m and the average population across the 14 Yeovil neighbourhoods and the market towns and rural centres (3,365). This therefore equates to one 400 sq m hall per 3,365 people i.e. 119 sq m per 1,000 population. Setting a standard higher than the current supply will strategically address historic quantitative deficiencies in some of these towns and larger villages, and address the demand for more multi purpose community facilities as identified in the PPG17 consultation.

Rural settlements: recommendation to base standard on the 2010 level of provision. Benchmarking against other local authorities provided evidence that the current standard of rural provision was appropriate and evidence from the local audit focussed more on qualitative improvements to the halls rather than extending their size.

**Proposed quantity standards:**

Yeovil, market towns and rural centres: 119 sq m per 1,000 population

Rural settlements: 353 sq m per 1,000 population

## Setting a Quality Standard

The 2005 SSDC Parish Council survey identified that nearly two thirds (62%) of parish councils that provided information on the quality of their main halls, indicate that they are in “good” condition. 24% are reported to be in an adequate condition and 14% are reported to be in a poor condition. The data obtained from Parish Plans and more recent consultation have highlighted that nearly half (45%) of the halls have identified needs for improvement.

In 2002, the Community Council for Somerset developed a Quality Standard for Village Halls and Community Buildings, which has since become a nationally recognised scheme. There are 3 levels and halls are assessed on many aspects, including: the condition of the hall; health and safety; accessibility; policies and marketing. Many public sector grants schemes now expect a hall to have achieved at least Level 1 to be eligible for funding.

Using the data obtained from parish plans and the Community Council Hallmark scheme, it is therefore recommended that the following quality factors should apply:

### Proposed quality standard:

Community halls (and external areas, ancillary facilities and equipment) should be in at least ‘good’ condition.

Good condition is defined as:

- Well decorated and maintained, with no signs of neglect.
- Well equipped as appropriate.
- Effective storage space.
- Meeting health and safety standards.
- Welcoming
- Incorporating energy efficient measures
- Those halls which have achieved a Hallmark award

## Setting a Catchment and Accessibility Standard

### Catchment Standard

Catchment areas provide a means of identifying the extent to which there is adequate geographical coverage of the District. Because propensity to travel varies between individuals, recreation planners normally apply the concept of ‘effective catchment’ defined as the travel time / distance 75%-80% of facility users are prepared to travel. Mode of transport is also important, and both of these aspects may differ between users living in rural and urban areas of the district.

The Sport and Recreation Community Needs Survey yielded valuable information on the typical travel distances travelled to use indoor sport and recreation facilities. Table 7 shows

that only 2.3% of respondents were prepared to travel more than 10 miles to indoor recreation facilities.

**Table 7: Resident Access Findings – Travel Distance**

How close to home do you think recreation facilities should be provided?	Indoor Facilities % response
Less than 1 mile	11.5
1 - 5 miles	40.6
5 - 10 miles	14.2
More than 10 miles	2.3

In relation to community halls, there will be a huge variation in travel time and mode of travel dependant on the nature of the activity that the participant is travelling to. For example, users will be prepared to travel much further to an arts event than to a parent and toddler group. However the primary purpose of community halls are as local facilities, to which the majority of users will, or should be encouraged to, walk to.

Research has been carried out into any national guidelines and standards used by other authorities, which are summarised in **Table 8** below. These standards are all based on a walking time/distance, rather than a drive time.

**Table 8: Benchmarking Information on Catchment Standards for Community Halls**

Organisation	Walking time (minutes)	Walking distance (m)	Straight line distance (m)
UWE/WHO, 2001 – Shaping Neighbourhoods Report	10	800	480
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	10	800	480
Department of Transport, 2011	10	800	480
Broxbourne District Council	15	1200	720
Wycombe District Council - urban	15	1200	720
Wycombe District Council - rural	30	1440	864
Taunton Deane Borough Council	20	1600	960
Dacorum Borough Council	25	2000	1200

The Council has adopted the Fields in Trust Standards for its youth facilities and larger neighbourhood equipped play areas (NEAPs), which are a 1000 m walking distance or 600 m straight line, which compares favourably to the benchmark standards in **Table 8**.

For the sake of consistency and ease of comparison with this assessment, it is therefore proposed to adopt a catchment standard for community halls equating to the Council's standard for youth facilities and neighbourhood equipped play areas.

### Accessibility Standard

In 1999, SSDC commissioned its first Disability Access Audits in 99 community halls across the district. In 2005, this survey was followed up and found that 50% of halls had made significant access improvements, and a further 25% had improvements planned for the future. In 2011/12 a sample of 50 halls will be re-audited.

Using the data obtained from these audits and the Community Council Hallmark scheme, which also includes an accessibility audit, it is therefore recommended that the following accessibility factors should apply:

**Proposed catchment and accessibility standard:**

All South Somerset residents should live within a 1,000 m walking distance (600m straight line distance) of a community hall.

Community halls should have a minimum of good access.

Good access is defined as:

- Compliant with the Equality Act 2010
- Effective signage and notices
- Accessible booking arrangements
- Open access policy (no groups denied access to the hall)
- Representative and well managed committee
- Those halls which have achieved a Hallmark award

### Setting a Minimum Acceptable Size Standard

It is recommended that the following minimum acceptable size standards be adopted.

Yeovil, market towns and rural centres	400 sq m, incorporating a main hall, separate meeting room and ancillary facilities, plus car parking
Rural settlements	220 sq m, incorporating a main hall and ancillary facilities, plus car parking