

Mae'r dogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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Executive Summary

This Open Space Assessment provides an updated, comprehensive analysis of the formal and informal open space provision across Blaenau Gwent to support the emerging Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). Prepared in accordance with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 (2024), TAN 16, and the Fields in Trust (FIT) 2017 Wales standards, the assessment evaluates quantity, accessibility, and distribution of open spaces and identifies key areas of surplus and deficiency. The assessment provides an updated audit of open spaces in Blaenau Gwent as recorded at January 2025.

Purpose of the Assessment

The assessment:

- Audits existing open space across all typologies (formal, informal, and allotments).
- Identifies any surpluses or deficiencies against FIT guideline standards.
- Evaluates accessibility based on recommended walking distances.
- Provides an evidence base to inform LDP policies relating to open space protection and provision.
- Supports wider corporate strategies for health, wellbeing, placemaking, and green infrastructure.

Key Findings

1. Formal Open Space

Across the county borough, all four formal open space typologies fall below recommended FIT standards:

- **Playing pitches** – significant deficits in 12 of 14 wards.
- **All outdoor sports (non-pitch)** – 11 wards fall below the standard.
- **Equipped play areas** – all wards fall below the standard (0.25 ha per 1,000 population).
- **Other outdoor provision** such as MUGAs and skate parks – all wards fall below below the 0.30 ha per 1,000 population benchmark.

Some wards—such as Tredegar, Ebbw Vale North, Nantyglo, and Sirhowy exhibit isolated surpluses due to specific large facilities (e.g., golf, BMX, water sports).

2. Informal Outdoor Space

County-wide provision of informal open space is generally above guideline levels, particularly:

- **Natural and semi-natural spaces** – substantial surpluses in all wards.
- **Parks and gardens** – most wards meet or exceed standards, but deficits exist in Georgetown, Ebbw Vale South, Brynmawr and Nantyglo.
- **Amenity green space** – seven wards fall below standards; biggest deficit in Cwm.

3. Allotments

- Only 5 of 14 wards meet or exceed the FIT reference standard of 0.3 ha per 1,000 population.
- Overall Blaenau Gwent's provision is below the indicated benchmark (0.3ha) at 0.21 ha per 1,000 population.

4. Accessibility

Accessibility across the county is generally strong, with:

- 60% or more of residents within walking distance of formal open space.
- 90% or more within walking distance of informal open space.
However:
- Ebbw Vale South and Sirhowy show low accessibility to certain typologies due to limited in-ward provision, but benefit from facilities in neighbouring wards.

Policy Implications

The Open Space Assessment recommends the following revised LDP Policies in line with updated guidance. These aim to address existing formal open space deficits and support placemaking and health priorities.

Policy DM12 Provision of Open Space and Recreation Facilities

Provision of a satisfactory standard of formal and informal open space is required on all new housing developments of 10 or more units, based on following standards:

Formal Open Space

- (a) 1.2 hectares per 1,000 population for Playing Pitches;
- (b) 1.6 hectares per 1,000 population for All Outdoor Sports (non-pitch);
- (c) 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population for Equipped/Designated Play Areas;
- (d) 0.3 hectares per 1,000 population for Other Outdoor Provision;

Informal Open Space

- (e) 0.8 hectares per 1,000 population for Parks and Gardens
- (f) 0.6 hectares per 1,000 population for Amenity Green Space
- (g) 2 hectares per 1,000 population for Natural and Semi-natural Space
- (h) 0.3 hectares per 1,000 population for Allotment/Community Growing Space provision;

The nature and type of provision will be informed by the findings of the latest Open Space Assessment and Children's Play-space Audits.

Policy DM13 Protection of Open Space

Development proposals which affect existing Open Space provision will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- (a) The site has no significant amenity, nature conservation or recreational value and;
- (b) There is a surplus of such facilities in the locality, or;
- (c) The loss can be replaced with an equivalent or greater provision in the immediate locality; or
- (d) The development enhances an existing facility.

Conclusion

The assessment highlights significant deficits in formal open space and pockets of deficiency in informal open space across several wards. Despite strong accessibility and substantial natural green space, the pressure on formal recreation spaces underscores the need to protect, enhance, and secure new open space provision through the RLDP. The assessment provides a robust evidence base for updated planning policies and future open space improvements within Blaenau Gwent.