

Active Design



CREATING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS
THROUGH PLANNING AND DESIGN

Active Kent & Medway Healthy Placemaking

Nick Evans, Head of Planning, Sport England

26 September 2023

Why is it important?

- 80% of all minutes of activity taken per week are done through walking, cycling, running, fitness and active travel.
- *Chris Whitty – “If you look back over the last 150 years, more has been done for public health by proper planning than almost any other intervention except perhaps vaccination” (TCPA Conference November 2022).*



Relationship with Sport England's Strategy

- Active Environments one of the 5 big issues in Sport England's 'Uniting the Movement' 10 year strategy
- Key interventions is to support those who develop and manage local environments to encourage formal and informal activity close to where we live.
- The advocacy of Active Design is currently one of Sport England's main work areas to support this intervention.



● HOW WE'LL KNOW IF WE'RE SUCCESSFUL

 **SPORT ENGLAND** **UNITING THE MOVEMENT**

FIVE BIG ISSUES

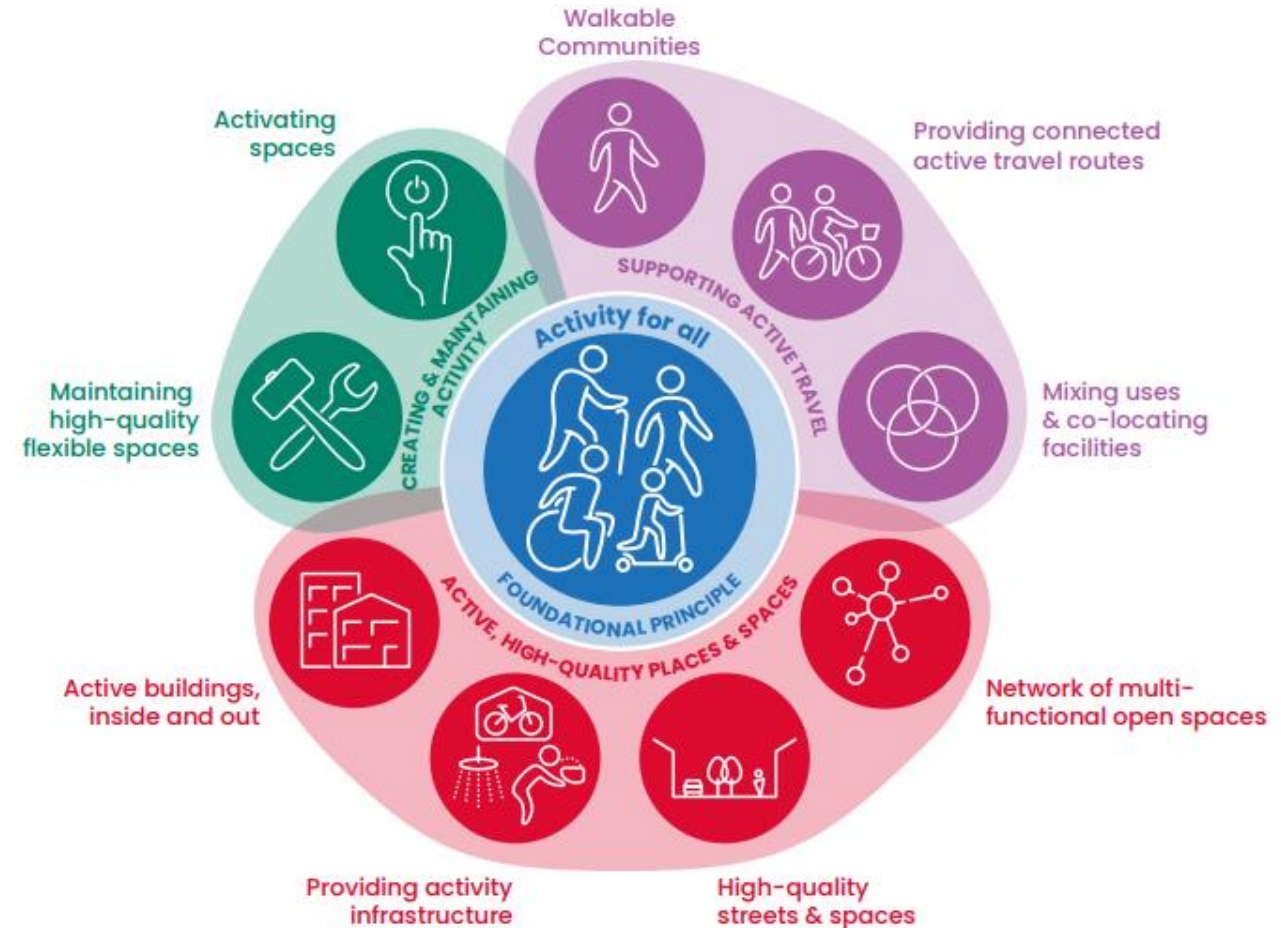
- **RECOVER AND REINVENT**
Recovering from the biggest crisis in a generation and reinventing as a vibrant, relevant and sustainable network of organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities that meet the needs of different people.
- **CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**
Focusing on sport and physical activity's ability to make better places to live and bring people together.
- **POSITIVE EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
Unrelenting focus on positive experiences for all children and young people as the foundations for a long and healthy life.
- **CONNECTING WITH HEALTH AND WELLBEING**
Strengthening the connections between sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing, so more people can feel the benefits of, and advocate for, an active life.
- **ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS**
Creating and protecting the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.

The challenge.....



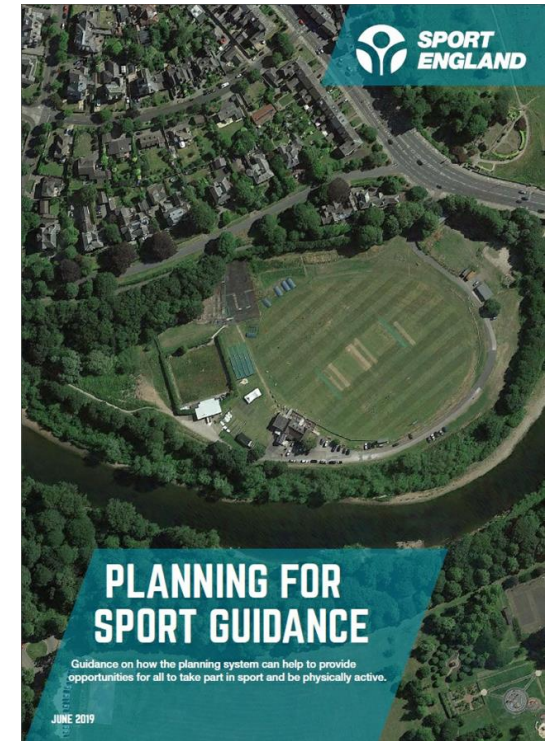
What is Active Design?

- Guidance is based around 10 principles aimed at promoting environments that offer individuals the greatest potential to lead active and healthy lifestyles;
- Uses case studies and illustrative places;
- Includes a checklist with questions for assessing proposals against;
- Particularly applicable to major residential developments as all principles can be applied.
- [Active Design Animation](#) – click on link to go to Youtube



Relationship with Government Planning Policy

- Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2021) advises planning policies and decisions to aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which includes enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles
- Sport England's Planning for Sport Guidance has a focus on providing active environments.
- Paragraph 11 of the National Model Design Code also advises on creating safe, inclusive, accessible and active environments.



PLANNING FOR SPORT: PROVIDING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

The **many benefits of sport and physical activity**, including to people's physical and mental health, are widely recognised.

Our built and natural **environments are key** to helping people change their behaviours to **lead more active and healthier lifestyles**.

The **planning system plays a vital role** in shaping our environments.

To help provide environments that protect, enhance and provide both formal and informal opportunities for all to take part in sport and be physically active, the planning system should **embrace 12 planning-for-sport principles**.

Active Design – Over the Years

2007

SPORT ENGLAND
Creating an active nation through sport

Active Design
Promoting opportunities for sport and physical activity through good design

A grid of 32 circular icons representing various activities and concepts: walk, cycle, fun, jog, move, health, life, smile, fun, live, sport, walk.

Supported by

2015

Active Design
Planning for health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity

A grid of 24 circular icons representing various activities: walking, cycling, jogging, playing, swimming, sports, etc.

October 2015

Supported by

2023

Active Design
CREATING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS THROUGH PLANNING AND DESIGN

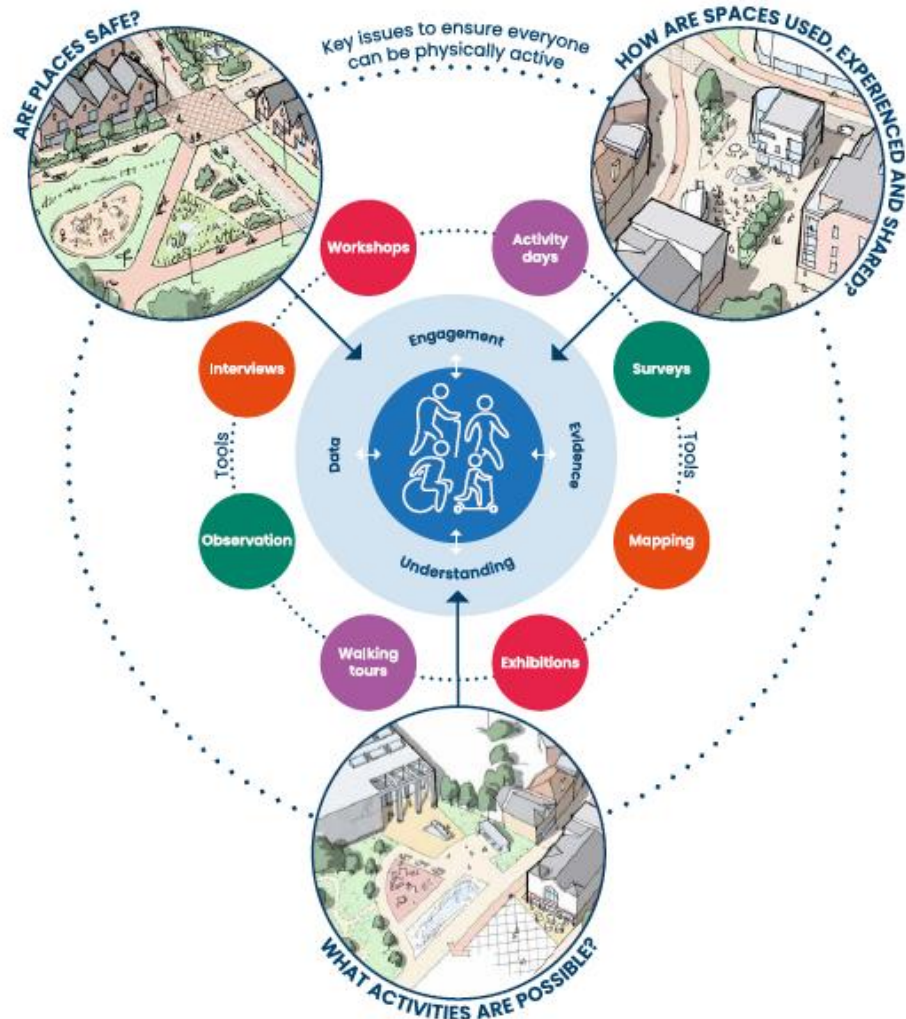
A grid of 24 circular icons representing various activities: walking, cycling, jogging, playing, swimming, sports, etc.

Supported by

What's new in Active Design 3

- Ten principles updated and Activity for All is the Foundation Principle
- Principles divided into three themes – easier to understand and use
- Linking to other policy priorities and agendas – climate change, environmental sustainability, reducing health inequalities and economic growth.
- How to deliver in practice – 5 new case studies, 5 new Illustrative Places
- Updated checklist
- Supported by Active Travel England

Activity for All



Principle 1 – Activity for all

All environments should support physical activity equitably across all ages, ethnicities, genders, and abilities, enabling everyone to be active and build long-term active habits and behaviours. This is essential for the delivery of all the principles of Active Design and is its foundational principle.

- Tackling inequalities is at the heart of Sport England’s Uniting the Movement strategy.
- Listening and engaging with the right audiences to better understand a variety of experiences is essential.
- Consider the issues that affect people’s ability to be physically active in their local environments.

Theme 1 – Supporting Active Travel



Principle 2 – Walkable communities

Facilities for daily essentials and recreation should be within easy reach of each other by active travel means, making it more likely that people will make the journey by using active travel modes (defined in Theme 1). Good active travel connections should be provided to extend the range of services that are accessible while remaining physically active.



Principle 3 – Providing connected active travel routes

Encourage active travel for all ages and abilities by creating a continuous network of routes connecting places safely and directly. Networks should be easy to use, supported by signage and landmarks to help people find their way.



Principle 4 – Mixing uses and co-locating facilities

People are more likely to combine trips and use active travel to get to destinations with multiple reasons to visit. Places with more variety, higher densities, and a mix of uses also reduce the perception of distance when travelling through spaces. They also generate the critical mass of travel demand to better support public transport services.



Theme 2 – Active, High-Quality Places & Spaces



Principle 5 – Network of multi-functional open spaces

Accessible and high quality open space should be promoted across cities, towns and villages to provide opportunities for sport and physical activity, as well as active travel connections and natural or civic space for people to congregate in and enjoy.



Principle 6 – High-quality streets and spaces

Streets and outdoor public spaces should be Active Environments in their own right. They should be safe, attractive, functional, prioritise people and able to host a mix of uses, with durable, high quality materials, street furniture in the right places and easy-to-use signage. High quality streets and spaces encourage activity, whereas poor quality streets and spaces are much less likely to be used to the same degree.



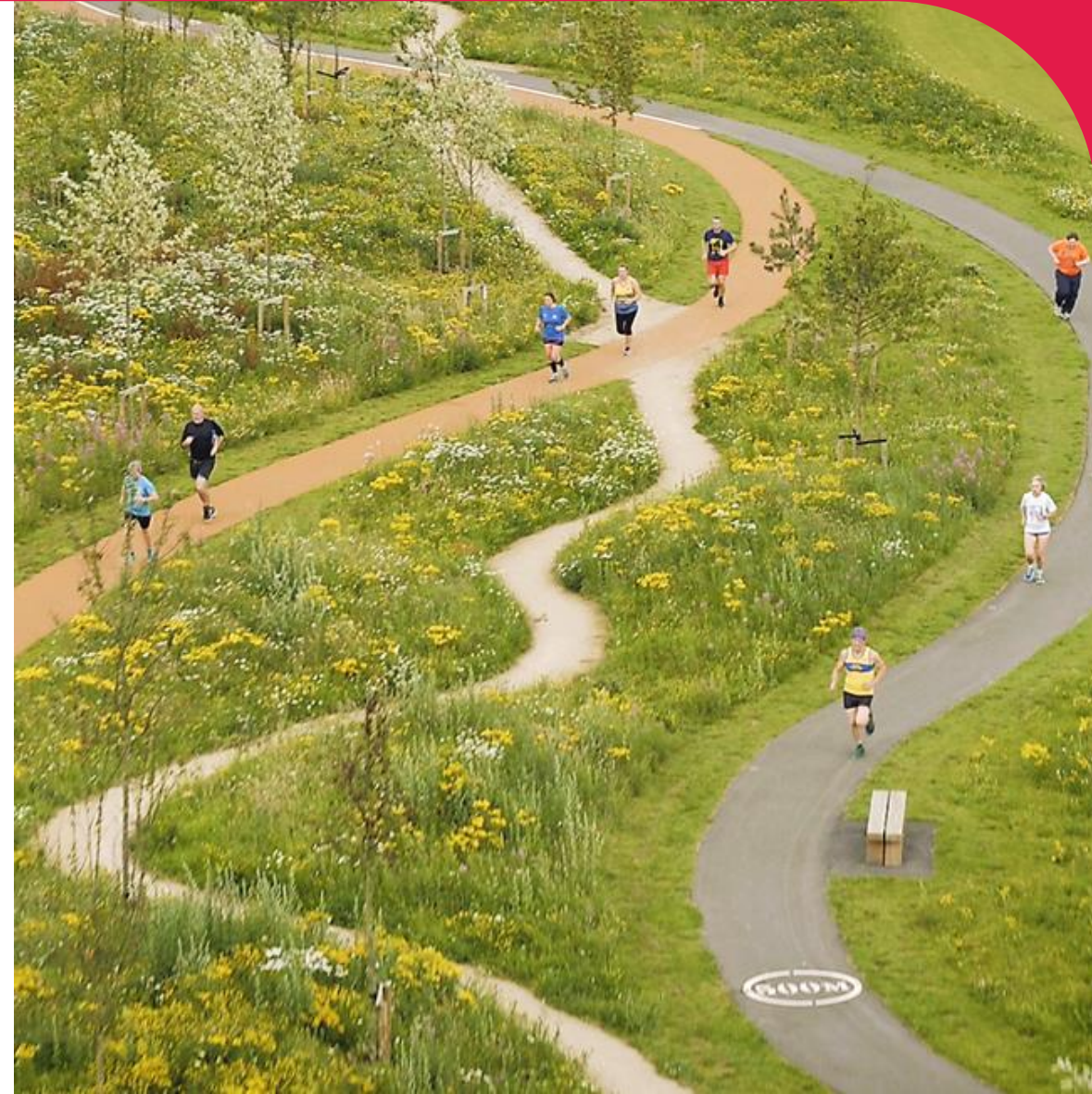
Principle 7 – Providing activity infrastructure

Infrastructure to enable sport, recreation and physical activity to take place should be provided across all contexts including workplaces, sports facilities and public space, to facilitate activity for all.



Principle 8 – Active buildings, inside and out

Buildings we occupy shape our everyday lives, both when users are inside and outside. Buildings should be designed with providing opportunities for physical activity at the forefront, considering the arrival experience, internal circulation, opportunities to get up and move about, and making the building an active destination.



Theme 3 – Creating & Maintaining Activity



Principle 9 – Maintaining high-quality flexible spaces

Spaces and facilities should be effectively maintained and managed to support physical activity. These places should be monitored to understand how they are used, and flexible so that they can be adapted as needed.



Principle 10 – Activating spaces

The provision of spaces and facilities which can help to improve physical activity should be supported by a commitment to activate them, encouraging people to be more physically active and increasing the awareness of activity opportunities within a community.



Usability of the Guide – illustrative places

Applying the Ten Principles of Active Design

The principles of Active Design can be applied anywhere in the built environment. They have the most effect when combined with each other and can be applied from the largest scales to smallest details.

Through a mix of in-depth case studies and illustrative places, this guide shows how the principles can be applied in a variety of places, from a city centre through to rural villages.

Case studies take a detailed look at how Active Design principles have been delivered on the ground, in terms of strategy, process, funding and design success.

Illustrative places demonstrate how the principles can be applied, giving inspiration for planners and designers working in some of the most common development typologies.



ILLUSTRATIVE PLACE 1

Existing Suburban Neighbourhood

Many of the existing suburban neighbourhoods in our towns and cities were built around the car and are not designed to support physically active lifestyles. With simple interventions and the engaged support of communities, existing neighbourhoods can be adapted so that people can live physically active, more healthy lifestyles close to home.

Design Interventions

- 1 Pedestrian-priority street on route to school, with on-street play opportunities.
- 2 Active travel and public transport only traffic allowed through local centre.
- 3 Waymarking and cycle paths to connect local centre to existing primary school.
- 4 Segregated cycling and walking space on major road with reduced vehicle space.
- 5 Modal filters to restrict through traffic and establish Low Traffic Neighbourhood.
- 6 Publicly accessible nature reserve and habitat networks.
- 7 Community garden and green links established on former in-block garage plots.
- 8 Junction improvements to prioritise and segregate active travel at major intersections.
- 9 Primary school with shared sports facilities for community use.
- 10 Intensified local centre with residential, retail and community uses with flexible civic space.
- 11 New community park with local leisure and sports facility.
- 12 Active travel and public transport interchange (mobility hub) at local centre.
- 13 Regenerated local industrial estate providing mix of local employment and small retail or commercial spaces.

ACTIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:



Usability of the Guide – case studies

80 ACTIVE DESIGN

CASE STUDY

Nottingham – active travel

Fact File

Name: **Nottingham**
 Location (town, county): **Nottingham, Nottinghamshire**
 Local planning authority: **Nottingham City Council**
 Date of planning consent/ construction/completion: **Strategy published 2016, Canal Street transformation 2020, programme ongoing**
 Case study type: **City-wide active travel infrastructure transformation programme**

Nottingham is transforming the city centre with a programme of new segregated cycle routes to connect all parts of the city and improve public realm and its public realm and its public realm.

In June 2020, Nottingham City Council secured financial backing for the project through the Cities Fund. This support has enabled the council to create and deliver a rolling programme of improvements.

The active travel improvements include transport upgrades, provision and expansion of cycle routes.



70 ACTIVE DESIGN

CASE STUDY

Houlton: Large-scale residential-led development

Fact File

Name: **Houlton**
 Location (town, county): **Rugby, Warwickshire**
 Local planning authority: **Rugby Borough Council**
 Date of planning consent/ construction/completion: **Under construction, first completions in 2018**
 Case study type: **6,200 home residential-led development on former brownfield site**

Houlton is a residential-led development, located to the east of Rugby on the site of the former Rugby Racecourse. Designed to be a complete village, it includes schools, shops, cafes, pitches and employment spaces with an extensive and varied range of green spaces and active travel routes.

Houlton is being developed by masterplanners who deliver the site infrastructure including key placemaking ingredients. Urban designers and housebuilders, who develop within the masterplan.

Health, wellbeing and physical activity are at the heart of the design at all scales. The site demonstrates a practical consideration of the principles of Active Design.



76 ACTIVE DESIGN

CASE STUDY

Aspire@ThePark, Pontefract community and sport facility

Fact File

Name: **Aspire@ThePark**
 Location (town, county): **Pontefract, West Yorkshire**
 Local planning authority: **Wakefield Council**
 Date of planning consent/ construction/completion: **Opened 2021**
 Case study type: **Sports and community centre within a public park**

Aspire@ThePark is a community and sports facility which is located within Pontefract Park, to the north-west of Pontefract, Yorkshire. The Park also houses Pontefract Racecourse, with Aspire@ThePark built upon land which previously accommodated a number of tennis courts that had fallen into disrepair to the south of the racecourse.

Aspire@ThePark was opened in 2021 and part-funded by Sport England, and it provides a valuable local community sports facility at the heart of an existing open space. Facilities on site include:

- two swimming pools, one 10-lane 25m pool, one 'studio pool' with adjustable depth to accommodate a wide range of aqua-activities;
- fully equipped gym, overlooking Pontefract Park;
- fitness studios, including spaces which are bookable by local health partnerships, and a spin cycling studio;
- Climbing area fitted with auto-belay and bouldering wall;
- An artificial grass football pitch;
- Four tennis courts;
- Café, open to the public seven days a week, located in the reception area of the building which is accessible to the public even if they are not participating in activities on site;
- Public toilets, including an accessible toilet on the outside of the building; and
- Pedestrian and cycle links to the wider park and local communities.

The combination of these facilities, their use and the role the facility plays within the local community make it an excellent example of the Active Design principles in practice.



APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES 77

ACTIVE DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:



How it happened

- The responsibility for leisure was brought into the Health Improvement Team of the council, allowing the creation and implementation of a wider strategy from Wakefield District Council to unite physical activity and health, including social prescribing and other health interventions. This enabled opportunities to explore a more holistic offer within the facilities.
- Understanding of the local context and facilities available in the area allowed decisions to be made on what to accommodate on site, and where to rely on other provision elsewhere to meet local needs. This led to the focus at the facility on the provision of multiple studio spaces rather than a single large sports hall, and influenced the swimming pool provision (See Principle 1 text, below).

Why is it successful?

- It caters for a wide range of activities, with the flexibility of the spaces offered (eg. studio space and adjustable depth pool) enabling a vast range of activities to be accommodated.
- It has helped to regenerate the park, creating a destination and bringing people into a space which was previously less used. The provision of the public toilets and café have further added to this, combining opportunities for both formal and informal activity.

Lessons Learned

- Long term vision and political buy-in was essential to delivering a large scale investment in physical activity interventions, particularly at this scale.
- Dialogue with local community groups, neighbouring uses and local business was essential in managing conflicts where they occur and maximising effectiveness of facilities and physical activity interventions.



© Wakefield Council

Applying AD Principles

Demonstrator Projects – Kidlington Wayfinding

Co-creating with the local community to provide low-cost interventions to support activity



Applying AD Principles

Playing Out

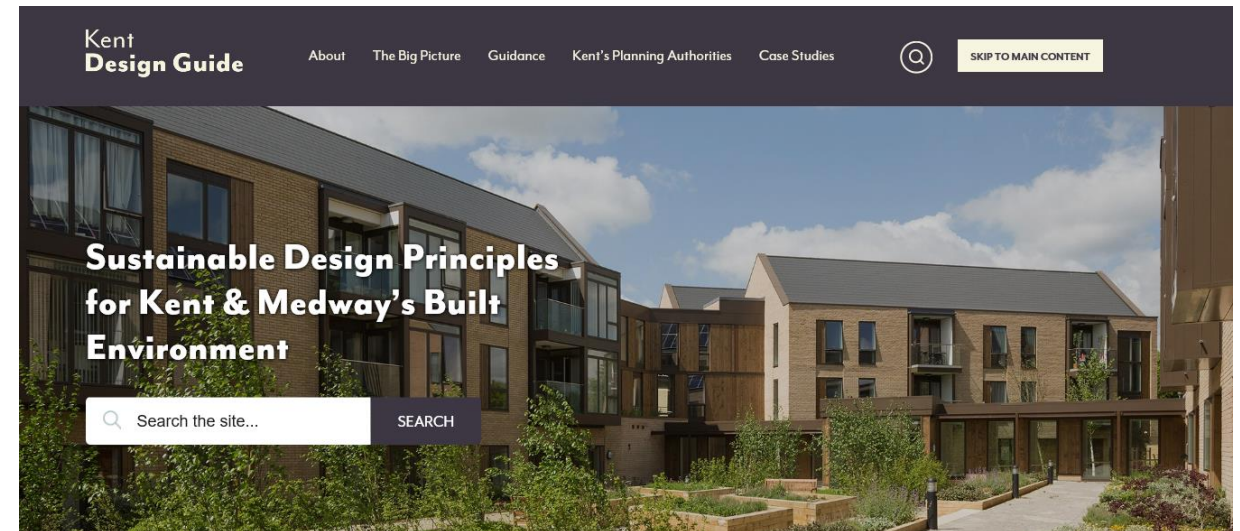


Under High Quality Streets and Spaces, we discuss the importance of the informal uses of streets which has been encouraged through the UK-wide play streets movement, supported by Playing Out.



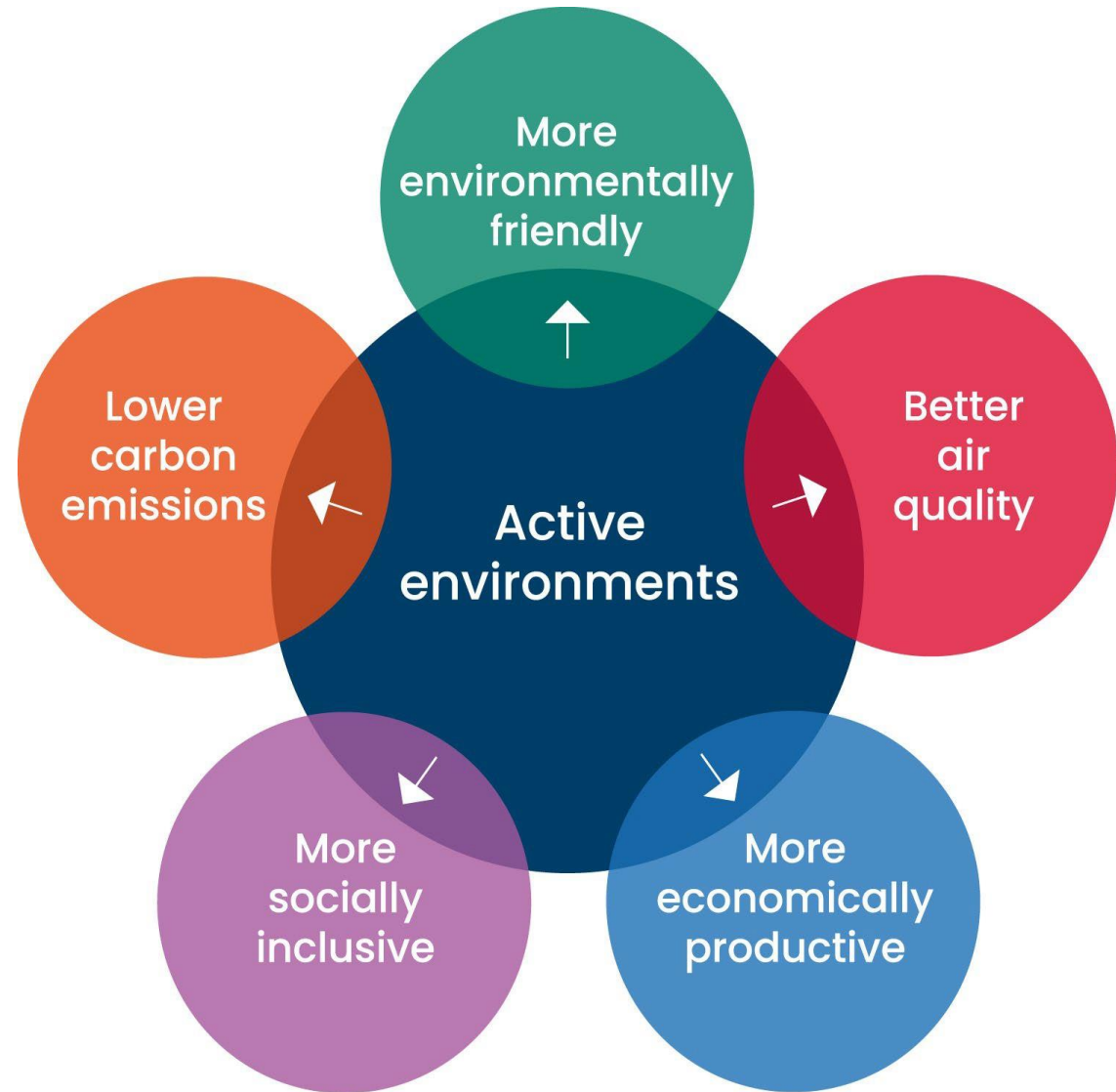
Active Design in Practice

- Local plan and neighbourhood plan policies can support the Active Design principles
- Design guides and design codes can provide advice on applying the Active Design principles
- Masterplans and planning applications can be assessed against Active Design checklist
- Active Design can be incorporated into Health Impact Assessments



Piggybacking off other priority agendas to drive change in Places

Active Design can complement and assist in the delivery of a number of policy priority areas, fitting into a more joined-up approach to designing the built environment.



How can Sport England support the use of Active Design in practice?

- Local plan and neighbourhood plan policies
- Design guides and design codes
- Masterplans and planning applications
- Active Environments Framework
- Advocacy and partnership working

Partnership: the key to success



Active Design



CREATING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS
THROUGH PLANNING AND DESIGN

www.sportengland.org/activedesign

Thank you

Contact:

Emma.cunnington@sportengland.org