



# Technical Paper

City of York

**LDF** | Local  
Development  
Framework

## School Playing Fields Assessment

City of York Council  
January 2010



# **School Playing Fields Assessment**

**City of York**

**2010**

## INTRODUCTION

1. Dedicated playing fields help schools to deliver important elements of their curriculum relating to team game and outdoor activities, and are important to a number of national strategies that feed into the national *Every Child Matters* agenda. The Department for Children, Schools and Families notes that:

“The framework document *Every Child Matters* aims to ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It identifies five overarching outcomes that all Government departments with a vested interest in children’s development should be working towards. These are:

- Be healthy
- Be safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well being

School grounds can play a significant role in delivering these outcomes, providing safe, stimulating, environments where children and young people can learn, explore, play and grow, regardless of their education needs. As a society, we recognise that our young people are being offered ever fewer opportunities for safe, challenging, active, and collaborative play. Lack of these opportunities can lead to health issues, apathy, social and behavioural issues. School grounds can help raise achievement and self esteem, improve behaviour and health, and help children and young people develop a wide range of skills.” (DCSF, 2006)

2. Playing fields and pitches are an important element of ‘school grounds’ described above. Unfortunately, some schools in York (particularly those within more urban settings) have a limited amount of playing field space, and in some cases have no playing field facilities at all. This is the case despite recent investment in school based sports provision across the city, which has seen several schools benefit from brand new facilities. The following schools have benefited directly since 2005:

<b>New facility</b>	<b>Provided for...</b>
New playing field	All PFI schools (St. Oswald’s, St Barnabas’ and Hob Moor primary schools); Manor Secondary; Joseph Rowntree Secondary.
Multi Use Games Area	Derwent Infant and Junior; Tang Hall Primary; Knavesmire Primary; Burnholme Secondary school; Applefields Special school

3. A study of the degree to which existing City of York schools have access to suitable levels of playing field space has been undertaken to provide a picture of 'school playing field need' across the city, and to assist in identifying priorities for provision of additional facilities.
4. **SECTION 1** begins by examining the two national standards of playing field provision to which Local Authorities must have regard, and examining the main differences between them. This is followed by a discussion of other, non quantitative factors that must be considered in relation to outdoor spaces for schools. The general approach of what is a 'two stage' assessment against these standards is then described. In **SECTION 2**, the results of the assessment are presented and discussed. The results are then used to identify the schools most in need of additional provision. Finally, some potential options for how to address some of these priorities are put forward.

#### - SECTION 1 -

#### NO STANDARD MEASURE

5. There is no 'one standard measure' concerning the amount of playing field facilities provided for mainstream primary and secondary schools. In fact, there are two relevant standards: the statutory minimum area requirements for 'team game and playing field provision', as specified in the *Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999*, and the 'minimum playing field area guidelines' found in the *Building Bulletin 98 (Primary Schools)* and *Building Bulletin 99 (Secondary Schools)* guidance documents that are issued by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Because of this, a 'dual' assessment of current provision has been undertaken, against both of these measures.
6. When bringing forward proposals and designs for *new* primary or secondary school sites, the LA and its design professionals have regard to both of these standards. However, the main design process itself is undertaken using the area recommendations contained Building Bulletin 98 and Building Bulletin 99, as these contain a complete set of complimentary area guidelines for every element of a school site, such as classrooms, car parking, etc, which enable a consistent approach to be taken during the design process. Nevertheless, since the LA have regard to both standards, an assessment against each has been carried out.

#### COMPARISON OF TWO AREA STANDARDS

7. The playing field area standards in the 1999 Regulations and relevant *Building Bulletin* guidance documents differ in two main respects.

##### *(i) Definition of playing fields*

8. ***The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999*** specify minimum area requirements for the amount of 'team game playing field' provision that must be made available to schools.

The Regulations define ‘team game playing fields’ as areas which, having regard to their configuration, are suitable for the playing of team games and which are laid out for that purpose. However, these spaces do not necessarily have to be grass, and can incorporate all weather surfaces (such as those used in Multi Use Games Areas and all weather pitches) and areas of playground surfaced with asphalt, if laid out and marked in the correct manner.

9. In addition, the Regulations state that ‘Team game playing fields’ must be available for school use for seven hours a week.
10. **Building Bulletin 98 and Building Bulletin 99**, in contrast, refer to ‘pitches’, which are grassed areas and MUGAs that are (or can be) suitably marked out for team game use. Pitches, under this definition, do not include hard surfaced play areas such as areas of playground that have been marked out as netball courts, for example.
11. For both standards, any area incorporating Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) or all weather pitches are counted as double when assessing the level of provision against the standards.

*(ii) Calculation of Requirements*

12. Both the Regulations and the Building Bulletins use pupil numbers to determine the amount of playing field space required. However, the Building Bulletins use a formula based approach (**table 1**, below), whilst the Regulations specify a predetermined minimum playing field area based upon a series of pupil number ‘ranges’ (**table 2**).

*Table 1: Building Bulletin formulae for determining recommended area of ‘pitches’*

Source	Recommended area (m2) formula
Building Bulletin 98 (Secondary schools)	$10000 + (35 \times \text{number of pupils})$
Building Bulletin 99 (Primary schools)	$20 \times \text{number of pupils}$

Table 2: Ranges specified in Regulations for statutory minimum 'team game playing field' area

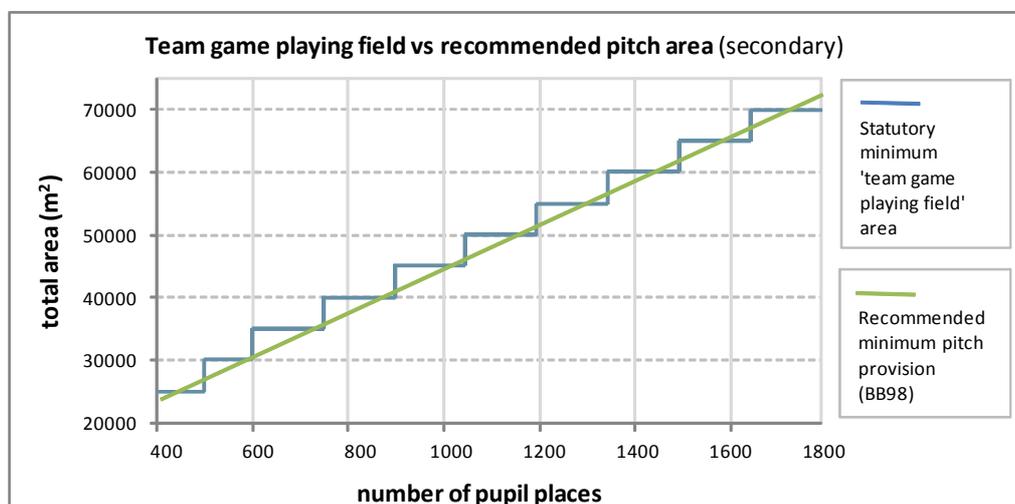
	Minimum area in m <sup>2</sup>	
1	2	3
Total number of pupils aged 8 or older	Schools with pupils under 11	Schools with no pupils under 11
100 or fewer	2500	5000
101 to 200	5000	10000
201 to 300	10000	15000
301 to 400	15000	20000
401 to 500	20000	25000
501 to 600	25000	30000
601 to 750	30000	35000
751 to 900	35000	40000
901 to 1050	40000	45000
1051 to 1200	45000	50000
1201 to 1350	50000	55000
1351 to 1500	55000	60000
1501 to 1650	60000	65000
1651 to 1800	65000	70000
1801 to 1950	70000	75000

13. Whilst there is some overlap between the two standards, the differences in core definitions of playing field space and calculation methodology means that they cannot be directly compared. This means that it may be the case that:

- (a) a school which meets the statutory minimum 'team game playing field requirements' might not meet the recommended level of 'pitches' provision in the Building Bulletins (e.g. a secondary school of 1500 pupils)
- (b) a school may meet the recommended level of pitch provision as per the Building Bulletin but fall short of the statutory minimum team game playing field area specified in the regulations. (e.g. a secondary school of 1000 pupils)

This quirk is illustrated in **fig. 1**, below.

Figure 1: Comparison of area standards.



## OTHER IMPORTANT FACTORS

14. There are many other factors that must be considered by schools, the Local Authority and design professionals during planning of outdoor space for school use, a point illustrated by the multitude of guidance documents that have been issued by the DCSF covering all aspects of the outdoor elements of a school site.

15. Pitches are but one of many elements comprising the external areas of a school site; considerations that are *specific to* pitch or playing field provision are also numerous, and include aspect in relation to the sun, child safety, and accessibility. *Building Bulletin 98*, for example, notes that:

“Careful attention should be given to the layout of pitches, courts and practice areas. Their location, size and shape should be based on a number of considerations including statutory requirements, safety considerations, gradient, relationships between winter games pitches and summer athletics and cricket position, orientation of pitches and accessibility.” (DCSF, 2004)

16. Thus, whilst some schools have access to community pitches and/or grassed areas for outdoor teaching and team game use, there is no guarantee that these facilities will be suitable. Generally speaking, a grass pitch based on the existing site of a school has many advantages over offsite public grassed areas and open spaces, meeting many of the considerations outlined above. These advantages are summarised in **table 3**, below:

*Table 3: comparison of dedicated school playing fields with community areas*

School playing fields	Community grassed areas / pitches
Public access generally controlled to prevent dog fouling and litter build up, and help provide a safe environment for children.	Open for public use. Safety of children is more difficult to manage.
Are usually on the main school site with associated changing facilities, enabling efficient change over at start and end of lessons.	Not on school site by definition. May be too far away for efficient class change over and will require additional staff to manage movement of pupils between two sites. May not have changing facilities.
Are marked out according to curriculum needs by school.	May not be marked out according to curriculum needs at different points of the year.
Will be fully accessible to those with a disability (access ramps, etc)	May not be accessible.

17. Use of public and/or community open space is, nevertheless, common for schools that do not have any grassed areas suitable for team game use on their own school site. A school that has no pitches of its own but has access to suitable community facilities may feel that the lack of their own on site pitches is not a problem if the facilities they are using are of a suitable standard. Potential use of community facilities has therefore been incorporated into the methodology of the assessment against the playing field standards, described below.

## **THE 'TWO STAGE' ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

18. The approach for assessment of existing provision against both standards was conducted in two stages. First, existing dedicated provision was measured against the two area standards discussed above. For each standard, this was achieved by:
  - a. measuring the required areas using GIS software
  - b. comparing the results of (a) to those dictated by the relevant standard
19. It was recognised that some schools may be below levels prescribed by either of the two standards, but feel either that there is no problem (i.e. they feel that they actually do have sufficient dedicated playing field facilities), or that they have put suitable arrangements in place for use of suitable community and/or public open space facilities to mitigate for the lack of their own dedicated facilities.
20. To assess this, each of the schools whose pitch or 'team game playing field' facilities are below those prescribed in either of the two standards were contacted by telephone to discuss whether they perceived a shortage of playing field space, and whether they had arrangements for use of community and/or public open space facilities (such as hire of sports centre facilities, for example).
21. For each 'standard' (i.e. Building Bulletin based and Regulations based), a map of the city has been produced showing those schools that fall below the relevant standard, coupled with an indication of their responses when contacted.
22. The responses of each school were categorised using a 'traffic light' system to represent the severity of the issues; these colours have been used on both maps to highlight degree of need. The meanings of the colours used are as follows:

**RED:**

Lack of provision is a problem for the school, and any arrangements they have in place to help mitigate are not alleviating problems of playing field / team game based curriculum delivery.

**AMBER:**

Lack of suitable levels of playing field is a problem for the school, but the school have suitable arrangements in place to utilise community and or public open space facilities that enable delivery of effective playing field / team game based teaching.

**GREEN:**

The school do not perceive that they are lacking in playing field / team game area provision.

Two schools (Millthorpe Secondary and Huntington Primary) did not respond to officer enquiries. These schools have not been shaded using this system and are instead shaded **BLACK**.

**- SECTION 2 -**

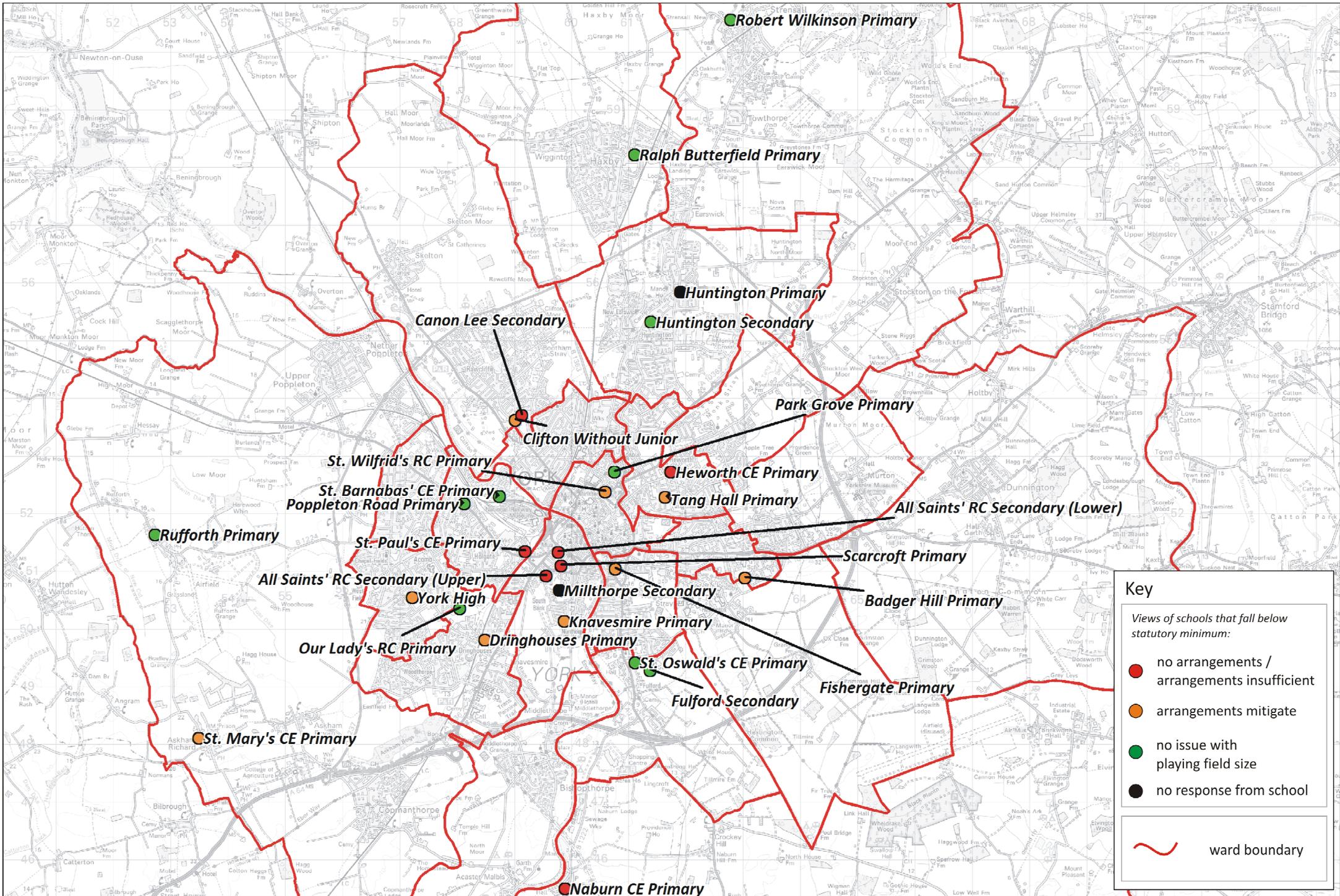
**RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT 1: Comparison against the *Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999***

23. The table below shows the results of the assessment of provision of 'team game playing field area' (as defined by the regulations) against that standard, and the views of each school. This information is also represented in **Map 1**, overleaf.

**TABLE 4: Schools that fall below statutory minimum level of 'team game playing field' provision (Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999)**

School	Dedicated 'team game playing field' provision (m2)	Statutory minimum (m2)	School response	Colour category
Badger Hill Primary	1398	2500	School has use of Archbishop Holgate's CE Secondary playing field, which neighbours site.	●
Clifton Without Junior	1153	10000	School has use of Canon Lee Secondary playing field, which has drainage issues.	●
Dringhouses Primary	354	5000	School has use of nearby sports club facilities.	●
Fishergate Primary	2264	2500	School feel that playing field is slightly too small for the number of children they have on roll but have no other arrangements in place.	●
			School deploys alternative arrangements as follows: (a) use of Monk Stray (poor drainage) (b) use of Hempland school field (c) weekly bookings on University of Ripon and St John's astroturf (d) use of Burnholme MUGA	●
Heworth CE Primary	138	2500	Whilst these enable some teaching of team games, it is difficult to manage safety on multiple sites, which each have their own issues.	●
Huntington Primary	4365	5000	no response	●
Knavesmire Primary	1642	2500	School has use of racecourse VIP carpark on non-race days.	●
Naburn Primary	87	2500	School uses village green, but this isn't suitable due to poor drainage and uneven surface.	●
Our Lady's Primary	2424	2500	School does not perceive an issue.	●
Park Grove Primary	3371	5000	School does not perceive an issue.	●
Poppleton Road Primary	4319	5000	Although school are happy with existing playing field provision, they have also arranged for use of pitches on Hamilton Drive for football team use.	●
Ralph Butterfield Primary	4183	5000	School does not perceive an issue.	●
Robert Wilkinson Primary	6146	10000	School does feel that grassed pitch provision is limited but are happy with on site MUGA for all year round sports use, in addition to swimming pool.	●
Rufforth Primary	2234	2500	School does not perceive an issue.	●
Scarcroft Primary	900	5000	School has access to roped off area of Scarcroft Green. Not really suitable and there are difficulties with maintenance.	●
St Mary's CE Primary	1758	2500	School does not perceive an issue with grassed pitches but has very limited and unsuitable hard surface games area provision.	●
St Paul's CE Primary	295	2500	School have negotiated use of strip of land off Holgate Road for some outdoor activities, but this is still unsuitable for team games.	●
St Wilfred's RC Primary	409	5000	School has use of Park Grove Primary's playing field.	●
Tang Hall Primary	1532	2500	School makes extensive use of on-site MUGA and doesn't see the lack of playing field as an issue. School does have a detached playing field but this is unsuitable for regular school use due to unauthorised public access.	●
Canon Lee Secondary	34129	40000	Lack of suitable playing field space is currently a problem. School hopes to be successful in acquiring funding for new all weather pitch on school site.	●
Huntington Secondary	44403	60000	Existing pitch provision is fine. School also has use of Huntington Sports pitches adjacent to site.	●
Millthorpe Secondary	27111	45000	No response	●
All Saint's RC Secondary	39359	55000	Pitches are off site and not within walking distance. Unsuitable.	●

**MAP 1: City of York schools below statutory minimum 'team game playing field' area, as per Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999.**



**Key**

Views of schools that fall below statutory minimum:

- no arrangements / arrangements insufficient
- arrangements mitigate
- no issue with playing field size
- no response from school

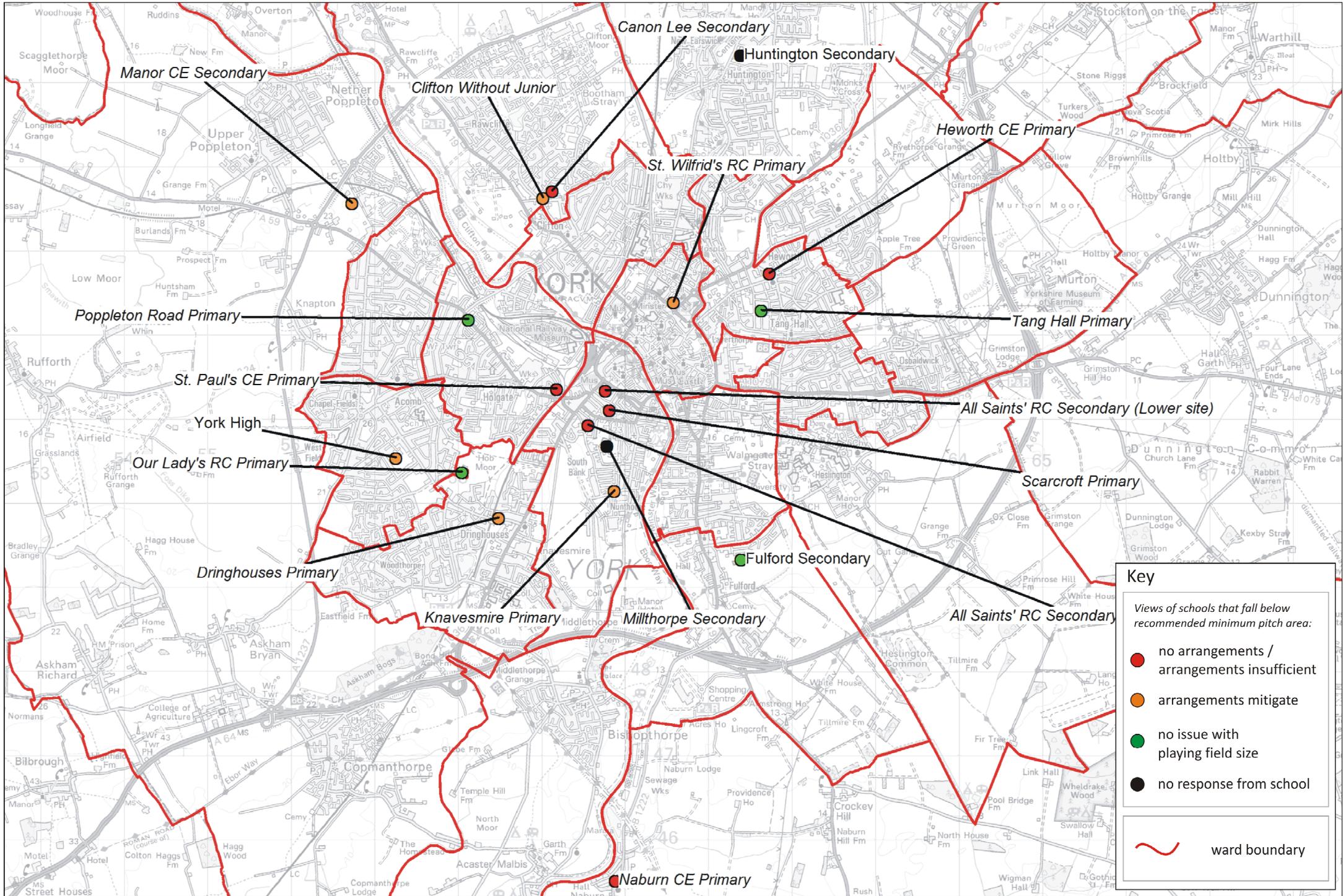
~ ward boundary

## RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT 2: Comparison against *Building Bulletin 98 and 99*

24. The table below shows the results of the assessment of provision of playing fields (defined as 'pitches' in the relevant Building Bulletin) against that standard, and the views of each school. This information is also represented in Map 2, overleaf.

School	Dedicated Pitch provision (m2)	Recommended minimum (m2)	School response	Colour category
Clifton Without Junior	NONE	4,360	School has use of Canon Lee Secondary playing field, which has drainage issues.	●
Dringhouses Primary	NONE	2,600	School has use of nearby sports club facilities.	●
			School deploys alternative arrangements as follows: (a) use of Monk Stray (poor drainage) (b) use of Hempland school field (c) weekly bookings on University of Ripon and St John's astro turf (d) use of Burnholme MUGA	●
Heworth CE Primary	NONE	1,260	Whilst these enable some teaching of team games, it is difficult to manage safety on multiple sites, which each have their own issues.	●
Knivesmire Primary	NONE	1,520	School has use of racecourse VIP carpark on non-race days.	●
Naburn CE Primary	NONE	660	School uses village green, but this isn't suitable due to poor drainage and uneven surface.	●
Our Lady's Primary	1,511	1,560	School does not perceive an issue.	●
Poppleton Road Primary	2,852	3,300	Although school are happy with existing playing field provision, they have also arranged for use of pitches on Hamilton Drive for football team use.	●
Scarcroft Primary	NONE	2,800	School has access to roped off area of Scarcroft Green. Not really suitable and difficult to get grass cut.	●
St Paul's CE Primary	NONE	1,380	School have negotiated use of strip of land off Holgate Road for some outdoor activities, but this is still unsuitable for team games.	●
St Wilfred's RC Primary	NONE	2,340	School has use of Park Grove Primary's playing field.	●
Tang Hall Primary	1,120 (MUGA)	1,340	School makes extensive use of on-site MUGA and doesn't see the lack of playing field as an issue. School does have a detached playing field but this is unsuitable for regular school use due to unauthorised public access.	●
Canon Lee Secondary	32,210	39,400	Lack of suitable playing field space is currently a problem. School hopes to be successful in acquiring funding for new all weather pitch on school site.	●
Huntington Secondary	31,379	62,500	Existing pitch provision is fine. School also has use of Huntington Sports pitches adjacent to site.	●
Fulford Secondary	52,140	55,640	Playing field fine, not an issue.	●
Millthorpe Secondary	25,347	44,770	No response to enquiry.	●
Manor Secondary	33,415	35,375	School very slightly below recommended area. New land is being acquired adjacent to existing site for additional pitch provision.	●
All Saint's RC Secondary	32,920	52,945	Pitches are off site and not within walking distance. Unsuitable.	●
York High	34,200	41,185	General pitch provision is insufficient but school has use of Oaklands Sports Centre facilities, which are based on the school site.	●

**MAP 2: City of York schools below recommended minimum pitch provision, as per *Building Bulletins 98 and 99*.**



**Key**

- Views of schools that fall below recommended minimum pitch area:
  - no arrangements / arrangements insufficient
  - arrangements mitigate
  - no issue with playing field size
  - no response from school
- ward boundary

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

25. A number of schools were below the specified standards prescribed by both the *Building Bulletins* and the *Regulations*. These schools are shown below. A short commentary on the existing facilities available to each of these schools is given, together with potential options for improving access to suitable facilities.

- Heworth CE Primary
- Scarcroft Primary
- St Paul's CE Primary
- Canon Lee Secondary
- All Saint's RC Secondary
- Naburn CE Primary

26. **St Paul's Primary** is located in a densely populated residential area of the city, and does not currently have any dedicated playing field provision. A very small patch of land of around 1450m<sup>2</sup> is used by the school but it is too small for effective use. Due to the residential nature of the school's location, it is extremely unlikely that a suitable amount of land will become available for new pitch provision within a suitable distance to the school.

27. **Scarcroft Primary** is located on Scarcroft Green, in an otherwise densely populated residential area of the city. Although it does not have any dedicated playing field provision it does have an arrangement for the use of an area of the Green (owned by CYC), which is roped off for this purpose. The school has on occasion found it difficult to arrange for regular grass cutting, and the area is not big enough, secure enough, nor suitably well-drained for their needs. Unfortunately, the residential nature of the school's immediate locality means that it is extremely unlikely that a suitable amount of land will become available that is an appropriate distance from the school.

28. **Heworth Primary** is a small school with no dedicated playing field provision that is also located within a built up residential area of the city. They have a variety of arrangements in place to deliver team game elements of the curriculum (see table 4), but none of these present adequate solution, primarily because they are not within walking distance of the school. Unfortunately, dedicated provision within close proximity to the school is not a viable option due to the built up nature of the area.

29. **Naburn CE Primary** is a small village school which uses the village green as a playing field, which is a short distance away from the school itself. The school site is technically land locked (there is no land adjacent to the site into which it can expand), although there may be other potential sites in the village. Unfortunately, the pitch currently used by the school suffers from poor drainage and an uneven surface, hindering the school's usage of the space.

30. **Canon Lee Secondary** is a medium sized secondary school that has dedicated on site pitch provision that suffers from chronic drainage issues which prevents use of much of the marked pitches for most of the school year. The school also owns a detached playing field around 1km from the school site, which is due to be used as pitches for the new Clifton with

Rawcliffe Primary school (due to open September 2011). The current provision available to Canon Lee is neither suitable nor sufficient. However, funding was secured in Q1 2010 for a new all weather pitch to be provided on the existing school site. It is expected that construction of this facility will mitigate for the problems with existing facilities.

31. **All Saints RC Secondary** is a large secondary school with a 6<sup>th</sup> form, which spans two sites (Nunnery Lane and Mill Mount). Neither of these sites have any dedicated playing field provision. The school does have a detached playing field which they use regularly for team games etc, but the land lies approximately 3.5km from the Upper Site and 4km from the Lower Site, just inside the ring road. The school therefore suffers (in addition to being below the prescribed standards) because the facilities in question are far beyond walking distance and require bus transport.
32. Both school sites are located within established residential areas, preventing provision of new and suitably located playing field facilities. Playing fields for the Mount School (an independent school) lie a short distance to the West, whilst the Knavesmire lies to the South. Millthorpe School, which has its own dedicated pitches, lies to the South.
33. The space required for new dedicated pitches for All Saints would be in the region of 55,000m<sup>2</sup>. The Mount School pitches are approximately 15,000m<sup>2</sup>, and are therefore too small for effective use. Use of the Millthorpe pitches would also pose significant logistical issues given degree of joint access requirements of two large schools.
34. Parts of the Knavesmire are already used by local sports clubs, and basic changing facilities are currently available. However, the land is publicly accessible at all times and is used extensively by dog walkers, making it difficult to safeguard children and monitor potential health and safety issues (see paragraphs 14-16, above).
35. The school estimate that they spend £25,000 a year transporting pupils to and from their detached playing fields. This money could be invested in other areas of the curriculum if the school had dedicated playing field provision. Facilities more local to the school, however, do not meet the standards that would be required for All Saints use, whilst the nature of the area surrounding both school sites is such that it is extremely unlikely that an area of land large enough to accommodate new pitches for the school will become available.

## CONCLUSION

37. Canon Lee secondary school has a project underway to mitigate for existing lack of facilities. However, three of the four Primary schools identified are on 'landlocked' sites within established built up areas relatively near to the centre of York. There is therefore no opportunity to provide on-site facilities whilst the schools remain in their existing locations.
38. Whilst it is highly unlikely that sites suitable for new provision will emerge within a reasonable distance to each of the schools, the Authority should be mindful of their requirements and seek to take advantage of any local opportunities that may arise as part of the development strategy for the city.