



GAA Sports Halls

Hallaí Spóirt CLG

INFRASTRUCTURE GUIDANCE NOTES



INTRODUCTION

A sports hall is not appropriate for every Club. It should only be built in response to clearly-identified needs. Unlike GAA pitches and associated changing facilities, GAA sports halls also tend to be used for non-GAA activities. This 'mixed use' is usually central to their sustainability.

OVERALL DESIGN ISSUES

Where possible a GAA Club sports hall should be integrated with the Club's pavilion and pitch(es). This not only improves the delivery of the Club's business but provides economies of scale through the use of shared spaces and facilities. Assuming this is the case, good practice tells us:

- Entry should be via a common lobby: sports halls also tend to require significant reception space to facilitate the coming and going of individuals and small groups of people and the 'cross-over' between various users.
- The sports hall itself should provide a 'fourth zone' to the complex.
- It should connect into and make full use of the 'changing zone' discussed above.
- It should also relate to and connect into the 'admin and social zones'.

Sports halls are essentially large sheds; are built accordingly; and thus, often appear like just a shed; an industrial building; or a warehouse. They tend to have few windows and thus the use of materials; colour; insulated cladding; and surrounds are particularly important here. Even a little thought given to design can have a major positive impact in terms of how an otherwise bland sports hall can look.

Sports halls tend not to have windows: any that are included should be north-facing to eliminate glare.

They should have a capacity to maintain an in-hall temperature of 12/16C.

Acoustics are a key concern in many sports halls and tend to be poor due to the hard surfaces involved. Unless tackled through design, poor acoustics will lead to:

- Poor speech intelligibility
- High background noise levels
- Increased stress for users
- Management/control difficulties.

Finally design and layouts need to facilitate:

- Good supervision of the hall
- The potential to break it down via screens or netting into smaller zones
- Wheelchair users
- Parents/carers with prams and buggies
- Cafeteria/vending provision.

SIZE AND LAYOUT

The 'Four-Court Hall' has become the standard most aspired to. The four courts referred to are badminton courts (each court is 13.4m x 6.1m and needs height of 7.1m): this classic hall has overall dimensions of 33m x 18m x 7.6m and covers 594 sq. m of floor-space.

The four-court hall is also able to accommodate the following sports/activities (but not at the same time):

SPORT/ACTIVITY	AREA REQUIRED
Basketball	24/28m x 13/15m plus a 1m margin
Netball	30.5m x 15.25m plus a 3m margin
'Five-a-side'	25/50m x 16.5/35m
Volleyball	18m x 9m plus 3m margins

A GAA sports hall should include as a matter of course facilities for One-Wall Handball. This requires a 'wall-space' 20 ft wide and 16 ft high and a 'floor-space' 20 ft wide and 34 ft long.

There is a view that a sports hall such as this requires a further 12.5% of storage space: that means another 70/75 sq. m.

FLOOR SURFACES

In broad terms Clubs are faced with three choices in terms of the surface of the main hall area. They and what they involve are summarised below:

FLOOR TYPE	COMMENTS	HOW IT'S INSTALLED
Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional and hard-wearing • Multi-uses, e.g. dancing • Requires regular cleaning • Wood absorbs moisture so damp must be avoided 	Hardwood strips or sections (these may be veneered) laid on battens or plywood sheeting which in turn are set on rubber pads fixed to the floor.
Synthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vinyl; linoleum; rubber; or composites • Easily-cleaned • Provides consistent bounce • Minimises risk of skin burns • Uses are largely sports-related 	Surface can be laid down as rolls or sections, often with a foam or rubber backing, and stuck to the floor surface beneath. This may be a timber support floor (as above) which will absorb users' impact energy. Alternatively, the final surface can be 'painted' on, usually between 1-4mm thick.
Textiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woven fabric; felt; flock; velour; fibre-bonded, needle punched and fine pile carpet; or knitted, woven or tufted carpet • Warm and give good acoustics 	Material is laid/stuck down on a sub-floor which may be tarmac or concrete.
3G	See Pitches Section	

A matt floor finish is preferred to a gloss one and its Light Reflective Value (the % of light reflected from a surface) should be 40/50%. There should always be a visual colour contrast between sports hall floors and walls.

CHANGING PROVISION

A GAA sports hall should capitalise on the Club's GAA-related changing provision. However, we need to be aware that:

- The hall will probably generate many users and the Club needs to be confident the 140- odd changing room spaces (and associated shower provision) described above will meet demand.
- Sports halls have many individual/small groups of users: changing provision thus needs to include lockers.
- Lockers typically measure 900mm x 300mm x 450mm.
- They also typically come in double rows, 1.8m high.
- Normally lockers are provided at a rate of 2/3 per 'changing room bench space'.
- 140 bench spaces as described above could support 280/420 lockers which could cater for 280/420 users and take up 39/57 sq m of floor-space: sometimes this can be provided to good effect in corridors.

TOILETS

As a rule of thumb, the following levels of toilet provision are needed:

- Men: one WC; one urinal; and one washhand basin per 15/20 users.
- Women: one WC per 7/10 users and one wash-hand basin per 15 users.

If the hall is part of or linked to a Club pavilion some sort of common access arrangements to toilets may be possible.

MULTI-USE

The points made above multi-use spaces in GAA pavilions also apply here. Many Clubs will want or need to use their hall for various activities. Points to consider here are:

- A moveable stage will be a requirement for many events (eg Scór).
- Look at the possibility of moveable bleacher seating: a floor-level seat 25/30m (80/90ft) back from a stage is not very appealing.
- Acoustics (see above) are also a critical issue here: poor acoustics severely constrains the uses the hall can be put to.

GYMS/TRAINING ZONES

These are now seen as part of the sports hall package but before investing here Clubs need to be confident that (a) a demand exists; (b) there are no dominant local competitors (eg Council or hotel leisure centres ... or even other GAA Clubs!); and (c) they know exactly what they'll put in their gym and why.

A gym is no longer something with 'a few weights' in it but is a complex place where complex activity takes place. Apart from what gyms do or offer, their aesthetics are increasingly important: how the place 'looks and feels' is a big part of it.

Clubs need to first decide who their market for the gym will be. If it's adult GAA players then that will determine what should be in the gym. If the target is wider then that will increase what should be in the gym. Just to give a sense of what can be involved, gyms can:

- Be for individuals and/or groups.
- Focus on basic fitness through to high level strength and conditioning.

- Include a wide range of equipment including cardio-vascular; circuit-related; and/or relating to particular parts of the body.

Other points to consider are:

- A minimum of 25 sq m of floor-space will be needed and a height of 3.5m/4m
- Many gyms/training areas take up 80/100 sq m of space
- 'Warm up and 'cool down' areas may be needed
- Changing/shower facilities need to be tied into the provision
- Many users also expect a cafeteria/ relaxation area
- Machines are expensive and need to be replaced/updated as required ... which can be as much on the basis of fashion/fad as on whether they are actually worn out
- Multi-provision of TV screens is also now an expectation of gym users

PUTTING THE GAELIC POLISH ON THINGS

A GAA sports hall should be more than just a functional building. It should 'sell' what the GAA and the Club are about. Simple ways of doing this include:

- Clearly labelling the hall on the outside as "ABC GAA Club Sports Hall".
- Use of Irish in all signage.
- Branding of the building with the Club crest, including indirect use of the images that make up the crest.
- Use of Club colours in the hall (though it can also be a good idea to use a colour coding scheme to differentiate the pavilion's various zones.
- Inclusion of Gaelic art.
- Use of local place-names and/or deceased individuals to name parts of/rooms in the hall.