

MUGA Social Impact Research Report

By the Northleach MUGA Working Group

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1. Objective

To identify similar facilities around the UK in order to determine if there has been a problem with building MUGAs close to residential housing. Current industry guidance recommends a minimum of 30 metres.

2. Methodology

2.1 A questionnaire was developed (attached) and sent with personalised letters to 12 organisations. Each organisation has been identified from research as either having a MUGA in the vicinity of residential housing or have had issues with residents' complaints.

2.2 The organisations contacted were;

1. Springfield Academy, Calne
2. Stalham High School, Norfolk
3. Oxford City Council
4. Derry City Council
5. East Renfrewshire Council
6. Bromsgrove District Council
7. Banbury Town Council
8. Dumfries and Galloway Council
9. Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
10. North Devon District Council
11. Wealden District Council.
12. East Devon District Council

2.3 In addition Peter Mills obtained feedback from direct contact with North Lanarkshire Leisure Trust (re Wishaw Leisure Centre) and Hart District Council.

3. Response

3.1 The questionnaire was completed by Springfields Academy Calne and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (KLWNBC).

3.2 Wealden District Council responded to advise the MUGA development was the responsibility of East Sussex County Council

3.3 North Devon district Council responded to inform that the identified MUGA was not built due to residents' concerns.

3.4 No response was received from the other 8 organisations, which is disappointing.

4. Findings

4.1 Springfields Academy- The MUGA is built 52 metres from housing. There has been no significant adverse feedback from residents. The only issue that arises is when floodlights are inadvertently left on.

4.2 The use of the MUGA at Springfields Academy is good, the respondent states; *"The use of the MUGA has exceeded expected usage. It is used 7 days a week*

- during the day, evenings and weekends. Private community groups hire the facility on a regular basis”*
- 4.3 KLWNBC- provided feedback on two MUGAs (Fairstead and North Lynn). Fairstead is 20 metres from houses and North Lynn is 55 metres.
 - 4.4 Both sites generate litter which requires picking every couple of days.
 - 4.5 Noise was not a problem, except for a temporary issue. *“We did have a problem with noise from balls hitting the fence on one site, until it was discovered that the installation was not done correctly. No issues now.”*
 - 4.6 KLWNBC report no significant adverse feedback from residents at either site.
 - 4.7 *“One particular complaint at Fairstead. The area was open space and used for football but without lighting. Main complaint was light levels, lights were to go off at 10pm, but now at 9pm. For the last 5 years we have not had any complaints.”*
 - 4.8 Further feedback from KLWNBC; *“Our Sports development Officer has organised activities to increase use. Some are better than others. Our best used is in a park with other activities including children’s play areas. Parking and toilets will help to increase use.”*
 - 4.9 Peter Mills had a discussion with Carl Westby (Head of Leisure Services, Hart District Council. Their policy is not to build where there is nearby housing.
 - 4.10 North Lanarkshire- On a visit to Wishaw Leisure Centre, Peter Mills noticed that housing surrounded the outdoor facilities at the leisure centre. The 3G pitch was about 30 metres from modern terraced housing and the athletics track a similar distance from a new estate. Discussion with Mr Alan Airlie (Leisure Centre Manager) provided useful feedback. There is no adverse feedback from the residents next to the 3G pitch, apart from complaints if the lights are left on beyond 10pm. Residents close to the athletics track complain re lighting, which is somewhat old and does cause light pollution. They also complain about athletics meetings and the use of the PA system.
 - 4.11 It was disappointing not to receive a response from Bromsgrove district Council. In 2010 they conducted an inquiry (report attached) into anti-social behaviour at a MUGA in Swanslength. This was built adjacent to housing. Whilst the MUGA was not in itself blamed for the behaviour (which would occur anyway somewhere), the report states at para 7.9 *“Bromsgrove District Council should review its processes when installing open space facilities to capture the potential impact on local residents”*. It appears the MUGA was not moved or closed, but the impact on design and monitoring changes are unknown.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Whilst the feedback cannot be argued to be statistically valid or overwhelming, we can draw some conclusions.
- 5.2 There are few MUGAs built close to residential housing. The research found it difficult to identify suitable installations to contact and feedback from installers confirmed that it is uncommon for them to be built within 50 metres of residential housing. Most Councils have been able to build MUGA’s remote from housing.
- 5.3 There is a small chance of anti-social behaviour having a negative impact on nearby residents. The level of the disruption was depending on a number of factors, some unrelated to the MUGA itself. In most cases this does not have a significant social impact, but the risk of a negative impact cannot be eliminated.
- 5.4 The research confirms that concerns on noise and lighting can normally be managed effectively.
- 5.5 Managing the hours of operation by switching floodlights off at 9pm reduces the impact.
- 5.6 Good design minimises the impact of noise.