

Wyre Forest

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment



A Final Report by PMP

October 2008

strategy finance delivery



Wyre Forest
District Council

DISTRICT OF WYRE FOREST

**OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION
ASSESSMENT**



A

FINAL REPORT

BY

PMP

OCTOBER 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

- i. During July 2007 Wyre Forest District Council (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake an assessment in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002) and its Companion Guide. This report sets out the findings of this study and includes an assessment of local needs and existing open space, sport and recreation provision.
- ii. The study will form part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will help to shape the strategic direction of the Wyre Forest District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) and other LDF documents, including the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the Site Allocations DPD and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan DPD.
- iii. The study was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).
- iv. The Companion Guide sets out a five step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space. Although presented as a linear process below, in reality, many stages were undertaken in parallel.
- v. The five step process is as follows:
 - Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
 - Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
 - Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
 - Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
 - Step 5 – Drafting Policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.
- vi. The study considers eleven typologies of open space and sports facilities, namely:
 - town parks
 - local parks
 - natural and semi natural open space
 - amenity greenspace
 - provision for children
 - provision for young people
 - outdoor sports facilities
 - indoor sports facilities
 - allotments and community gardens
 - green corridors
 - churchyards and cemeteries.

- vii. The key outputs of the study include:
- a full audit of all accessible open spaces across the district categorised according to the primary purpose of the site (in line with the typologies highlighted previously). This audit is stored on a GIS layer and linked Access database
 - an assessment of the open space, sport and recreational needs of people living, working and visiting the Wyre Forest derived from extensive consultations
 - production of local provision standards (quantity, quality and accessibility) for each type of open space where appropriate, in accordance with local needs
 - application of local standards to the existing open space provision, enabling the identification of surpluses and deficiencies based on the quantity, quality and accessibility
 - recommendations to address the key findings and drive future policy.
- viii. Full details of the methodology can be found in Section 2 of the report and the standard setting process can be found in appendices F, G and H. A full programme of consultation and site assessments were carried out and the findings of this work feeds directly into the local standards. The key issues arising from this phase of work are summarised below:

Current position

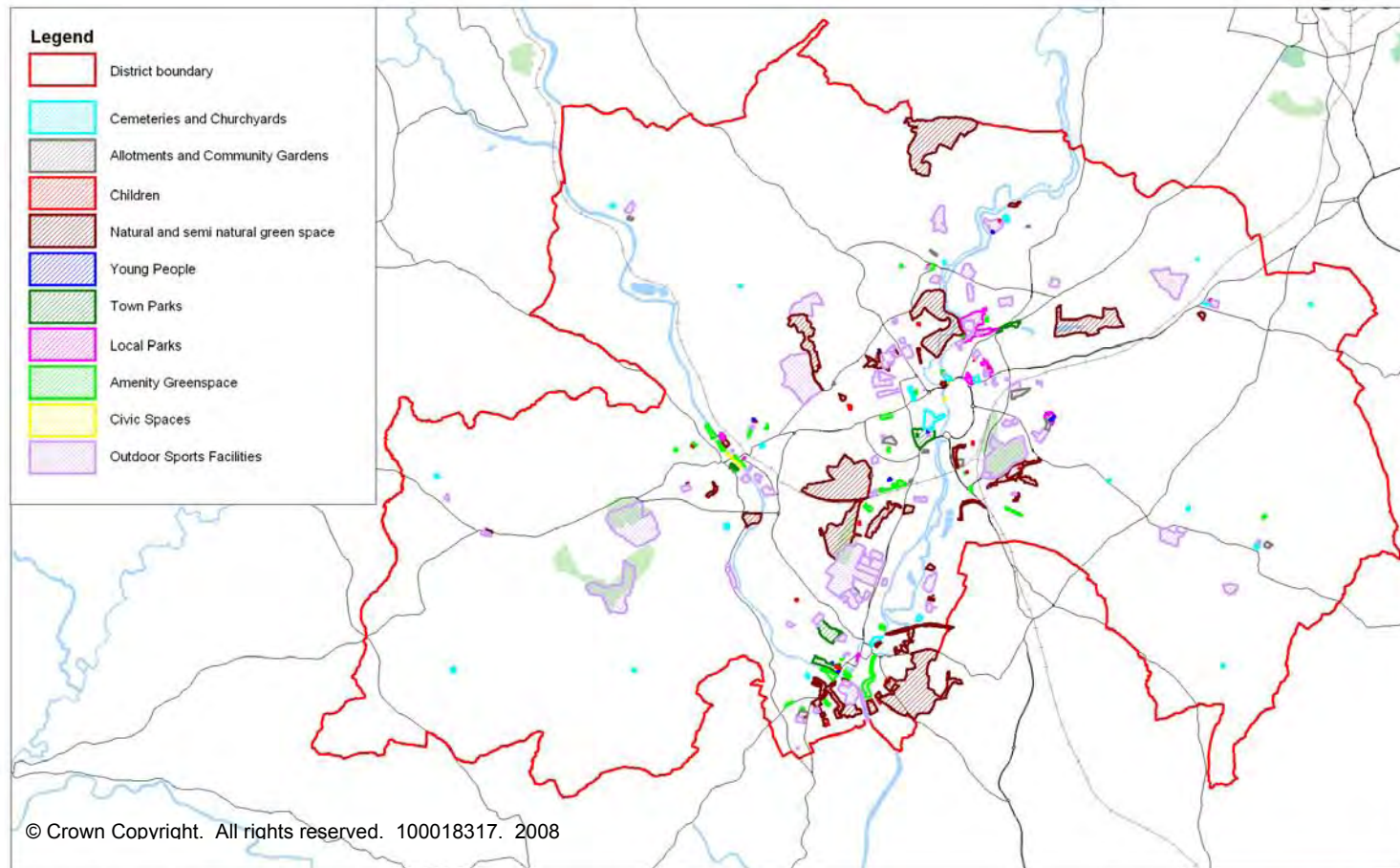
- ix. Consultation and site visits regarding the different types of open space in Wyre Forest highlights the following key issues:
- parks and gardens are highly valued across Wyre Forest, with residents and visitors to the district using them frequently. There is a particular emphasis from public consultation for the provision of local parks and gardens, with residents at drop in sessions and respondents to the household survey highlighting their value to the local community, particularly for children. Parks are seen as a focal point of the community and also perceived to offer significant landscaping and environmental benefits, particularly within the urban areas of the district
 - natural and semi natural open space is the most popular of all typologies in Wyre Forest. Natural and semi natural open spaces, alongside areas of countryside, are perceived to be a key part of the character of the district and highly valuable. The need to protect these sites from development is a key theme that developed throughout consultation. Residents and visitors recognise the benefits they draw from the excellent provision of nature reserves and large natural and semi natural sites in the area
 - the value of amenity green spaces within close proximity to residents is highlighted through local consultation. The importance of achieving a balance between quantity and quality is reinforced by residents, with amenity green space perceived to be valuable to the local community if it is maintained
 - equipped provision for children and young people is the overriding theme of consultations throughout the study with residents expressing concerns over the quantity of provision, as well as highlighting that the quality of many

facilities is insufficient. Facilities are perceived to be unimaginative and not challenging. The lack of youth clubs and facilities available for use at night for young people is a key issue across the district

- allotments are seen as a valuable open space in the district offering residents opportunities for informal recreation. This type of open space is considered to be particularly important for older residents in Wyre Forest
- the importance of outdoor sports facilities is emphasised by residents, with many viewing the protection of this type of open space as essential. Residents identified both quantitative and qualitative issues with regards to outdoor sports facilities. The quantity and quality of changing facilities in particular is perceived to be a key issue

x. The distribution of sites in Wyre Forest is illustrated in Map 1 overleaf.

Map 1 – Distribution of all open space sites across Wyre Forest



Distribution of open space, sport and recreation facilities in Wyre Forest

Based on MapInfo Streetpro data. Crown Copyright PMP Ltd.



Setting local standards

- xi. In line with PPG17 guidance, local standards were set for quality, quantity and accessibility for each type of open space. The standards set are summarised in Table 1 below. The application of these standards highlights the key issues across the district. While the analysis in this document provides an overview of provision and highlights the implications of natural barriers on access to sites, site specific analysis and interpretation should consider the analysis of natural barriers in detail.

Table 1 – Locally derived standards

Typology	Quantity standard (hectares per 1000)	Accessibility standard	% Score achieved
Town parks	0.33	Urban - 15 minute walk (720m) Rural - 20 minute drive	70%
Local parks	0.24	Urban - 10 minute walk (480m) Rural - 15 minute drive	70%
Natural and semi natural	2.30	10 minute walk (480m)	60%
Amenity green space	0.29	10 minute walk (480m)	70%
Children's play areas	0.05	10 minute walk (480m)	70%
Provision for young people	0.03	15 minute walk (720m)	66%
Outdoor sports facilities	1.91	10 minute walk (480m – grass pitches) 15 minute drive time – tennis courts, bowling greens, synthetic pitches and golf courses	70%
Allotments	0.191	10 minute walk (480m)	64%

- xii. The key findings emerging from the application of the local standards in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility are summarised below.

Access

- xiii. The accessibility of all open space sites is discussed throughout the report. In summary the application of the accessibility standards highlights that:
- there is a good level of access to parks and gardens in the rural area of the district, with the majority of residents located in the rural settlements able to access a park within the recommended drive time. In contrast, there are a number of key areas of deficiency in the urban area. A large proportion of residents in the Kidderminster West analysis area and Stourport analysis area are outside the accessibility threshold of a park
 - access to natural and semi natural open space is high across all areas of the district. The majority of residents in Wyre Forest are able to access a natural or semi natural open space within the recommended 10 minute walk time
 - amenity green space is poorly distributed across the district. Key areas of deficiency exist in the Kidderminster East analysis area, in the north of the Kidderminster west analysis area and the north of Stourport analysis area. Only in the Bewdley analysis area can the majority of residents access an amenity green space within the recommended 10-minute walk time
 - although a lack of children's play areas was emphasised throughout consultation these facilities are evenly distributed across the district. However, despite this equitable distribution of facilities, there remain some key areas of deficiency, particularly in Kidderminster East and Kidderminster West analysis areas
 - there is a good distribution of young people's facilities across the district, however, predominantly due to the lack of facilities for young people in Wyre Forest, a number of areas are outside the recommended distance threshold of a facility. This is particularly evident in the Kidderminster analysis areas and in the north of the Stourport analysis area
 - there is an even distribution of outdoor sports facilities across both the urban and rural areas of the district. Analysis of the spread of different types of outdoor sports facilities indicates that pitches are evenly distributed and that the majority of residents are able to access local provision. In contrast, bowling greens, tennis courts and larger sites containing multiple facilities are focused predominantly within the Stourport analysis area
 - increasing access to school facilities is a key issue for residents, particularly in the rural areas of the district
 - despite an even distribution of allotments in Wyre Forest there are a number of areas of deficiency. Clear accessibility deficiencies are evident in the Bewdley analysis area, centre of Stourport analysis area, centre of Kidderminster West analysis area and north of Kidderminster East analysis area.

Quantity

- xiv. Consultation regarding the quantity of different types of open space in Wyre Forest highlights that:
- overall the quantity of parks is perceived to be sufficient. This is supported by findings within each analysis area. Enhancing the quality of parks is considered to be more important than increasing the quantity of this typology
 - there is an overall satisfaction with the quantity of natural and semi natural open space. The need to protect this type of open space from development was a key theme and the local quantity standard has been set at the existing level of provision
 - perceptions regarding the quantity of amenity green space are varied and a standard has been set marginally above the existing level of provision in order to enable the identification of locational deficiencies as well as placing an emphasis on opportunities to enhance the quality of provision
 - the quantity of provision for children and young people was the overriding theme throughout consultation, with increasing the provision of these types of open space regularly emphasised. The local quantity standards have been set above the existing levels of provision to reflect the need for increased provision
 - the lack of provision of allotments is the most conclusive finding across all types of open space in the district. Analysis indicates that there is increasing demand for allotments in the district and a number of sites in Wyre Forest currently have waiting lists. The local quantity standard has been set above the existing level of provision
 - overall the quantity of outdoor sports facilities is perceived to be sufficient. However, dissatisfaction with the provision of tennis courts and synthetic turf pitches is highlighted. With regards to the provision of local facilities high levels of satisfaction are shown with the quantity of grass pitches. Although the quantity standard has been set at the existing level of provision, increasing access to school facilities will be key in meeting future demand
- xv. Application of the quantity standards demonstrates that:
- across all typologies, the greatest quantitative shortfall is found in provision for young people. In order to meet the recommended standard an increase of 58% of current provision will be required
 - overall, across the district there is a shortfall of open space, sport and recreation provision in quantitative terms and there are particular quantitative shortfalls relating to provision for young people, children, allotments and natural open space. As specified throughout the report, the quantity standards need to be applied in conjunction with the accessibility standards in order to identify the location of any deficiencies.

Quality

- xvi. Analysis of the quality of sites illustrates that in general, the quality of open spaces is average. However, there are concentrations of poor quality sites dispersed across the district. Issues arising from the assessment of the quality of provision include:

- the quality of parks is perceived to be good by residents. Recent improvements at Brinton Park were regularly commended by residents. Site assessments reveal the quality of town parks is good and local parks average
 - the quality of natural sites is perceived to be important to residents and the wider benefits of these sites are recognised. The aesthetic and recreational values this type of open space offers to local residents is perceived to be particularly important
 - the quality of amenity green space in Wyre Forest is varying, with quality scores ranging from 30% - 68%. The quality scores for amenity green space sites indicate the quality of this type of open space is average
 - although the quantity of children's play areas and provision for young people was the main focus for these typologies a number of quality issues also emerged. Comments from residents particularly focus on the lack of imaginative facilities available for children and young people
 - the quality of allotments is perceived to be average by residents and this was reflected in the quality scores of allotments in Wyre Forest
- xvii. The actions that are required to enhance the overall provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities across Wyre Forest are set out below. Full rationale is provided within the main report.

Parks and gardens

- all parks should be protected from development
- seek to create a network of high quality town and local parks within the District. Improvements to local sites should focus firstly in areas where there is a lack of town parks
- seek to increase access to all parks in the district, particularly to the strategic parks in the district, such as Brinton Park, Memorial Park and Jubilee Gardens
- upgrade existing amenity green spaces in areas deficient in parks in the Bewdley analysis area
- prioritise the development of a new local park within Areley Kings, Spennells and within the south of the Kidderminster East and Kidderminster West analysis areas.

Natural and semi natural open spaces

- identify opportunities for improving the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces both in terms of the wildlife and habitat values of the site, but also for recreational purposes
- maximise biodiversity on natural and semi natural open spaces
- seek to increase access to natural and semi natural open space in the Bewdley, Stourport and Kidderminster West analysis areas

- consider opportunities to provide new provision within the Bewdley analysis area, in the north of the Kidderminster East analysis area and in the Kidderminster West analysis area
- protect natural open spaces in the Bewdley and Stourport analysis areas from development
- enhance the quality of natural and semi natural open space in the rural analysis areas. Should the opportunity arise, consider the provision of more formal natural or semi natural open spaces in larger settlements in the area, such as Far Forest and Rock.

Amenity green space

- seek to improve the quality of amenity green spaces, aiming to achieve a minimum score of 70%
- focus on the qualitative enhancement of existing facilities within Bewdley analysis area
- should the opportunity arise, provide new amenity green space within Franche and Habberley
- monitor the demand for amenity green space in the rural analysis areas.

Children's play areas

- incorporate the findings from the quality assessments to inform decisions on sites requiring investment. Any new facilities should meet the recommended quality standard
- investigate opportunities to provide new sites in areas where residents are unable to access play facilities within the recommended catchment. Key priorities for new provision include Bewdley and Offmore and Comberton
- consider the value of play facilities serving similar catchments, particularly those which are of poor quality, seek opportunities to redistribute existing play areas sites in close proximity to each other in order to enhance the quality of the remaining site. This approach should be adopted specifically in the north of Kidderminster town centre
- protect all play areas in the rural settlements and support the ongoing maintenance programmes undertaken by the Parish Councils
- identify opportunities to provide new facilities in the larger rural settlements
- continue to develop the 'Play Ranger Project' in deprived and more rural areas of the district.

Provision for young people

- seek to enhance the quality of facilities for young people and encourage young people to be involved in the design of new facilities

- seek to increase access to existing young people's facilities in the area. Should the need arise, consider the provision of a new young people's facility within Greenacres Lane amenity green space
- consider the provision of a new young people's facility within the centre of the Kidderminster West analysis area, Bewdley, Areley Kings, Aggborough, Offmore and Memorial Park (Stourport)
- encourage the development of 'The Wild Walshes Play Project' within Stourport
- protect all facilities for young people located in the rural areas of the district.

Allotments

- monitor and regularly review demand for allotment provision
- investigate and address any potential demand for additional allotments in all urban areas of the district
- support Parish Councils in the provision of new allotments in the rural area, where there is demand
- protect existing allotment sites from any future developments
- seek to improve the quality of allotments in Wyre Forest.

Outdoor Sports Facilities

- protect all outdoor sports facilities from development
- seek to improve the quality of outdoor sports facilities across the district to ensure that all sites are fit for purpose
- identify potential adult pitches that could be redesigned for the use of junior football and junior rugby. Consider the development of a new synthetic turf pitch to be used for hockey at a strategic location within the district
- opportunities for the new provision of a grass pitch should be considered in the Bewdley, Kidderminster East and Kidderminster West analysis areas
- maximise access to local school sites, particularly within the rural areas, to meet demand

Cemeteries and churchyards

- recognise and promote the nature conservation value of cemeteries and churchyards
- seek to increase access and enhance the quality of cemeteries and churchyards, particularly in areas when there is limited open space provision.

Green corridors

- maximise linkages between open spaces through the development of green corridors and create a network of multifunctional open spaces

- work in tandem with key partners to maximise the use of green corridors
 - aspire to achieve the quality vision at all green corridor sites.
- xviii. Enhancement of the links between open spaces will be instrumental in both maximising the benefits of the network of open space and also in achieving the wider sustainable transport objectives.
- xix. As well as considering the provision of open space within settlement boundaries, it is essential to also acknowledge the role of the wider countryside and the importance of this asset to local residents. Within the district there are many large areas of informal countryside, such as Wyre Forest that provide many informal recreation opportunities to residents and visitors alike.
- xx. The open space, sport and recreation study is also an invaluable tool in the formulation and implementation of planning policies. This relates to both the protection and enhancement of existing open space and the framework for developing planning obligations.
- xxi. The study provides the tools in which the value of an open space can be assessed on a site-by-site basis, as and when a development proposal is submitted for an existing piece of open space. Similarly, this approach can be the basis for determining what type of open space provision is appropriate to be provided within a housing development and for pre-empting growth implications as part of the LDF.
- xxii. The provision of swimming pools, sports halls, indoor bowls and indoor tennis facilities was also considered as part of the study. The key outcomes of this assessment included:
- there are sufficient swimming pools to meet current and future demand in quantitative terms. Pools are ageing and focus should be placed on improving the quality of facilities and providing public transport linkages
 - the supply of sports halls is in balance with demand. Changes to the current levels of participation and population growth may see demand become greater than supply. New provision may therefore be required. Any new facilities should be linked to school sites in order to maximise the use of resources
 - there are no indoor bowls facilities in the district and the need for a facility was a key theme of consultation. New provision should therefore be considered. This is of particular importance in light of the profile of the population which indicates that one of the dominant population groups has a strong propensity to participate in bowls
 - there are no indoor tennis facilities in the district. Consultation did not uncover the need for a facility within Wyre Forest and demand should therefore be monitored on an on-going basis.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Introduction and background

The study

- 1.1 During July 2007 Wyre Forest District Council (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake an assessment in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002) and its Companion Guide. This report sets out the findings of this study and includes an assessment of local needs and existing open space, sport and recreation provision.
- 1.2 The study will form part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will help to shape the strategic direction of the Wyre Forest Core Strategy and other LDF documents, including the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the site allocations DPD and the Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan DPD.
- 1.3 Other key objectives of the study include:
 - to assess existing green space across Wyre Forest
 - to identify local needs and aspirations through consultation, a strategic review and a review of existing provision standards
 - to recommend standards of provision (quantity, quality and accessibility) in accordance with PPG17
 - to inform the future enhancement and management of green spaces.
- 1.4 The Council currently manage almost 600 acres of public open space in the District including a range of parks, sports pitches and play areas. The findings of this work will enable the Council to adopt a clear vision and priorities for the future (based on local need) and establish a direction for the allocation of resources.

Why public open space?

- 1.5 Open space and recreation provision in Wyre Forest has an important role to play in supporting the implementation of both national objectives and more locally in the achievement of key Council priorities including enhancing cultural life, regeneration and the health of the local community.
- 1.6 The provision of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is becoming increasingly important and the contributions it can bring to both national and local priorities are recognised. The benefit to local communities is reflected in the Park Life Report (Greenspace, June 2007), which indicates that 92% of all those questioned had visited a park within the last month.
- 1.7 PPG17 states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:
 - supporting an urban renaissance



- supporting a rural renewal
 - promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
 - health and well being
 - promoting more sustainable development.
- 1.8 The May 2007 White Paper highlights minimising climate change and the protection of the environment as some of the key challenges to be addressed through the planning system in future years. The provision and protection of green space will be instrumental in the achievement of these objectives.
- 1.9 The importance of promoting health is emphasised through recent pressure on Local Planning Authorities to combat rising obesity through the appropriate design of buildings and the local environment, including open spaces.

Function and benefits of open space

- 1.10 Open spaces can provide a number of functions within the urban fabric of towns and villages, for example, opportunities for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between the built environment and/or a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity.
- 1.11 While all sites have a primary purpose, many open spaces perform secondary functions, for example outdoor sports facilities offer an amenity value in addition to facilitating sport and recreation.
- 1.12 There is a need to provide a balance between different types of open space in order to meet local aspirations. Local aspirations may vary from place to place and change over time.
- 1.13 Changing social and economic circumstances, different work and leisure practices, more sophisticated consumer tastes and higher public expectations have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers. While the provision of open spaces can be challenging, open spaces can also promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector.
- 1.14 Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wide range of people than many other sport and leisure facilities and are better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation provision is therefore key to an ideal, sustainable and thriving community. The Park Life Report (Green Space June 2007) highlighted that 83% of those surveyed feel that parks are the focal point of a community.
- 1.15 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality 'public realm' facilities such as parks and open spaces can assist in the promotion of an area as an attractive place to live and can result in a number of wider benefits. These are highlighted in Appendix A.

National Policy Context: Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation & Assessing Needs and Opportunities - PPG17 Companion Guide

- 1.16 PPG17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreational facilities (paragraph 1). It encourages local authorities to proactively plan for the future delivery of appropriate open space, sport and leisure facilities.
- 1.17 The document suggests that local authorities should undertake audits of existing provision, the use of existing facilities, access in terms of location and identify the need for new open space and sport and recreation facilities (paragraph 2).
- 1.18 Paragraph 7 states that “local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas”. PPG17 sets out the Government’s belief that national standards are inappropriate, as they do not take into account the demographics of an area, the specific needs of residents and the extent of built development. PPG17 therefore places significant emphasis on meeting local needs and expectations and adapting provision to the local context.
- 1.19 The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:

- assessing needs and opportunities
- undertaking audits of open space, sport and recreational facilities
- setting local standards
- maintaining an adequate supply of open space
- planning for new open space.



- 1.20 The Companion Guide recommends a process that should be followed and outlines the key objectives of an open space, sport and recreation needs assessment.
- 1.21 This PPG17 study has been undertaken following the recommended process and guides the effective provision of open spaces across Wyre Forest District. It recommends local standards based on an analysis of current provision and local community need. The application of the recommended local standards highlights key areas of deficiency and priorities for enhancement.

Local features and demographics

- 1.22 The District of Wyre Forest is located in the north of the county of Worcestershire, bordering Shropshire and covering an area of 75 square miles. The District contains three towns, with Kidderminster being the principal town and Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn smaller urban areas. A series of small villages and hamlets surround these towns, making up a total of ten parishes. The varying landscapes and characteristics of Wyre Forest ensure a variety of different open space provision and expectations in the different geographical areas of the District.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.23 The outlying rural areas present a different challenge for the Council in terms of providing access to open space, sport and recreation facilities. Parish Councils are important providers in these areas. In contrast, most of the facilities within the urban areas of the District are under the management of the District Council.
- 1.24 56% of the District falls within the West Midlands Green Belt and there is therefore an abundance of countryside. Access to this countryside is integral to the character of the area.
- 1.25 According to the 2001 Census, the population of Wyre Forest District was 96,981. Mid year estimates for 2005, detailed in the 2006 Annual Monitoring Report, indicate that the population had risen to 98,510. Population growth provides challenges for the Council in terms of maintaining and improving open space provision across the District in line with increased demand, while simultaneously combating increased pressures on land for development.
- 1.26 Population projections up to 2011 indicate that the population is likely to fall again. As a consequence, it is likely that demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities will fluctuate and it will be essential that providers are responsive to changes in demand. While the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) targets high levels of house building in some areas of Worcestershire, implications in Wyre Forest are likely to be limited and will primarily be accommodated on brownfield sites. Population increases may however arise as a result of inward migration and some redistribution of the population is likely to occur.
- 1.27 The population structure of the District is also anticipated to change, with the proportion of residents over 65 rising and the number of people below the age of 18 falling. Demand for different open space, sport and recreation facilities is influenced by the age and population profile of the District.
- 1.28 While deprivation levels in Wyre Forest are lower than the national average, there remain pockets of deprivation. For example, life expectancy in Oldington & Foley Park ward is 2.4 years below the England average. This ward encompasses the Birchen Coppice and Riffle Range areas of the District, areas of high deprivation. Local, accessible facilities and good links to public transport routes may be crucial to the effective delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities in this area. The Sustainable Community Strategy highlights the importance of addressing issues in these areas.
- 1.29 The RSS indicates that although Wyre Forest is not part of a large regeneration zone, some more deprived areas will be subject to local regeneration proposals over the RSS period. Local and accessible provision of open space will assist in meeting social inclusion targets and improving the health and wellbeing of residents. Kidderminster is undergoing significant regeneration and acts as a strategic centre for the area.
- 1.30 According to the Active People survey, 20.1% of the Wyre Forest adult population take part regularly in sport and active recreation. This is in line with the national average. In light of the drive to increase participation and health nationally, improvements to green spaces and playing fields could play a key role in further raising levels of physical activity, as well as driving forward other key agendas. Increases in participation would also result in demand for additional facilities.

Structure of the report

- 1.31 This report is split into 14 sections. Section 2 summarises the methodology used to undertake the study and Section 3 provides the strategic context to the study.
- 1.32 Sections 4 -13 relate to each of the typologies identified within the scope of the report. Each typology chapter sets out the strategic context to that particular typology, the recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards, the application of these standards and the resulting priorities.
- 1.33 An overview of negotiating developer contributions in light of the locally derived provision standards is contained within Section 14. This section includes examples of good practice in other local authorities as well as making recommendations for the future delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities across Wyre Forest.
- 1.34 There are also a number of appendices that support the report, providing further background detail and statistical calculations.

SECTION 2
UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

Undertaking the study

Introduction

- 2.1 As detailed in Section 1, this study has been undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its Companion Guide. The key emphasis of PPG17 is the importance of understanding local needs and making decisions based on local aspirations, as opposed to following national trends and guidelines.
- 2.2 The Companion Guide indicates that the four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:
- (i) understanding that local needs will vary even within local authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
 - (ii) recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
 - (iii) considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
 - (iv) taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment.
- 2.3 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each local authority will need to be adopted as each area has different structures and characteristics. The process set out in PPG17 has therefore been adopted to ensure that the needs and expectations of residents in Wyre Forest are adequately addressed.

Types of open space

- 2.4 The overall definition of open space within the government planning guidance is:
“all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”.
- 2.5 PPG17 identifies ten typologies, including nine types of green space and one category of urban open space. It states that when preparing assessments of needs and audits of existing open space and recreation facilities, local authorities should use these typologies, or variations of it.
- 2.6 Table 2.1 overleaf sets out the types of open space included within this study in Wyre Forest. It is important to note that only those sites within settlement boundaries have been included in the audit, in line with guidelines set out in PPG17. The significance of sites outside of these boundaries, alongside areas of nearby natural countryside will be considered throughout this report. This is particularly important in light of the nature of many of the rural settlements in the District where there may be limited dedicated provision within the boundaries of the settlements but extensive areas of countryside in close proximity to the home. In some instances, increasing access to existing open space will be as or more important than the development of new spaces.

Table 2.1 – Typologies of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Wyre Forest District

Type	Definition	Primary purpose
Town parks	<p>Includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks. PPG17 states that large or high quality spaces (or facilities) tend to attract users from a wider area than small or poor quality ones and tend to have a higher local profile. This gives rise to the concept of a hierarchy of provision. For this reason parks and gardens in Wyre Forest have been split into “town parks” and “local parks” in recognition of the different size of sites, range of facilities and the anticipated catchments of these sites.</p> <p>Town parks are therefore defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategically significant • having a large effective catchment • accessed by public transport or car • large and more expensive to develop and maintain • planned using national data and strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal recreation • community events.
Local parks	<p>As with town parks, the local parks category includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks. In comparison to town parks, local parks are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • locally significant • smaller effective catchment • accessed on foot or bicycle • smaller/cheaper • planned using local data/views • smaller range of facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal recreation.
Natural and semi-natural green spaces	<p>Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wildlife conservation • biodiversity • environmental education and awareness.
Amenity green space	<p>Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal activities close to home or work • children’s play • enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Provision for children	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below the age of 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children’s play.

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Type	Definition	Primary purpose
	considers only those spaces containing equipped play facilities.	
Provision for young people	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose) as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage shelters • skateboard parks • BMX tracks • Multi Activity Play Areas (MAPA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities or meeting places for young people.
Outdoor sports facilities	<p>Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outdoor sports pitches • tennis courts and bowls greens • golf courses • athletics tracks • playing fields (including school playing fields) • water sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilities for formal sports participation.
Allotments	<p>Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. Private gardens are not included.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.
Cemeteries & churchyards	<p>Cemeteries and churchyards, including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • burial of the dead • quiet contemplation.
Green corridors	<p>Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walking, cycling or horse riding • leisure purposes or travel • opportunities for wildlife migration.
Civic spaces	<p>Hard surfaced areas usually located within town centres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community events • setting for civic buildings.

The geographical area

2.7 Analysis of the open space, sport and recreation facilities across the District has been undertaken both District wide and also by six sub areas across the local authority area (referred to as analysis areas in this report). These areas were discussed and

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agreed with the Council at the outset and are made up primarily by the amalgamation of wards.

- 2.8 The use of analysis areas allows examination of data at a more detailed local level, enabling an understanding of the geographical distribution of open spaces and ensuring that differences in perception and opinion of open spaces across the District are understood.
- 2.9 Although these analysis areas have been used to guide interpretation, the application of local standards will enable the identification of priorities at neighbourhood level where appropriate.
- 2.10 Table 2.2 details the geographical areas that have been used for analysis and interpretation during this study.

Table 2.2 – Analysis areas in Wyre Forest

Area name	Population	Wards included
Bewdley	9,178	Bewdley Town Council area
Stourport	19,713	Stourport, Areley Kings, Mitton and Lickhill
Kidderminster East	29,206	Broadwaters, Greenhill, Offmore, Comberton and Aggborough and Spennells
Kidderminster West	29,976	Franche, Habberley and Blakebrook, Sutton Park, Oldington and Foley Park
Rural East	10,197	Wolverley, Cookley, Blakedown and Chaddersley and Bewdley and Arley addresses which fall outside Bewdley Town Council area
Rural West	2,711	Rock and Bewdley and Arley addresses which fall outside Bewdley Town Council area.

PPG 17 – Five step process

- 2.11 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a logical five-step process for undertaking a local assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities. This process was followed in this assessment and although presented as a linear process below, in reality, steps 1 and 2 were undertaken simultaneously.
- 2.12 The five step process is as follows:
- Step 1 – identifying local needs
 - Step 2 – auditing local provision
 - Step 3 – setting provision standards
 - Step 4 – applying provision standards
 - Step 5 – drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.

Our process

- 2.13 The following paragraphs detail the key tasks undertaken as part of each of the key stages of PPG17.

Step 1 - Identifying local needs

- 2.14 PPG17 states that consultation with the local community is essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision.
- 2.15 The assessment of needs should result in essential and desirable quality features, quantity and accessibility standards that reflect the type and amount of open space, sport and recreation facilities that local communities want. It is essential that the local standards set are directly reflective of local needs and expectations.
- 2.16 In order to identify local needs in Wyre Forest, a series of consultations were carried out including:
- household questionnaires
 - neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions
 - internet survey for children and young people
 - consultation with external agencies
 - one-to-one consultations with Council officers
 - Council officer survey
 - parish council consultations
 - Council members questionnaire and drop in session.
- 2.17 Background is provided on each of the key elements of the consultation in the paragraphs that follow.

Household survey

- 2.18 The household survey provides an opportunity for residents to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space provision as well as identifying their aspirations for future provision.
- 2.19 5000 questionnaires were distributed to households across the District to capture the views of both users and non-users of open spaces. Residents were randomly selected using the electoral register.
- 2.20 Random distribution of questionnaires to a geographically representative sample (based on the populations living in each of the identified analysis areas) of households ensures that representatives from all age groups, ethnic groups and gender were given the opportunity to participate. In order to promote an even response rate across ages and gender, residents with the next birthday in each household were asked to complete the questionnaire. A copy of the household survey and accompanying covering letter can be found in Appendix B.
- 2.21 551 postal surveys were returned, providing a statistically sound sample that can be used to assume responses for the remaining population across the District. Obtaining more than 400 responses means that the results are accurate to +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval.

Neighbourhood ‘drop in’ sessions

2.22 Neighbourhood ‘drop in’ sessions were held in three locations within Wyre Forest, specifically:

- Stourport Civic Hall, Stourport
- Kidderminster Market, Kidderminster
- Bewdley Museum, Bewdley.

2.23 These sessions were advertised to the public through the display of information at local sports centres and libraries in the three main conurbations of the area. The sessions were also advertised via Wyre Forest District Council website. It was intended that the drop in sessions would provide an informal opportunity for residents to give their views on open space, sport and recreation issues. Local interest groups were also formally invited to the sessions. The drop in sessions were well attended and the key issues arising from discussions have fed directly into the recommended local standards.

Internet survey for children and young people

2.24 Consultation with young people and children is traditionally difficult, however it is important to understand the views of this large sector of the community. Children and young people are important users of open space, sport and recreation facilities.

2.25 To reflect the importance of children and young people, two questionnaires were therefore posted on the internet. One questionnaire was intended for pupils of a primary school age and one for young people of secondary school age. All schools within the Council boundaries were notified of the website address and asked to encourage their pupils to complete the questionnaires.

2.26 The level of response to the surveys was reasonably good with 100 responses received in total.

2.27 The information obtained through the distribution of these questionnaires has been instrumental in the development of the local standards and ensures that the views of young people and children are represented.

External agencies questionnaire

2.28 Questionnaires were distributed to key regional and local agencies with the aim of obtaining their views and ensuring that local standards and emerging priorities dovetail with the work of other agencies.

Internal Council officers

2.29 Internal consultations with Council officers were undertaken in order to understand the work, focus and key priorities of the Council and to provide a detailed strategic and practical overview. An internet survey was also distributed to Council officers, examining their views on open space, sport and recreation facilities from their perspective as residents and people who work within the District. This survey received 45 responses.

Parish Council Questionnaires

- 2.30 A questionnaire was distributed to all Parish and Town Councils in the District in order to gain an understanding of localised issues and priorities. Questionnaires explored issues including the perceived quality and quantity of facilities in the area and issues experienced with existing facilities and/or access to facilities.

Members

- 2.31 A questionnaire was sent to all Members of the Council providing them with an opportunity to comment on provision within their wards as well as to discuss wider issues across the District. Members were also invited to a consultation drop in session for one to one discussions with representatives of PMP.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

- 2.32 PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space and sport and recreation, irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access. The logic for this is that all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs. Audits should also include all primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions and should focus on provision within settlement boundaries.
- 2.33 Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreation facilities. Audits of quality are particularly important as they allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.
- 2.34 The multi functionality of some types of open space presents a challenge in the audit. In order to address these issues, all spaces have been classified by their primary purpose. This ensures that all spaces are counted only once, but does not negate the need to consider the relationships between different types of open space as part of the study.
- 2.35 Additionally, some types of open space are located within a larger space. Where this occurs and the primary purpose is clearly defined, these sites are considered to be two separate sites and have been subdivided. A good example is the location of a children's play area within a park. It is important that these sites are considered separately as they have different roles and fall into different typologies, although it is recognised that the colocation of sites of many different typologies may in itself be an attraction to local residents.
- 2.36 The Council compiled a detailed audit of provision of open space across the District. This audit was then verified and refined by PMP in order to ensure that only those sites falling within the PPG17 typologies were identified and that no sites, apart from those under 0.2 ha (excluding children and young people), were omitted. In line with PPG17, grass verges and farmland were excluded from consideration, as well as sites located outside of settlement boundaries.
- 2.37 285 sites were identified during the audit. Each site was classified into a relevant typology and site assessments were then carried out at each site.
- 2.38 Site assessments were undertaken using a matrix developed in conjunction with Council Officers, enabling comparisons both between sites in the same typology and across typologies. For consistency purposes, all sites were assessed by the same person. Sites were rated against the following categories:

- accessibility
- quality
- wider benefits.

2.39 The site assessment process resulted in an overall quality and accessibility score for each site in addition to ratings for each individual factor. A full list of sites and their scores can be found in Appendix C along with the matrix used to evaluate sites.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and applying provision standards

2.40 PPG17 states that open space standards should be set locally and recommends that national standards should not be used to assess local circumstances.

2.41 PPG17 recommends that local authorities use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (stage 1) to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities. These local standards should include:

- quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed)
- a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities)
- accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).

2.42 The local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility of open space, sport and recreation facilities should relate directly to the local consultation undertaken and should therefore be reflective of local needs. PMP has produced locally based standards using the findings of the household survey and other consultations undertaken where appropriate.

2.43 Table 2.3 overleaf briefly summarises the process adopted for setting each of the local standards.

Table 2.3 – The setting standards process

Process stage	Methodology
National standards	Analysis of any existing national standards for each typology. These are usually provided by national organisations eg National Playing Fields Association for playing pitches. It is important to ensure that national standards are taken into account as part of determination of local standards.
Existing local standards	Consideration of existing local standards for each typology that are currently applied by the Council. These include standards set out in the Local Plan and in other adopted strategies.
Current provision (quantity standards only)	Assessment of the current quantity of provision within the local authority area as a whole and within each of the six analysis areas.
Benchmarking	Figures detailing local standards set by PMP for other open space projects to provide a benchmark when setting local standards.
Consultation (household survey)	Consideration of the findings of the household survey with regards the provision of each type of open space. This analysis provides a robust indication (at the District wide 95% confidence level) of public perception of the existing provision and aspirations for future provision of all different types of open spaces.
Consultation comments	Results from qualitative consultations are used to test the key themes emerging from the statistical evidence base and to determine issues of priority importance to residents. These feed in to the standards set.
PMP recommendation	PMP recommendation of a local standard. The standard is based on an assessment of the local community need and will be in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantity – x hectares per 1000 population • accessibility – a distance threshold in metres • quality – a list of essential and desirable features.
PMP justification	Full justifications for the recommended local standard based on qualitative and quantitative consultations are provided for each typology.

2.44 A brief explanation of the purpose of setting each type of standard is set out overleaf.

Quantity

- 2.45 The open space audit gives an understanding of the quantity of provision for each type of open space in each area of the District. This level of detail enables the calculation of the amount of each type of open space per 1,000 population. This information is provided within typology specific sections 4-13.
- 2.46 The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:
- provide an understanding of the adequacy of existing provision for each type of open space in the District
 - establish areas of the District suffering from deficiency of provision of each type of open space
 - provide a guide to developers as to the amount of open space expected in conjunction with new development.
- 2.47 This assessment measures the quantity of provision against the current population of 96,981 (taken from the 2001 Census).
- 2.48 Consideration is also given to the likely implications of future population growth up to 2026 using population projections developed by the Office of National Statistics (2004).
- 2.49 In order to ensure that any standards set are reflective of local community needs and opinions, key themes emerging from consultations in each analysis area relating to the quantity of each type are analysed. The key issues for each type of open space are assessed within sections 4 – 13. Local standards are subsequently set, taking into account the current level of provision compared to the perceived community need.

Accessibility

- 2.50 Accessibility is a key criterion for open space sites. Without good access, the provision of good quality open space would be of limited value. The overall aim of accessibility standards should be to identify:
- how accessible sites are
 - how far people are willing to travel to reach open space
 - areas of the District that are deficient in provision (identified through the application of local standards).
- 2.51 Similar to quantity standards, accessibility standards should be derived from an understanding of community views, particularly with regards to the maximum distance that members of the public are willing to travel.
- 2.52 Distance thresholds (ie the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport) are a very useful planning tool especially when used in association with a Geographic Information System (GIS). PPG17 suggests that open spaces should be accessible by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Quality

- 2.53 The quality and value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. Two examples of this are:
- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Usage is therefore restricted and as a result the value of the site to the public is limited
 - a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have significant wider benefits such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a high value despite qualitative issues.
- 2.54 The overall aim of a quality assessment should be to identify deficiencies in quality and key quality factors that need to be improved within:
- the geographical areas of the District
 - specific types of open space.
- 2.55 The quality standards set as part of the study are intended to provide information on the key features of open space that are important to local residents. Sites are then assessed and given a score for a range of factors including:
- cleanliness and maintenance
 - security and safety
 - vegetation
 - ancillary accommodation.
- 2.56 Each element of quality is rated on a scale of very good (5 points) to poor (1 point) and a total percentage score is then calculated. Where an element of provision (such as toilets) is considered to be not applicable, this will not be taken into account in the calculation of the percentage score.
- 2.57 These scores are then weighted (multiplied either by 4, 3, 2 or 1) to reflect the importance of each factor for each type of open space. These weightings are derived from the findings of the consultation. Factors that are given higher weightings are perceived to be the most important and to have the largest impact on the quality of the site according to local residents. Factors with a higher weighting will therefore influence the total score more than those with lower weightings.
- 2.58 Full details of the linkages between the quality assessments and the site visits undertaken can be found in Appendix G.

2.59 Following the calculation of the total scores achieved during site visits, sites can then be benchmarked against each other. The application of the process for each typology can be found in typology specific Sections 4 – 13.

Step 5 – Drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities

2.60 The application of the local standards enables the identification of deficiencies in terms of accessibility, quality and quantity and also enables analysis of the spatial distribution of unmet need.

2.61 Based on this analysis, strategic options can be devised considering space to be protected, existing provision to be enhanced, opportunities for relocation and proposals for new provision.

2.62 The recommendations contained within the report are based on the findings of the application of the local standards for each typology. An example is provided below. These recommendations do not constitute formal policies, but should guide the production of policies in the LDF and other related strategy documents.

P&G1	Given the low number of sites within the District, all park and garden sites should be afforded protection from development.
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SECTION 3
STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Strategic context

- 3.1 This section reviews the strategic context and provides background on the national / regional and local context relevant to open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- 3.2 All documents reviewed influence the provision of facilities in Wyre Forest and the strategic priorities of the Council. Provision of open space is also a key vehicle for the achievement of many of the priorities outlined.
- 3.3 Local strategic documents of particular relevance to one typology have been reviewed within the individual typology sections.
- 3.4 A full review of national strategic documents is contained within Appendix E.

Regional Policy Documents

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (formerly Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 11) June 2004

- 3.5 The Regional Spatial Strategy guides the preparation of local authority development plans and local transport plans and provides a coherent framework for regional development.
- 3.6 The overall vision is for the West Midlands to be:

‘an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region, which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life for future generations’.
- 3.7 The key outcomes for the region are highlighted as:
 - improved quality of life
 - an advanced, thriving and diverse economy occupying a competitive position
 - successful urban and rural renaissance
 - development of diverse and distinctive cities, towns, sub-regions and communities
 - recognition for its distinctive, high quality natural and built environment
 - an efficient network of integrated sustainable transport facilities and services
 - partnership working for a commonly agreed sustainable future.
- 3.8 Policies contained within the Regional Spatial Strategy of specific relevance to this open space, sport and recreation study include:
 - **Policy QE1** - Environmental improvement is a key component of the Spatial Strategy. Environmental improvement underpins the overall quality of life of all areas and supports wider economic and social objectives

- **Policy QE4** - local authorities and other agencies should ***undertake assessments of local need and audits of provision***, and develop appropriate strategies for greenspace to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality urban greenspace with an emphasis on:
 - i) significantly improving the overall quality of public space, especially in city centres
 - ii) enhancing the setting of local residential neighbourhoods in built up areas
 - iii) increasing the overall stock of urban trees
 - iv) improving accessibility and community safety
 - v) maintaining and enhancing sports, playing fields and recreation grounds.

- **Policy T3** - Development plans and local transport plans should provide greater opportunities for walking and cycling by:
 - i) developing safe, secure, direct, convenient and attractive networks which connect town centres, local facilities, educational premises, public transport interchanges, residential and employment areas
 - ii) giving pedestrians and cyclists priority in residential areas and town centres
 - iii) providing links between smaller settlements and centres and developing greenways and quiet roads
 - v) making the most effective use of canal towpaths
 - vi) expanding 'cycle & ride' and cycle carriage on public transport
 - vii) ensuring that new developments and infrastructure proposals improve walking and cycling access.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands – Phase 2 Revision Draft Submission – Preferred Option

- 3.9 The preferred option for Phase 2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy, which extends up to 2026 was submitted to the Secretary of State during December 2007. In light of the Government's agenda to increase house building across the country, Baroness Andrews (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government) has expressed concern about the levels of housing growth proposed by the Preferred Options. As a result, consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners have been appointed by Government Office for the West Midlands to develop options for further housing growth to be considered at the Examination in Public which is expected to be developed to be held in Spring 2009.
- 3.10 The underlying spatial strategy seeks to focus house building within the conurbation and a number of growth points across the region. The document aims to enable all parts of the Region (not necessarily individual settlements or local authorities) to meet their own needs, in a mutually supportive and sustainable way. The strategy

indicates that 3400 new dwellings will be required within Wyre Forest up to 2026. Approximately 170 new dwellings will therefore be required each year. New development will be phased across the region to ensure that there is a steady increasing supply of housing.

- 3.11 The house building which will take place over the next 15 years will at the very least re-distribute concentrations within and around the District and therefore have a major effect on the demand for open space.
- 3.12 The scale and location of house building across Wyre Forest up to 2026 will have a significant impact on open space, sport and recreation requirements in the District. One of the greatest challenges the Council faces is ensuring that the quality of life for existing and new communities in the area is improved. Fundamental to achieving this is the need to enhance existing infrastructure, including open space, sport and recreation to support the scale of growth proposed.
- 3.13 The implications of population growth on the open space, sport and recreation network in Wyre Forest are highlighted throughout this report.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands – Phase 3 Revision

- 3.14 Phase 3 revisions look at critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and the development of a framework for provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites. The Council should use the findings of this study to influence their involvement in the phase 3 revisions regarding recreation provision.

Sign Up For Sport: A Regional Plan for Sport in the West Midlands 2004-2008, Sport England

- 3.15 Sport England as the national agency driving sports development takes a strategic lead on the provision of sport.
- 3.16 Sign Up For Sport is a plan for sport and physical activity in the region. Its formulation has involved national, regional and local consultations with key stakeholders, agencies and organisations across the private, public and voluntary sectors that fully understand the strategic issues and local needs of the region. It has been facilitated by Sport England under the guidance of the new West Midlands Sports Board.
- 3.17 The aim of the plan is:
- ‘to significantly increase participation in sport within all age and social groups, leading to improvements in health and other social and economic benefits and providing the basis for progression into higher levels of performance for those with talent and the desire to progress.’*

- 3.18 The plan has seven main outcomes:
- increase participation in club and community sport
 - improve levels of sport performance
 - widen access to sport
 - improve the health and well being of people through sport

- create safer and stronger communities through sport
- improve education through PE and sport
- benefit the economy through sport.

3.19 The appropriate provision of facilities for sport and active recreation in Wyre Forest will contribute to the achievement of many of the objectives within the Sport England Regional Framework.

Local strategic documents

3.20 The key principles of local strategic documents in Wyre Forest and their links to this study are summarised in Table 3.1 overleaf. Documents relating specifically to one type of open space are summarised within typology specific Sections 4 – 13.

Table 3.1 – Strategic Context – Implications for this assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
<p>Wyre Forest District Adopted Local Plan 2004 – 2011</p>	<p>The plan sets out detailed land use policies to guide development in the District until 2011. It will be superseded by policies in the LDF.</p> <p>The key aim of policies within the leisure and tourism section is, “<i>to enable the provision of high quality and accessible leisure and tourist facilities</i>”.</p> <p>Policies of specific relevance to this study include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy LR1- proposals for development that will lead to the loss or reduction of parks, public open spaces or other open space areas will not be allowed, except when the equivalent or increased provision is provided. Development that will have an adverse impact on these areas will not be permitted • Policy LR2 – Development proposals must, where appropriate, include provision for amenity space (including LAPs) for the recreation and enjoyment of users. S106 obligations may be sought for contributions to the provision and enhancement of amenity spaces. Development that will have an adverse impact on the provision of amenity space will not be permitted • Policy LR3 – proposals for residential development should include the provision of children’s play space. This should meet the NFPA Six Acre Standard, including LEAPs and NEAPs, as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. on sites providing 75 – 200 child bed spaces, a Local Equipped Area for Play 2. on sites providing 200+ child bed spaces, a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play 	<p>This study will inform the Council in future planning decisions and provide an evidence base that will outline where new facilities should be provided.</p> <p>The study will provide evidence to support the Council’s policies including the protection and enhancement of open space.</p>

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<p>3. if there is nearby play space, off-site improvements may be required under Section 106 obligations</p> <p>4. development that will have an adverse impact on the quality or quantity of play space will not be permitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy LR4 – The Council will safeguard allotment sites shown on the proposals map. Any development that will cause loss of these sites will not be permitted unless similar or increased provision is provided • Policy LR5 – Proposals for the development of Informal Countryside Facilities will be permitted provided that they: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. enable easy and safe access 2. contain adequate provision for future maintenance 3. do not have an adverse impact on the quality of recreation opportunities 4. do not have an adverse impact on the surrounding land uses 5. do not have an adverse effect on wildlife and ecology. • Policy LR6 – The Council will safeguard the areas shown on the proposals map in the Stour Valley north of Kidderminster for future development as a Country Park • Policy LR7 - The Council will safeguard the area shown on the proposals map around Hurcott Pool and Woods for future development as a Local Nature Reserve 	

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy LR9 – Private playing fields, together with sports pitches situated within educational establishments, will be safeguarded to protect their contribution to sports pitch provision in the District and as valuable urban amenity open spaces. Section 106 obligations may be required to secure playing fields as an integral part of larger new developments. Developments that will result in the loss of these playing fields will not be allowed, unless: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the proposal is for minor development required in the connection with the use as playing fields 2. alternative or improved provision of at least equivalent community benefit is made available • Policy LR10 – The Council will safeguard the area shown on the proposals map north-west of Minster Road, Stourport-on-Severn for outdoor sports use. Proposals for outdoor sports facilities will be encouraged within this area • Policy LR14 – Proposals for golf development will only be permitted where: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. there will be no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the landscape 2. there will be no adverse impact on areas of conservation or ecological importance 3. access can be gained from suitable roads without an adverse impact of road safety. 	

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy LR17 – Proposals for major new commercial leisure developments will only be permitted in sustainable locations within Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn town centres Policy GB3 – Within the Green Belt, the use of land for outdoor sport and recreation will normally be allowed unless there is an adverse impact on the use or amenity of neighbouring land and buildings, including residential properties. 	
Local Development Scheme	<p>The scheme sets out a detailed programme of documents that form the Local Development Framework up to 2026.</p> <p>The Council are in the process of preparing the Core Strategy and the Preferred Options are currently being developed.</p>	<p>The findings of this study will feed in to the Preferred Options and inform the Wyre Forest Core Strategy. The key issues arising from this study will also inform the Planning Obligations SPD and the Site Allocations DPD.</p>
Worcestershire Playing Pitch Strategy 2002	<p>The ratio of pitches to adults in Worcestershire currently exceeds the national average at 1:843.</p> <p>Within Wyre Forest there is 105.5 ha of playing pitches, 75% of which are available for community use.</p> <p>Analysis of supply and demand indicates that there is currently a surplus of 30.9 pitches, however there are shortfalls of pitches for junior football (-0.1), junior rugby (-2.6) and hockey (-0.8).</p> <p>The estimated surplus in 2009 for Wyre Forest is 31.4 pitches.</p>	<p>This assessment will consider the overall supply and demand for outdoor sports facilities and will include a local standard of provision.</p> <p>The key findings of the playing pitch strategy will be integrated within this document and the findings of the consultation phase of this study can inform an update of the playing pitch strategy.</p> <p>This assessment of outdoor sports facilities will aid in the identification of areas of shortfall and provide the</p>

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
		evidence base for the provision of new facilities and the enhancement of existing sites.
Wyre Forest Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2014	<p>The vision of the strategy is, <i>“Making a Real Difference: Wyre Forest is a vibrant District where all our communities enjoy a high quality of life, and people value themselves and one another. Residents of all ages receive efficient services and play an interactive part in the success and well-being of the District. Our distinctive and beautiful rural landscape is preserved; our three uniquely identifiable riverside towns and the outlying villages thrive, socially and economically. Wyre Forest District is a safe, prosperous and healthy place to live, work and play”</i>.</p> <p>The vision focuses upon six key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communities that are safe and feel safe: Wyre Forest District is an even safer place to live, work, visit and do business. Crime and disorder are low, and our residents feel safe • a better environment for today and tomorrow: the built and natural environment of the Wyre Forest District provides an accessible, attractive, enjoyable, healthy and wildlife-rich place to be, now and in the future. Biodiversity and heritage assets are protected and enhanced. Our varied natural habitats and diverse landscapes are thriving, offering a range of outdoor interests, contributing to local educational opportunities and sustainable tourism • economic success that is shared by all: Wyre Forest District has a thriving and sustainable urban and rural economy, with the infrastructure and a skilled population in place to support it. It 	<p>Provision of open space will be critical in delivering several of the key themes of the community strategy, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the health benefits of participating in a range of sport and recreational activities can be achieved through the use of open space • effective provision of open space will enhance the quality of the natural environment. This study will ensure that well valued sites are protected from development • provision of opportunities to participate in sport and recreation activities can lead to a reduction in crime. Indirect participation can challenge and provide a purpose for young people • the increased provision of open

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<p>offers its businesses and investors attractive, accessible and high quality employment locations, particularly around Kidderminster and the Stourport Road Employment Corridor. Kidderminster benefits from sustainable brownfield regeneration which emphasises its unique carpet and industrial heritage. The riverside towns of Stourport and Bewdley offer many opportunities to draw in visitors, and Kidderminster supports a vibrant tourist economy, providing a choice of quality commercial leisure facilities, restaurants and cultural opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving health and wellbeing: by working in partnership with local people and organisations, the physical and mental health and wellbeing of our communities is promoted, sustained and improved • meeting the needs of children and young people: all children and young people in Wyre Forest District are healthy, safe, enjoy life and achieve success, make a positive contribution and benefit from economic wellbeing • stronger communities: all our communities, rural and urban, experience high quality of life. Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley and the larger outlying villages serve their communities' needs with quality leisure, learning, healthcare and shopping facilities and appropriate services and support are available to all those who need them. Everyone has the opportunity to have fun, learn and develop through culture and recreation • our neighbourhoods are regenerated and residents are community spirited and actively engaged in shaping services. Kidderminster town centre is attractive and accessible, inspiring community pride. The unique public realm of Stourport is 	<p>space in the Wyre Forest District can increase participation in physical activity. Learning and skills can also be developed through the use of various types of open space.</p>

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<p>enhanced through the restoration of the canal basins and the regeneration of Bridge Street, and Bewdley remains a thriving market town whose historic character is preserved and its flourishing riverside environment enhanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everyone is able to sustain a good quality lifestyle. The District’s local population has a choice of housing which caters for a variety of needs. Attractive, affordable housing is accessible in the three towns and larger rural settlements. The entire District is well served by a sustainable transport network, so local residents benefit from a variety of transport choices and no longer rely on the private motor car • Wyre Forest District has a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector, which provides first class services and is supported by a large number of volunteers. 	
<p>Worcestershire Play Strategy 2007 – 2010</p>	<p>The strategy identifies the importance of play and highlights the elements needed to ensure comprehensive play opportunities are provided for children and young people living in Worcestershire.</p> <p>The values underpinning the strategy, of relevance to this study, are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to contribute to the five outcomes for children and young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic well being 2. to recognise the importance of play for children and their families both in its own right and in relation to wider agendas such as health, social inclusion and community safety 	<p>This assessment will investigate local community need in terms of provision for children and young people and will provide information relating to current views and aspirations for children’s play facilities.</p> <p>The findings will be considered in the context of the play strategy. Although this study considers only the provision of equipped play areas, it will be important this is evaluated in the wider context of</p>

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Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. to be prepared to offer challenge, whilst managing risk 4. to acknowledge that every child needs and has the right to play and that play is an essential part of growing up 5. to provide facilities and services that meet all children’s needs, encouraging social inclusion and embracing people with disabilities 6. to ensure that children and young people have safe and easy access to a range of play opportunities within a reasonable distance of their homes 7. to extend the choice and control that children have over play opportunities. To recognise a child’s need to push boundaries, to be independent and have self esteem 8. to use play positively to foster respect for and amongst children and young people 9. to strive to achieve the best quality possible for the greatest number of people. <p>The four outcomes of the strategy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. children and young people to have increased opportunity to access and enjoy a variety of play 2. increased inclusive play opportunities 3. a greater understanding of the importance of play 4. children and young people are involved in the design and delivery of play. 	<p>play opportunities.</p> <p>Site visits will provide an indication of the quality of existing facilities and identify potential areas for improvement.</p> <p>The completion of the Children and Young People Survey will generate a greater understanding and awareness of the importance of play and will help to develop ownership.</p>

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Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
Wyre Forest Community Safety Strategy 2005 - 2008	<p>The community safety strategy has four strategic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-social behaviour – to reduce recorded incidents of anti-social behaviour • drugs and alcohol – to reduce problematic drug and alcohol use and the resulting effect on individuals, families and communities within the Wyre Forest District • public perception of crime – to increase public reassurance in those wards and town centres where crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour is most prevalent • violent crime – to reduce the number of recorded incidents of violent crime by 18% by March 2008. 	<p>Appropriate provision of open space can reduce drug and alcohol use by keeping young people occupied and appealing to their interests.</p> <p>The provision and enhancement of open space in areas where crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour is prevalent can reassure the public that a possible solution is being provided.</p>
Best Value Performance Plan 2007	<p>The best value performance plan incorporates the aims of the community strategy and corporate plan.</p> <p>The priority for 2007/2008 of relevance to this study is crime reduction.</p> <p>The improvement plan for 2007/2008 focuses on environment and economic regeneration. The Council achieved 65% of its Best Value Performance Indicators and 70% of its Local Performance Indicators.</p>	<p>Effective provision of open space will assist the Council in the achievement of several key priority objectives and performance indicators.</p>
Wyre Forest District SPD Planning Obligations 2007	<p>The objective of the document is to ensure sustainable development and reduce pressure on existing infrastructure. Chapter 5 covers open space, sport and recreation facilities and recognises their importance to quality of life in the District.</p> <p>The SPD outlines current Council policy, suggesting that:</p>	<p>This study will provide a key evidence base for decision making in the planning obligations process and will encourage the collection of contributions towards the provision of open space from new</p>

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is important to protect existing open space and play provision and upgrade facilities where appropriate • the council uses the NPFA standards for the provision of outdoor playing space (2.4 ha per 1000 people) • the Council requires maintenance payments covering a 20 year period • contributions towards improving the quality of the District's open space are required from residential developments of 5+ dwellings • if a development scheme includes affordable housing, open space contributions will be reduced by 50% • it is considered good practice to seek geological and biodiversity conservation. <p>It is stated that Section 106 agreements will be sought for biodiversity and geodiversity enhancement in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major planning applications • residential developments of 10+ dwellings • buildings whose floor space is 1000 sq ft • site areas of 1.0 ha + • any other application which is in close proximity or impacts on such sites. 	<p>developments.</p> <p>The study will consider the national standards currently used by Wyre Forest and set local standards which are reflective of current need.</p>
Wyre Forest Cycle Strategy	The Wyre Forest Cycle strategy aims to promote cycling as a sustainable form of transport and provides a framework for this to be achieved.	This study will provide information on existing linkages and encourage the use of sustainable transport through the production of local

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<p>The strategy attempts to increase the modal split of journeys undertaken by bicycle.</p> <p>The objectives of the strategy are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. create safer cycle routes 2. ensure new developments meet cyclists needs 3. improve the provision of facilities for cyclists at transport interchanges and to promote links between cycling and public transport 4. support the creation of Safer Routes to Schools 5. implement Sustrans Route 45 and associated regional routes within the District 6. increase cycle parking provision within Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley 7. promote cycle routes for leisure and sustainable tourism purposes 8. promote environmental and health benefits of cycling 9. provide quality and useable cycle infrastructure through regular consultation with local cyclists 10. work in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, the Highways Agency, Wyre Forest Cycle Forum and local residents to meet or exceed government targets of trebling cycling for 2000 – 2010. 	<p>accessibility standards.</p>

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
<p>Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework – Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper</p>	<p>The key findings of the consultation for the Issues and Options paper included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher densities can result in poorer and smaller gardens; this increases the demand for allotments • there is an under provision of swimming facilities within the District • the River should be made more of a feature in Kidderminster • the canals should be used to attract visitors., the winding Brindley canals in this area are some of the best waterways in the Country – but boaters don’t want to come to Kidderminster for the bad name that the town has for abusing boat traffic • increase maintenance, and presence of wardens around for play and for safety. Increase provision of public toilets. More modern public toilets available and maintained at high quality • Bewdley needs a swimming pool for locals and visitors alike • open spaces should be preserved • cycle ways and walkways protected by CCTV can help to provide access to green spaces • increase entertainment in parks. school bands could perform, open air theatre, local radio broadcasts in local open spaces. The Council should sponsor more festivities like the local ‘party in the park’ • improve access to greenspace by providing footways and cycleways, footpaths and cycle paths including bridges, e.g. a footbridge over canal from Springfield Park to the tow path can help to improve access to green spaces in the urban areas of the District 	<p>These findings will be integrated within the local needs assessment for this study and will guide the recommended local standards.</p>

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve wildlife corridors, especially in town centres it is vital to maintain or even expand wildlife corridors into town centres • provide a link from the old town to new development (Weavers Wharf) • reserve areas vulnerable to flooding areas for social 'greenspace' use • improve access and signage. 	
Public Realm Design Guide for Stourport-on-Severn 2006	<p>The document provides design guidance for the implementation of public realm improvements within key areas of the towns.</p> <p>The guide sets out design codes for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. street furniture 2. surfacing 3. lighting 4. soft lighting <p>The design codes must be adhered to when providing new facilities.</p>	This study will outline priorities for areas of new provision in the District. Any new facilities should meet the set design guidelines.
Wyre Forest District Council, Park Lane Kidderminster Public Realm Framework Final Report – June 2006	<p>The report outlines the Council's plan to reduce the barriers around the Park Lane area between the town centre and Park Street residential area.</p> <p>The vision of the strategy is to create a coherent street of residential character and draw together the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. town centre 2. canal square 	This study will take into account the key principles of this framework and ensure that the priorities of the strategy are reflected within this PPG17 needs assessment and analysis.

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<p>3. canal</p> <p>4. Timber Yard housing area</p> <p>5. New Park Lane Neighbourhood Park.</p> <p>The plan aims to create an attractive neighbourhood of strong visual character and amenity that has clear links to the town centre.</p> <p>The wooded greenspace to the west of Park Lane is identified as the site for the new town park.</p> <p>The three main aims of the strategy are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improve the pedestrian environment 2. make the area more visually attractive 3. improve access. 	
<p>Design Quality – Supplementary Planning Guidance 2004</p>	<p>The document provides guidance on securing high quality design in the Wyre Forest District. A set of rules are specified for the design of new developments.</p> <p>The three main themes of the document are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. inclusive design and accessibility 2. sustainable design 3. safer by design. 	<p>All new open spaces provided should adhere to the guidelines set out within this document.</p>
<p>North Midlands Facility Plan 2005/08</p>	<p>The plan identifies the overall facility investment within the North Midlands Rugby Football Union area.</p>	

SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Document reviewed	Summary	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	<i>The purpose of the plan is, “to ensure, where possible, a clear local infrastructure for rugby union which allows the game to be played, where playing includes training, coaching, officiating and competitive play, on a regular basis by any person who wishes to take part”.</i>	

Summary and conclusions

- 3.21 The provision of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities contributes to the achievement of wider governmental objectives such as social and community cohesion, urban renaissance and promoting a healthy and enjoyable life. Any development of open spaces (i.e. provision of either new or enhancement of existing spaces) should take into account bio-diversity and nature conservation opportunities and develop an increasing environmental awareness, as well as facilitating the increase needed in participation in sport and active recreation.
- 3.22 Many organisations are willing to work in partnership together to manage and develop existing open spaces and share similar aims and objectives e.g. protecting, enhancing and maximising usage and nature conservation value of open spaces. The importance of enhancing biodiversity across the region as well as maintaining and improving the green network is a key feature of many regional strategies.
- 3.23 Points emerging from the strategic review that are integral to the development of this open space, sport and recreation assessment in Wyre Forest include:
- improvements and continuing enhancement of the local environment are an important feature of the region, providing a tool to achieve many wide-ranging issues impacting on health levels as well as increasing the well-being of residents, workers and visitors
 - housing developments and geographical allocations driven by national planning policies, and employment land allocations will have a direct impact on open space, sport and recreation provision and sustainability. Population growth will place increasing demands on existing open spaces as well as generating higher needs for recreational open space provision.
- 3.24 In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the local importance of maintaining and improving open space sites within Wyre Forest. This local needs study and resulting strategy will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.

SECTION 4
PARKS AND GARDENS

Parks and gardens

Introduction and definition

- 4.1 This type of open space (as defined by PPG17) includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events. Only sites falling within settlement boundaries are included.
- 4.2 Parks often contain a variety of facilities and amenities, including some that fall within different classifications of open space, eg children's play facilities, sport pitches and wildlife areas. For classification purposes, the different open spaces within parks have been separated according to the PPG17 typology under which they most appropriately fall. Large green areas, footpaths, lakes and less dense woodland will provide the park area (total hectares) and the other facilities will be calculated separately under their own classification. This ensures that open space sites are not counted twice within the PPG17 assessment.
- 4.3 Parks provide a sense of place for the local community and help to address social inclusion issues within wider society. According to the recently published Park Life Report (June 2007), 83% of those questioned feel that parks are a focal point of community life. Parks also provide an important recreational resource, and many residents enjoy visiting parks to walk or to undertake more physical exercise. The Active People (Sport England 2007) survey reveals that walking is the most popular recreational activity for people in England. Over 8 million adults aged 16 and over completed a recreational walk for at least 30 minutes in the last four weeks. Provision of parks therefore represents a key opportunity to increase levels of physical activity across the local population.
- 4.4 In addition to the recreational opportunities provided by parks, these large green spaces provide structural and landscaping benefits to the surrounding local area. They also frequently offer ecological benefits, particularly in more urban areas. The provision of parks to break up urban landscapes is becoming increasingly important, particularly in light of growing fears regarding climate change. Green space can contribute to reducing the impact of climate change.
- 4.5 Within Wyre Forest there are a number of key strategic parks located within each of the main towns (Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley). Brinton Park, located in Kidderminster, is the largest park in the District and offers a wide range of facilities for residents. The park has recently been regenerated and attracts a large number of visitors to the District. Riverside Park in Stourport offers a wide range of recreational opportunities to residents and visitors alike and is viewed as an excellent facility for children and young people. Due to its location the site also attracts a large number of visitors to the area, particularly in the summer months. Jubilee Gardens, located in Bewdley, is the only park in the District to have Green Flag status. The park is widely recognised for its aesthetic benefits and although there is not a wide range of facilities provided, the park attracts residents and visitors from all areas of the District. Broadwaters Park has received a Green Pennant Award consecutively from 2005 to 2007.
- 4.6 For the purpose of this study, parks and gardens have been divided into two hierarchies: town parks and local parks. It is important to consider each hierarchy separately and in context with one another. Both types of parks will be discussed later in this section.

Figure 4.1 – Brinton Park



Strategic context

4.7 The key issues for parks and gardens arising from a review of strategic documents include:

- Policy LR1 of the **Wyre Forest District Adopted Local Plan** states that proposals for development that will lead to the loss or reduction of parks, public open spaces or other open space areas will not be allowed, except when the equivalent or increased provision is provided. Development that will have an adverse impact on these areas will not be permitted
- the **Annual Monitoring Report 2006** highlights that Broadwaters Park has received a green pennant for the second year running – this indicates that a consistently high quality is maintained at this site.

Consultation – Assessing Local Needs

4.8 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues:

- residents emphasised the value of town parks, identifying them as a vital facility for children. This was reinforced through the commendation of the improvements made to a number of town parks in the District
- the importance of local parks was also recognised, with many residents reinforcing the value of local parks that are accessible on foot from their homes. These sites were perceived to be a key community asset
- 55% of children identified parks as their favourite open space. Parks were also the second most popular open space for young people, emphasising the importance of this typology to children and young people. It must be noted that in some instances, children and young people refer to play provision as parks, and there is therefore a significant cross over between the two different types of open space
- parks were seen as a focal point of the community, providing many benefits to residents and visitors alike. Large town parks, such as Brinton Park and Riverside Park, offering a wide range of facilities, were viewed as essential to the character of the District. The wider benefits offered by local facilities were also recognised.

SECTION 4 - PARKS AND GARDENS

PG1	<p>Maximise the role that parks can play in striving to increase participation in health and physical activity across the District by effectively promoting these opportunities.</p> <p>Consider providing activities and alternative means of exercise such as organised health walks and trim trails to maximise usage.</p>
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Quantity of provision

4.9 The quantity of parks and gardens across Wyre Forest is summarised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1 – Provision of town parks across Wyre Forest

Analysis areas	Current provision	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	LDF population (2026)	Provision per 1000 population (2026)
Bewdley	0.88	1	-	0.88	9,697	0.09
Stourport	16.89	2	6	10.89	20,811	0.81
Kidderminster East	2.76	1	-	2.76	30,827	0.09
Kidderminster West	11.6	1	-	11.76	27,419	0.42
Rural East	0.00	0	-	-	10,772	0.00
Rural West	0.00	0	-	-	2,874	0.00
Overall	32.13	5	0.88	11.76	102,400	0.31

4.10 The key issues emerging from Table 4.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of town parks across the District include:

- respondents to the household survey expressed an overall satisfaction with the provision of town parks. 66% of residents felt that the quantity of provision was about right and only 15% not enough – this indicates that overall, the provision of town parks is sufficient to meet the needs of residents
- this perception was reflected across the individual analysis areas, where the significant majority of respondents in each area indicated provision was about right. However, in the rural area, 21% of residents had no opinion regarding the provision of town parks. This lack of interest regarding the provision of town parks could be due to the location of town parks in urban areas of the District which means that residents in the more rural areas are required to travel to access these facilities

SECTION 4 - PARKS AND GARDENS

- the greatest level of provision is located in the Stourport analysis area (16.89 ha) and this is supported by high levels of satisfaction, with 71% of residents in this area indicating provision is sufficient.

Table 4.2 – Provision of local parks across Wyre Forest

Analysis areas	Current provision	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	LDF population (2026)	Provision per 1000 population (2026)
Bewdley	0.99	2	0.10	0.89	9,697	0.10
Stourport	0.25	2	0.12	0.13	20,811	0.01
Kidderminster East	22.83	4	1.80	16.95	30,827	0.74
Kidderminster West	0.00	0	-	-	27,419	0.00
Rural East	0.00	0	-	-	10,772	0.00
Rural West	0.00	0	-	-	2,874	0.00
Overall	24.07	8	0.10	16.95	102,400	0.24

4.11 The key issues emerging from Table 4.2 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of local parks across the District include:

- the majority of respondents to the household survey perceived the provision of local parks to be about right (54%). However, 22% of residents also felt there was not enough provision – while this is a slightly higher level of dissatisfaction than with the provision of town parks, it suggests that overall, the quantity of provision is about right
- within the individual settlement areas a similar perception was portrayed, with over 46% of respondents in each area stating provision was about right
- surprisingly the highest level of satisfaction (71%) was located in the Kidderminster West analysis area, where there is currently no provision of local parks. It is worth noting that residents in this area were satisfied with the provision of town parks, therefore there may have been some crossover between the two typologies leading to a high satisfaction with the provision of parks generally
- consistent with the findings for town parks, the lowest level of satisfaction is found in the rural areas of the District. This corresponds with the actual levels of provision, which is the lowest of all areas in Wyre Forest.

Setting provision standards – quantity

- 4.12 The recommended local quantity standards for town parks and local parks have been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix F.
- 4.13 In line with consultation, the standards are set at the existing level of provision, reflecting the overall satisfaction with the quantity of parks.

Quantity standard – town parks (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.33 ha per 1000 population	0.33 ha per 1000 population
Justification	
<p>The value of town parks to local residents was reinforced throughout consultation. The majority of respondents to the household survey regard the provision of parks to be sufficient (66%) and this perception is reflected within all areas of the District.</p> <p>Findings from local consultation place a greater emphasis on improving the quality, rather than quantity of parks. Therefore, the local standard has been set at the existing level of provision, putting an emphasis on the qualitative improvements of this typology and the protection of existing provision. This standard will also enable the identification of any locational deficiencies and combined with the application of the accessibility standard, will ensure that residents have access to a town park within the recommended distance of their homes.</p>	

Quantity standard – local parks (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.24 ha per 1000 population	0.24 ha per 1000 population
Justification	
<p>Similar to the findings for town parks, the general perception gathered from consultation is that the provision of local parks is sufficient. The importance of the provision of local parks in close proximity to communities was widely recognised by residents in Wyre Forest.</p> <p>Throughout consultation there was a focus on the quality of parks with many quality issues raised by residents. A local standard set at the existing level of provision will protect the existing local parks as a valued local resource to the community and allow for qualitative enhancements to local parks across the District. A challenging accessibility standard has been set and combined with the application of the quantity standard, any locational deficiencies will be identified.</p>	

Current provision - quality

- 4.14 The quality of existing town parks and local parks in the District was assessed through site visits and is set out in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.
- 4.15 The quality scores are weighted according to the findings of the local consultation (as discussed in Section 2). Those elements that were highlighted through consultation as being a particularly important determinant of the quality of a park have been weighted higher. This ensures that they have a greater influence on the overall quality score that each site achieves. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix G.
- 4.16 The Green Flag Award is a national standard for parks and greenspace. Jubilee Gardens achieved this Green Flag status in 2007, and Broadwaters has been awarded the Green Pennant three times, from 2005 to 2007. Jubilee Gardens has also received Green Flag accreditation for 2008/09 and Broadwaters Park has been awarded a Green Pennant for 2008/09.

Table 4.3 – Quality of town parks across Wyre Forest

Analysis area	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bewdley	1	88	-	-	Jubilee Gardens – ID 309
Stourport	2	56 – 60	58	Stourport Memorial Park – ID 91	Riverside Park – ID 104
Kidderminster East	1	60	-	-	Broadwaters Park – ID 148
Kidderminster West	1	66	-	-	Brinton Park – ID 191
Rural East	0	-	-	-	-
Rural West	0	-	-	-	-
Overall	5	56 – 88	68	Stourport Memorial Park – ID 91	Jubilee Gardens – ID 309

4.17 The key issues emerging from Table 4.3 and the consultation relating to the quality of town parks are:

- respondents to the household survey demonstrated a reasonable level of satisfaction regarding the quality of town parks. 57% of respondents rated the quality of town parks as good and 40% average
- across the individual analysis areas similar results are portrayed and the highest satisfaction is found in the Kidderminster West analysis area, where 65% of residents feel the quality of town parks is good. No respondents rated the quality of town parks as poor, which is reflective of the overall high perception of the quality of provision in the District
- the average quality score of town parks in the District is 68% and site scores vary from 55% to 88%, with the highest scoring site being Jubilee Gardens in Bewdley. This indicates that there is some variation within the overall quality despite high public satisfaction across the District.

Table 4.4 – Quality of local parks across Wyre Forest

Analysis area	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bewdley	2	60 - 66	63	Garden of Rest – ID 568	Northwood Lane – ID 548
Stourport	2	56 – 62	59	Stourport War Memorial Garden – ID 136	Villeneuve-Le-Roi Gardens – ID 178
Kidderminster East	4	52 – 60	56	St George’s Park – ID 109	Borrington Park – ID 10
Kidderminster West	0	-	-	-	-
Rural East	0	-	-	-	-
Rural West	0	-	-	-	-
Overall	8	52 – 66	59	St George’s Park – ID 109	Northwood Lane – ID 548

4.18 The key issues emerging from Table 4.4 and the consultation relating to the quality of local parks are:

- similar to responses for town parks, findings from the household survey reveal a general satisfaction regarding the quality of local parks. 55% of residents feel the quality of this open space is good and 39% average. Like town parks, very few residents perceive the quality to be poor, reinforced by the positive perceptions expressed at drop in sessions
- responses within the individual analysis areas are consistent with the overall findings. However, a significantly higher level of satisfaction is highlighted in the Kidderminster West analysis area, where 81% of residents rate the quality of local parks as good. This is influenced by the presence of Brinton Park, which although is classified as a town park, fulfils the functions of a local park for residents in this area
- the quality scores within each individual area are consistent, suggesting an even distribution of quality across the District
- the average quality score of all local parks across the District is 59%. This is marginally below that achieved for town parks, suggesting that the overall quality of the local facilities is lower.

Setting provision standards – quality

- 4.19 The recommended local quality standard for town parks and local parks is summarised below. Full justifications and consultation relating to the quality of provision for the local standard is provided within Appendix G.
- 4.20 The aspirations are derived directly from the findings of local consultations.

Quality standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – TOWN PARKS		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
Essential	Desirable	
Clean/litter free	Flowers and trees	
Toilets	Facilities for the young	
Well kept grass	Seating	
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to town parks, the relative importance of the key components is shown below. These scores have been used to weight the site assessments.		
Component of quality	Proportion of possible total responses received	Weighting
Security and safety	16%	1
Cleanliness and maintenance	46%	4
Vegetation	23%	3
Ancillary accommodation	20%	2

Quality standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – LOCAL PARKS		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
Essential	Desirable	
Clean/litter free	Seating	
Flowers and trees	Water features	
Well kept grass	Litter bins	
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to local parks, the relative importance of the key components is shown below. These scores have been used to weight the site assessments.		
Component of quality	Proportion of possible total responses received	Weighting
Security and safety	11%	1
Cleanliness and maintenance	45%	4
Vegetation	35%	3
Ancillary accommodation	17%	2

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 4.21 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing an opportunity for people to use the site. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.
- 4.22 Site specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the site visits, where information and signage, transport and general access issues were assessed.
- 4.23 Consultation and analysis has shown that the key issues with regards accessibility are:
- there is a split in opinion regarding the most appropriate mode of travel to reach town parks. 48% of users currently drive while 46% walk. The majority of respondents to the household survey would expect to walk to a town park (55%), however 38% would prefer to drive – this is influenced by residents in the rural area, who expect to travel further to reach parks

SECTION 4 - PARKS AND GARDENS

- the findings from the IT young people survey indicate that of those 55% of children who identify parks as their favourite open space, 43% walk and 33% cycle – this reinforces the perception that these sites should be available locally
- respondents felt that there is a requirement for not only large, centrally located parks and gardens but also smaller facilities, accessible on foot to local communities
- site assessments reveal that access to town parks and local parks is average. Information and signage were the main areas identified for improvement.

PG2	Consider the location of public transport links when identifying appropriate sites for the future provision of parks and gardens across Wyre Forest. Additionally, attempts should be made to improve access to public parks, particularly through improvements to the information and signage.
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- 4.24 The recommended local accessibility standard for town parks and local parks is summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H. The standard reflects the difference in aspiration between residents in the urban and rural areas.

Accessibility standard – town parks (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
15 MINUTE WALK TIME (URBAN) 20 MINUTE DRIVE TIME (RURAL)
Justification
<p>There is an emphasis in favour of walking to town parks both in terms of current travel patterns and expectations. The standard for urban areas is therefore set at 15 minutes (720 metres) walking to local parks and gardens, based on the 75% threshold level District wide (as advocated in the PPG17 companion guide). This encompasses all areas and is representative of the viewpoint of residents within each analysis area (due to the number of responses this information can be said to be statistically robust).</p> <p>Given that parks tend to be larger more strategic facilities offering a range of activities it would not be realistic to expect this type of facility within a shorter walking time and also within each village, therefore, a drive time of 20 minutes has been set for the rural areas, in light of the findings from the household survey. This is supported by the consultation undertaken in the rural area, where it can be seen that residents expect to travel by car, with the 75% level being 20 minutes.</p> <p>Setting separate accessibility standards is reflective of the fact that further provision should be made within the urban areas that are currently outside of the proposed accessibility catchment due to the density of population in these areas. This is not to suggest that the Council should not be pursuing improvements to the accessibility for rural residents (such as public transport networks), but rather offers an approach that facilitates the usage of these areas and increases their value locally.</p> <p>Setting a standard at this level will enable the Council to strike a balance between quantitative improvements in accessibility deficient areas and also on improving the quality of existing sites.</p>

*a straight-line distance of 720m has been used rather than the pedestrian distance of 1200m. This is based on average walking distances reduced by a factor of 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in straight lines. The 40% factoring is based on the approach set out in the NPFA Six Acre Standard.

Accessibility standard – local parks (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
10 MINUTE WALK TIME (URBAN) 15 MINUTE DRIVE TIME (RURAL)
Justification
<p>Consultation highlights a clear emphasis in favour of walking to local parks. Usage patterns indicate 77% of current users walk to local parks and 68% of respondents to the household survey expect to walk to this typology. The importance of local parks being in close proximity to communities and accessible on foot was emphasised at drop in sessions. Therefore it is recommended that a walk time be set for the urban areas of the District. Responses from residents in rural areas highlighted an acceptance of the need to travel by car to access a local park, with 77% of respondents stating they expect to travel by car. Based on this a drive time has be set for the rural areas of Wyre Forest.</p> <p>A local standard of a 10 minute walk time (480m) is recommended based upon the 75% threshold level (recommended by the PPG17 Companion Guide). The recommended standard for the rural area is a 15 minute drive time. This has been set following the modal response of 15 minutes. A drive time of 15 minutes has been set due to the importance of local parks being in close proximity to communities. The local standard set for the rural areas is not challenging and therefore the Council should consider the development of pocket parks in these areas to increase provision in the rural areas and combine with natural and semi natural open space.</p>

*a straight-line distance of 480m has been used rather than the pedestrian distance of 800m. This is based on average walking distances reduced by a factor of 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in straight lines. The 40% factoring is based on the approach set out in the NPFA Six Acre Standard.

Applying provision standards

- 4.25 The application of the recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of parks and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 4.26 The application of the local quantity standard for each area is seen in Tables 4.5 and 4.6: The interrelationship between town and local parks will be discussed later in this section.

Table 4.5 – Application of quantity standard - town parks

Analysis areas	Current balanced against local standard (0.33 hectares per 1000 population)	Future balanced against local standard (0.33 hectares per 1000 population)
Bewdley	-2.15	-2.32
Stourport	10.38	10.02
Kidderminster East	-6.88	-7.41
Kidderminster West	3.03	2.55
Rural East	-3.37	-3.55
Rural West	-0.89	-0.95
Overall	0.13	-1.66

Green = above the standard, Red = below the standard.

4.27 As can be seen in Table 4.5:

- overall, the current provision of town parks is sufficient to meet the local standard, however based on the application of the quantity standard a small deficiency in the provision of town parks (-1.66 ha) is expected by 2026
- there will be deficiencies in most areas of the District by 2026, with the exception of the Stourport and Kidderminster West analysis areas
- the greatest under supply of town parks is located in the Kidderminster East analysis area (-7.41 ha).

4.28 In light of the wide catchment of town parks, locational quantitative deficiencies should be treated as being of limited significance unless the deficiency is sufficiently large to justify the development of a new park. It is also important to consider the interrelationship between town and local parks.

Table 4.6 – Application of quantity standard - local parks

Analysis areas	Current balanced against local standard (0.24 hectares per 1000 population)	Future balanced against local standard (0.24 hectares per 1000 population)
Bewdley	-1.21	-1.34
Stourport	-4.48	-4.74
Kidderminster East	15.82	15.43
Kidderminster West	-6.23	-6.58
Rural East	-2.45	-2.59
Rural West	-0.65	-0.69
Overall	0.79	-0.51

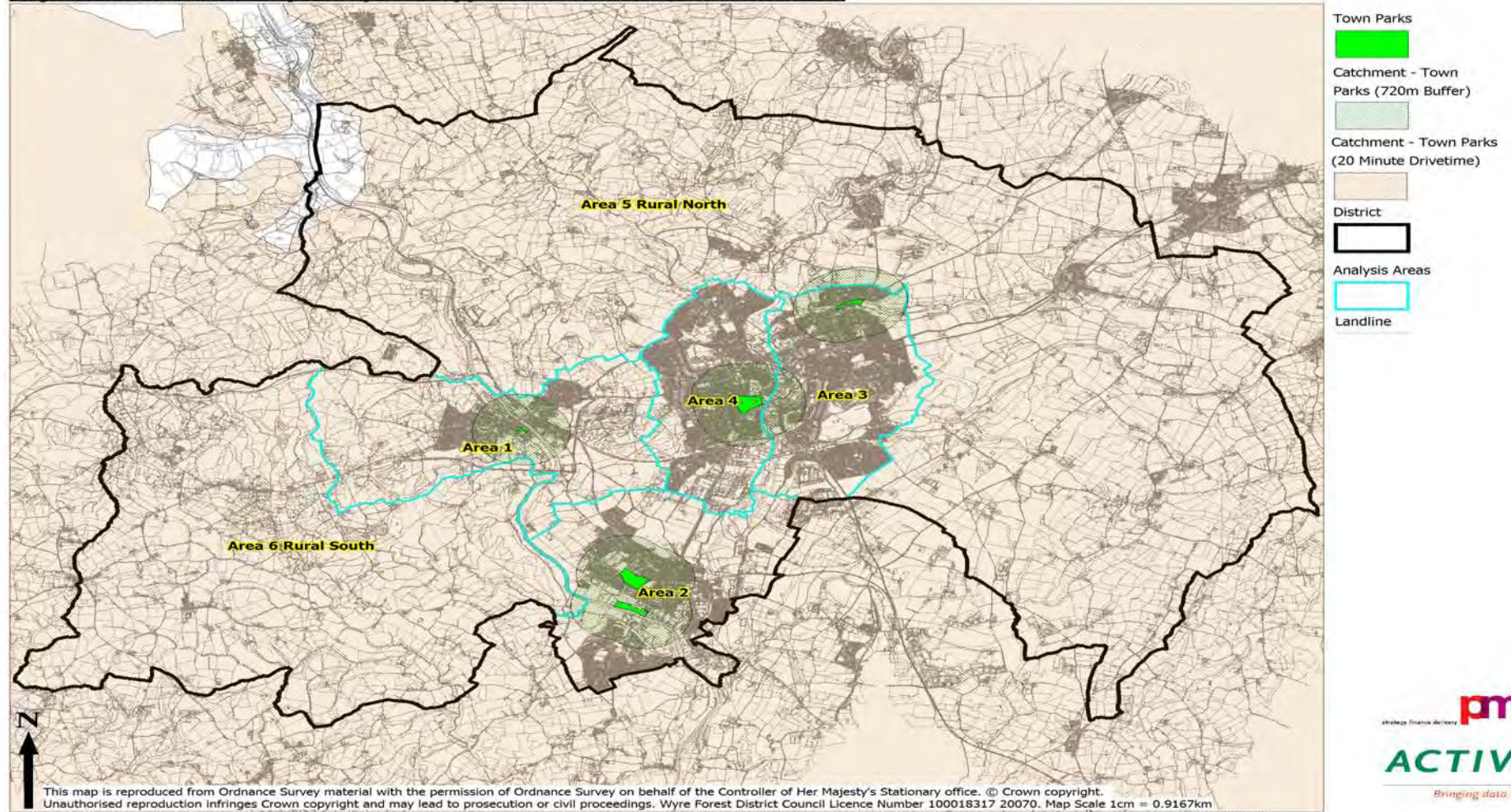
4.29 Table 4.6 illustrates that:

- currently there is sufficient provision of local parks to meet demand, however there will be shortfalls in the provision of local parks within all areas of the District, with the exception of Kidderminster East analysis area, by 2026. This illustrates the importance of considering the provision of town parks in the context of local parks, as the Kidderminster East analysis area contained the greatest shortfall of town parks
- the greatest shortfall in provision of local parks will be located in the Kidderminster West analysis area, where there will be a future shortfall of – 6.58 hectares. However, in contrast, provision of town parks in this area was slightly above the minimum standard.

4.30 The application of the local accessibility standards for town parks and local parks is set out overleaf in Maps 4.1 – 4.4. Consideration is given to the distribution of both town and local parks, as well as to the interrelationship between parks and amenity green spaces (Map 4.7).

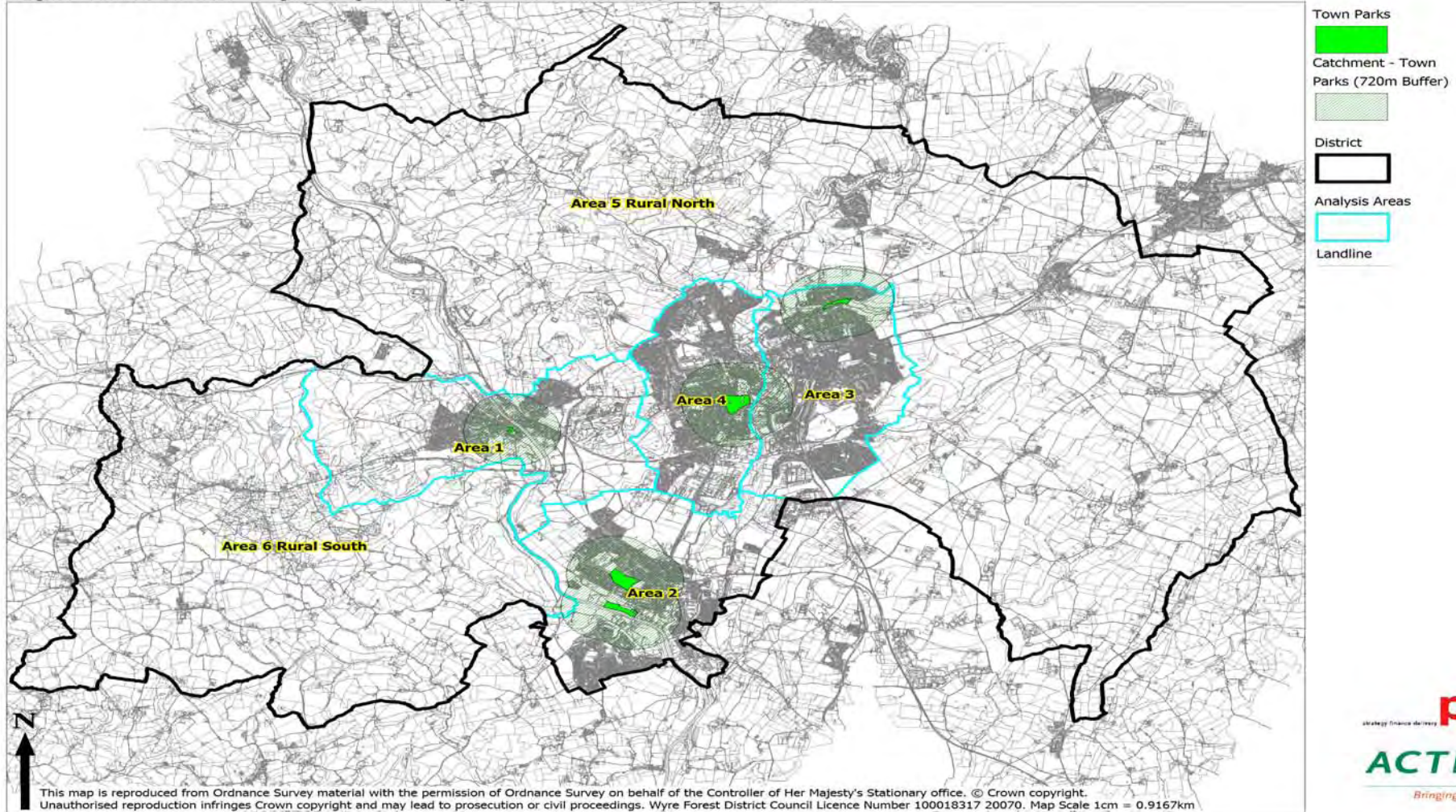
Map 4.1 - Provision of town parks in Wyre Forest (urban and rural standards)

Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Town Parks



Map 4.2 - Provision of town parks in Wyre Forest (urban standard)

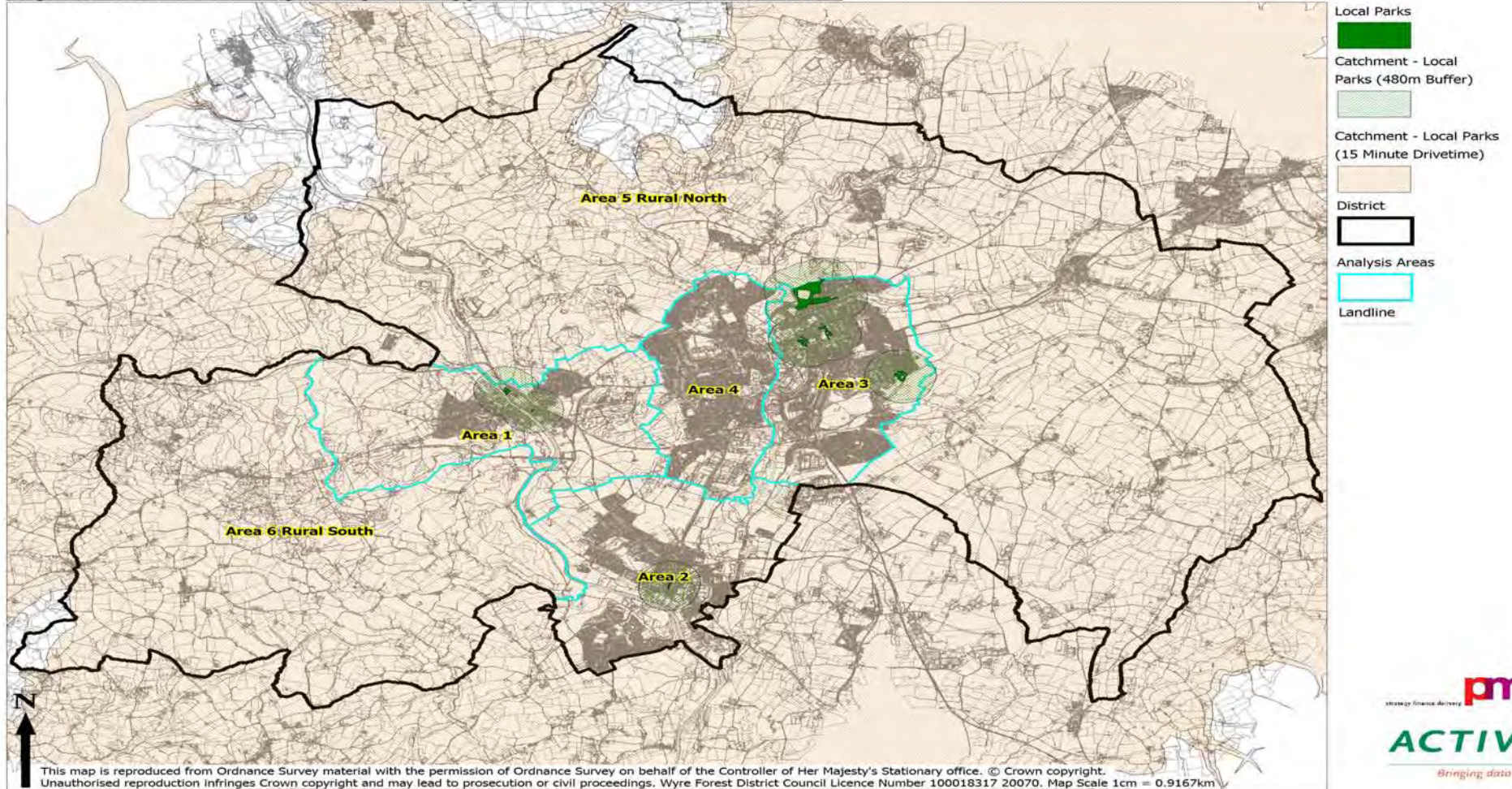
Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Town Parks



SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 4.3 - Provision of local parks in Wyre Forest (urban and rural standards)

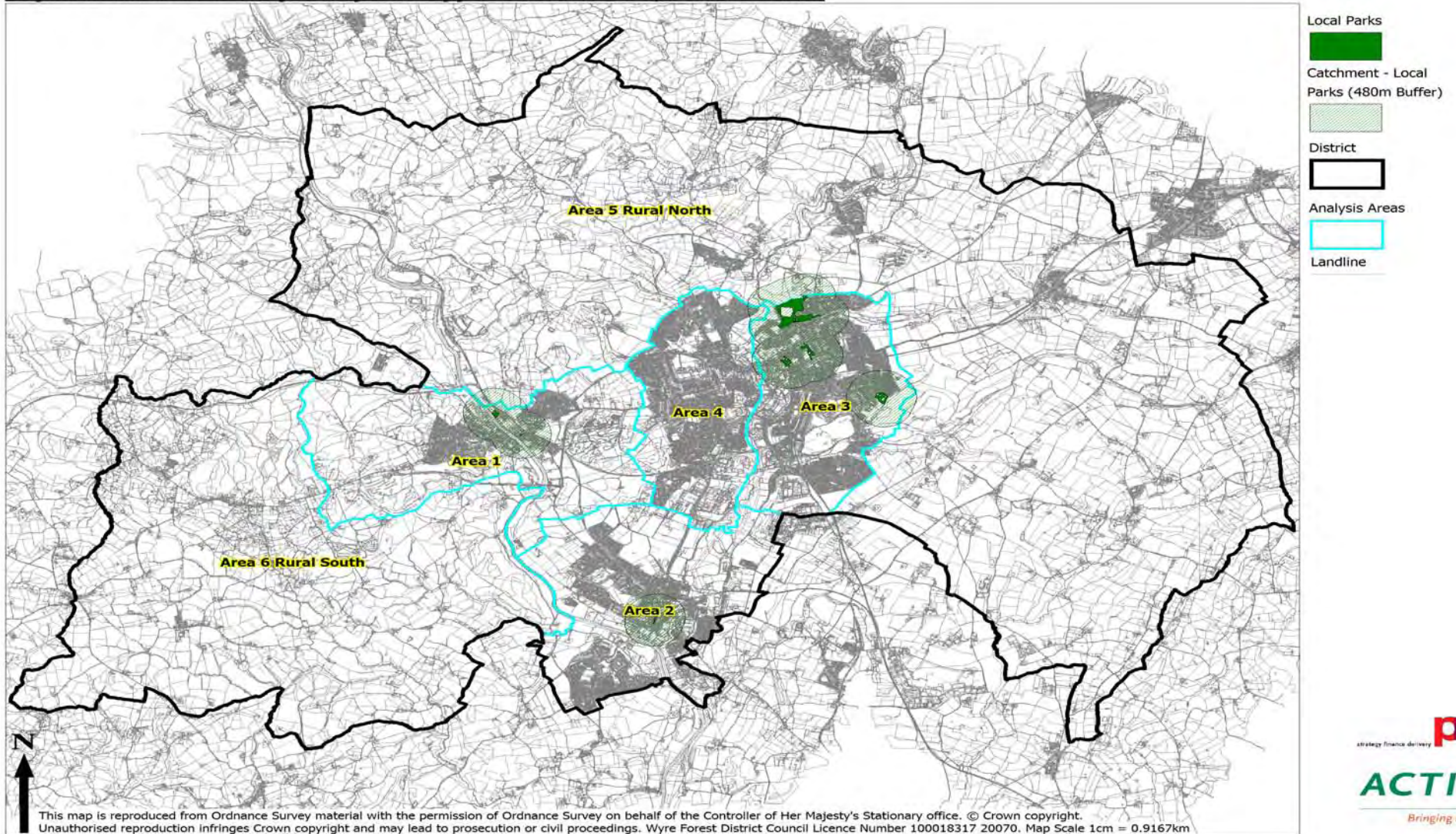
Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Local Parks



SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 4.4 - Provision of local parks in Wyre Forest (urban standard)

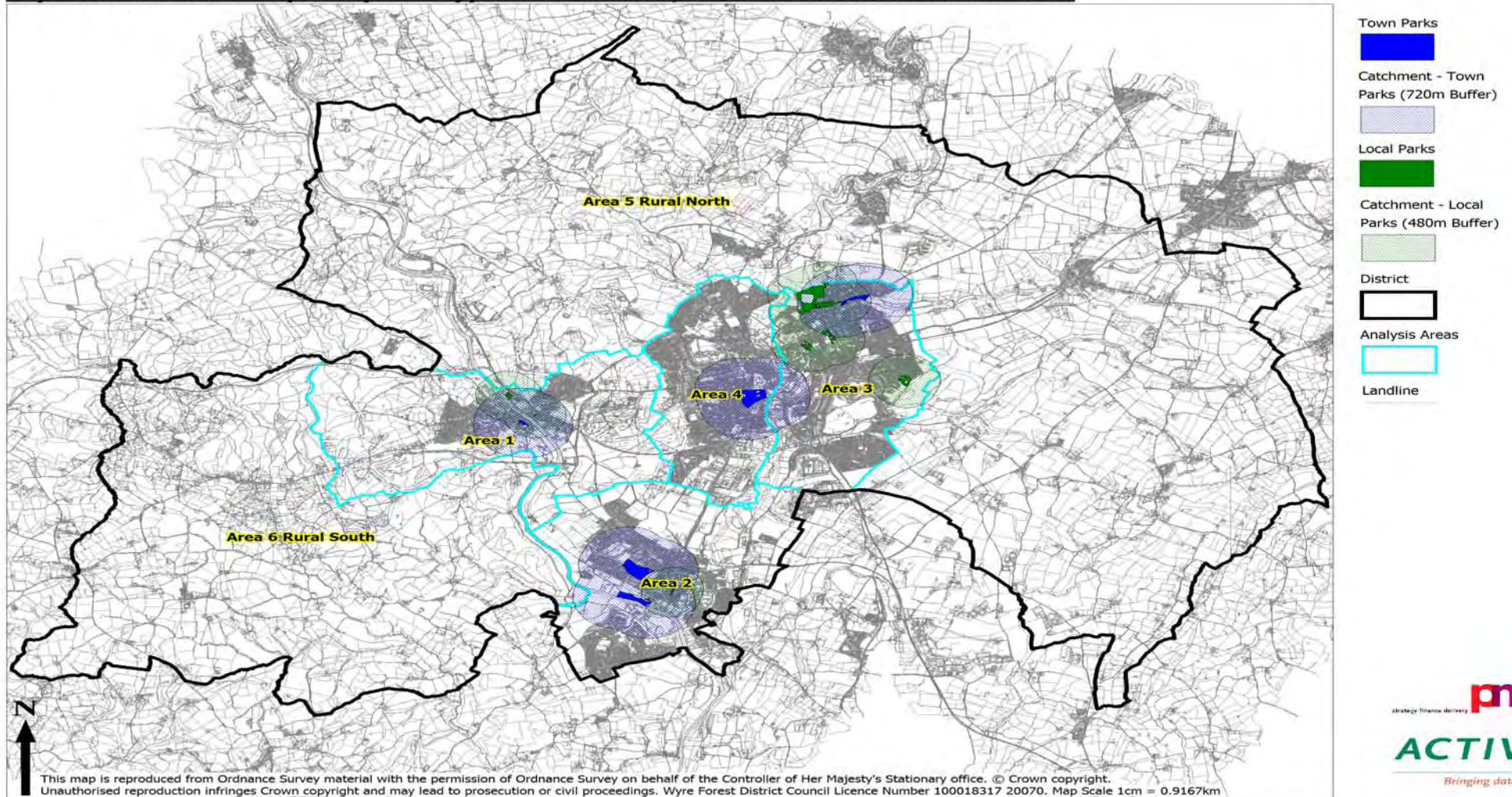
Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Local Parks



SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 4.5 - Provision of town parks and local parks in Wyre Forest (urban standards)

Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Town Parks and Local Parks



SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

- 4.31 As can be seen in Map 4.1, application of the local accessibility standard (for the rural area) indicates that the majority of all residents living in the rural analysis areas are within the recommended 20-minute drivetime of a town park. Map 4.3 illustrates that residents in the rural analysis areas also have access to a local park within the recommended accessibility catchment.
- 4.32 In contrast, Map 4.2, which considers the provision of parks in the urban areas of the District highlights a number of key areas of deficiency. A large proportion of residents in the Kidderminster West analysis area and Stourport analysis area are outside the threshold of a town park.
- 4.33 This is also reflected in Map 4.4, which considers the provision of local parks. Areas of key deficiency can be found in the Kidderminster West analysis area, Stourport analysis area and Kidderminster East analysis area.

Applying the quantity, quality and accessibility standards

- 4.34 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas where there is potential unmet demand we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify whether areas are quantitatively above or below the recommended minimum standard and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

Quality of parks and gardens

- 4.35 Although quantitative and accessibility deficiencies have been identified, the quality of sites was perceived to be particularly important to local residents. The quality standard and the scores achieved when measured against this standard provide a guide as to sites that may require improvement.
- 4.36 Security and safety was a consistent issue for residents at both town parks and local parks. A number of residents identified security concerns when accessing a park. The role of park wardens was viewed as an ideal solution to this problem.

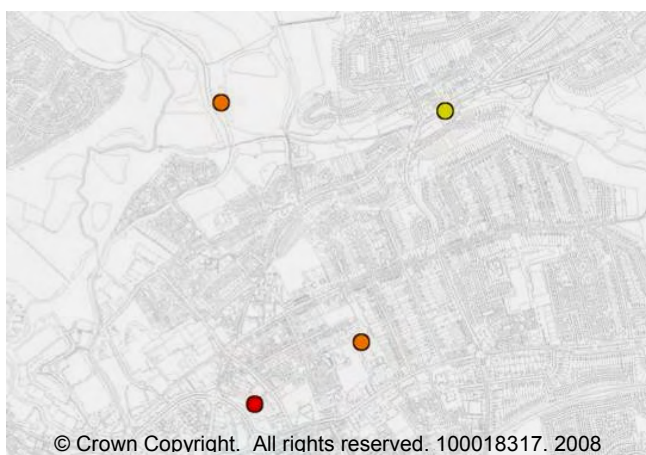
PG3	Identify opportunities to increase security and safety in parks. Consider the role of park wardens in achieving this aim.
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- 4.37 Jubilee Gardens and Brinton Park are examples of good practice that were frequently commended by residents and visitors. Jubilee Gardens was recognised for its aesthetic benefits and Brinton Park was acknowledged as a site offering a wide range of facilities. In particular, the recent improvements and regeneration at Brinton Park were widely recognised. These parks should be seen as examples of good practice and investment should be placed into other strategically located parks to replicate the quality of these sites.
- 4.38 Improvements should focus on sites of particular importance to local residents and in strategic locations across the District. Provision of at least one high quality facility in each of the main urban areas of the District (ie Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport) should be targeted. These should be supplemented by a network of high quality local parks. The local standard should be used to guide investment.

PG4	Seek to create a network of high quality town and local parks within the District. Improvements to local sites should focus firstly in areas where there is a lack of town parks. The quality vision should be used to guide investment, with a target of a minimum score of 72%. This is the score required to achieve the top quartile level, calculated from the existing quality scores for town parks.
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- 4.39 The application of the quality standard for parks and gardens is set out overleaf in Map 4.6.
- 4.40 Map 4.6 highlights a good distribution of average to good quality facilities across Wyre Forest. Despite a good distribution of higher quality facilities, there is a concentration of poor facilities in the north west of the Kidderminster East analysis area (Figure 4.2).

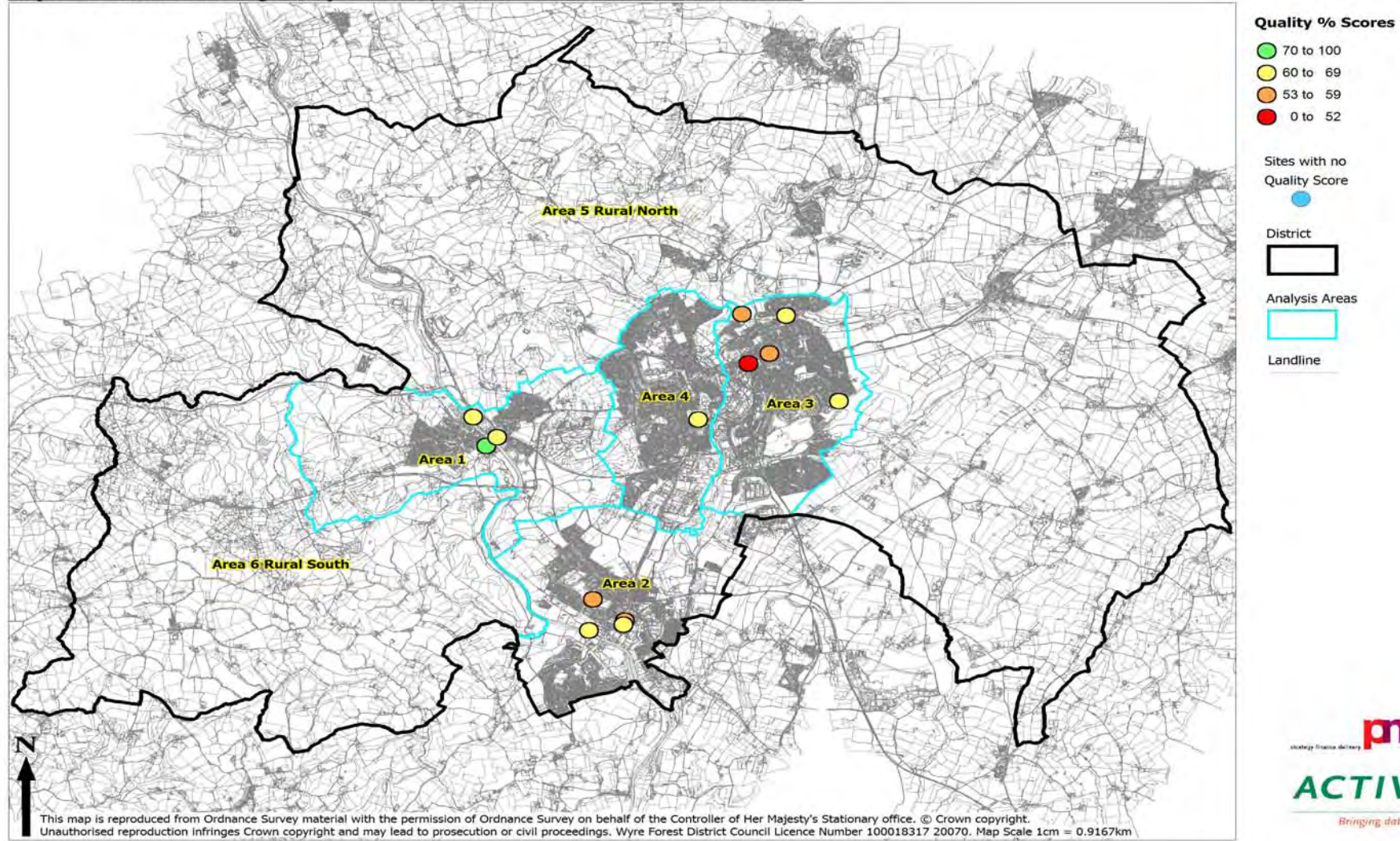
Figure 4.2 – Poor quality sites in the Kidderminster East analysis area



SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 4.6 – Quality of parks and gardens in Wyre Forest

Wyre Forest OSS - Quality Scores, Town Parks and Local Parks



Areas of deficiency

- 4.41 The supply of both town parks and local parks is sufficient to meet current needs and the initial focus is therefore upon qualitative improvements. Application of the quantity standard however reveals a future requirement (to 2026) for increased provision of both hierarchies of parks.
- 4.42 Town parks serve a wider catchment area than local parks and therefore attract residents from further afield. Despite this, it is also important that residents have access to local parks. As a higher order facility, the presence of a town park within the recommended catchment of a local park would negate the need for the provision of an additional local park (for example, those residents within a 10 minute catchment of Brinton Park would not also require a local park). Local provision would however still be required for those residents outside of a 10-minute catchment of this facility (even if they were within the 15 minute catchment of a strategic park).
- 4.43 When combining the provision of town parks and local parks, Map 4.5 (shown earlier) highlights a number of areas of deficiency, particularly in the Kidderminster analysis areas. The value of parks to residents was emphasised through consultation, where parks emerged as one of the most valued types of open space.

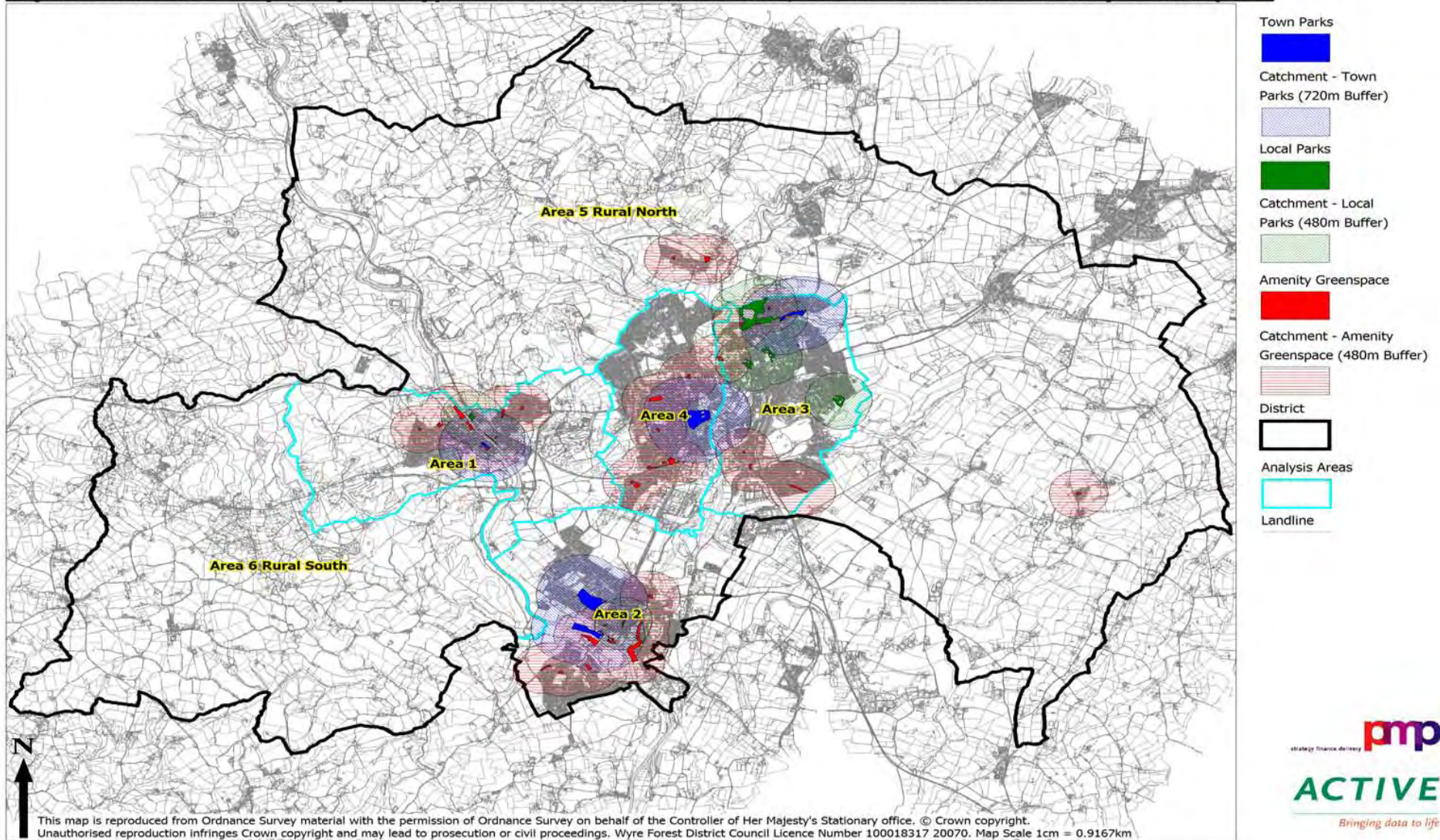
PG5	Given the low number of sites within the District and the presence of some areas of deficiency, all parks should be afforded protection.
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- 4.44 In order to maximise the benefit of new parks, any new facilities should be targeted in locations that are currently lacking in provision. Moreover, in order to ensure that the maximum number of residents are within the accessibly catchment of parks and gardens, any new site should be located so that there is no overlap with the catchment of existing parks.
- 4.45 Map 4.7 overleaf illustrates the provision of parks in the context of amenity green space in the area. The presence of amenity green space in areas deficient of parks provides an opportunity to formalise these spaces and better meet the needs of local residents.

SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 4.7 - Provision of town parks, local parks and amenity green space in Wyre Forest (urban standards)

Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Town Parks, Local Parks and Amenity Greenspace



SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

- 4.46 Where parks are provided within a 10-minute catchment (the recommended distance threshold for amenity green space – set in Section 6) they may negate the need for further provision of amenity green space (as a higher order facility they provide a greater range of facilities) as they fulfil similar roles. This is discussed in Section 6.
- 4.47 The analysis that follows considers the provision of parks within each of the geographical areas of the District and highlights where future priorities should lie.

Bewdley analysis area

- 4.48 Application of the quantity standard reveals a future shortfall in the provision of both town parks (-2.32 ha) and local parks (-1.34 ha). Accessibility mapping illustrates this shortfall with residents to the west and east of Bewdley town centre unable to access a park within the recommended distance threshold (Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

Figure 4.3 – Deficiency to the west of Bewdley town centre

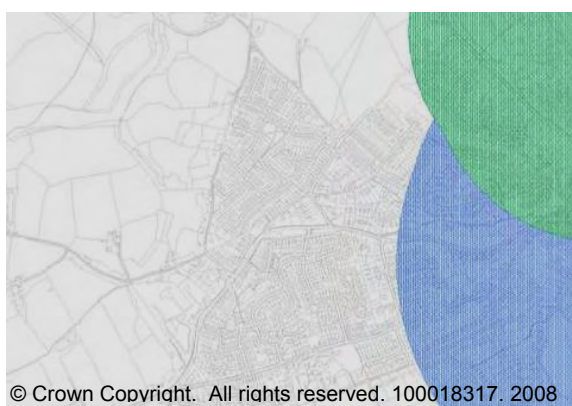
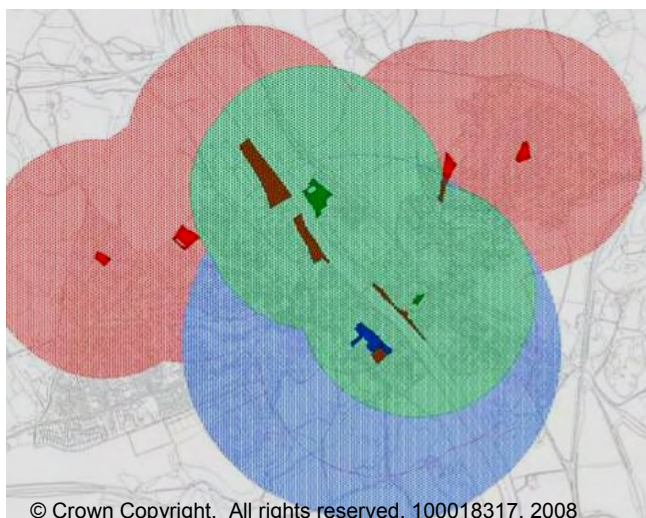


Figure 4.4 – Deficiency to the east of Bewdley town centre



- 4.49 Although there are deficiencies in the provision of parks in the Bewdley analysis area, quantitative analysis reveals there is sufficient provision of amenity green space in the area. When amalgamating the provision of amenity green space and parks in this area, nearly all residents have access to at least one type of open space (Figure 4.5). Only a small number of residents in the south west of Bewdley cannot access either an amenity green space or local park. Jubilee Gardens, being a strategic park, has a wider catchment and residents outside of the area of deficiency for local parks are able to access this site.

Figure 4.5 – Provision of parks and amenity green space in Bewdley analysis area



- 4.50 Jubilee Gardens is the only town park located in this analysis area. This park has a quality score of 88% and is the highest rated quality park in Wyre Forest.
- 4.51 In consideration of the good provision of amenity green space and the location of Jubilee Gardens in the analysis area, focus should be placed on increasing access to existing sites through the provision of green linkages, as well as maximising the role of amenity green spaces in areas that are deficient in parks.

PG6	Seek to increase access to existing parks in the Bewdley analysis area, particularly access to Jubilee Gardens through the development of green linkages. Upgrade existing amenity green spaces in areas deficient in parks and improve the quality of local parks.
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Stourport analysis area

- 4.52 The Stourport analysis area has the greatest provision of town parks in the District (17 ha) and this is reflected in the application of the quantity standards, which show there is sufficient provision to meet current and future demand. Although there is sufficient provision in the analysis area, accessibility mapping reveals both sites are located in close proximity to one another and therefore have overlapping catchments. Due to poor distribution of sites, clear areas of deficiency can be found in the north west of Stourport town centre and in Areley Kings (Figures 4.6 and 4.7).

Figure 4.6 – Deficiencies to the north west of Stourport town centre



Figure 4.7 – Deficiencies in Areley Kings



- 4.53 Within the Stourport analysis area there is a large future shortfall of local parks (-4.74 ha). There are only two local parks in the analysis area and these sites are located in close proximity to one another and fall within the catchment of town parks in Stourport. Therefore, these two sites do not alleviate deficiencies in areas where residents are outside the 15 minute walk time of a town park.
- 4.54 Analysis of the provision of amenity green space indicates that there is sufficient supply to meet current and future needs. Sites are mainly distributed in the south of the analysis area. Provision of amenity green space in an area does not negate the need for a park (as a park is a higher order facility) but it provides significant opportunities for the conversion of amenity green spaces to develop new parks.

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- 4.55 While there is a good distribution of amenity green space in Areley Kings, there are significant accessibility issues for parks. In light of the application of the quantity standards, provision of a new local park to meet the needs of residents in Areley Kings should therefore be considered a priority.
- 4.56 There are two amenity green space sites within Areley Kings that could be formalised to provide a local park, Erneley Close (0.76 ha) and Dunley Road (0.56 ha). Both sites are located in close proximity to one another and furthermore, site assessments reveal both sites have a poor quality score (54%) and could therefore benefit from improvement.

PG7	Prioritise the development of a new local park within Areley Kings. This could be delivered through the enhancement of an amenity green space. The new site should encompass the recommendations set out within the quality vision.
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- 4.57 To alleviate deficiencies in the north west of Stourport town centre, focus should be placed on enhancing the quality and increasing access to Memorial Park. This site is the second largest park in the District (10.89 ha) and throughout consultation residents highlighted that improvement in the current facilities and range of activities would provide many opportunities at Memorial Park if investment was provided.

PG8	Seek to enhance the quality of Memorial Park in Stourport and focus on increasing access to this park through the development of green linkages to unlock its potential as a highly valuable site in the District.
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Kidderminster East analysis area

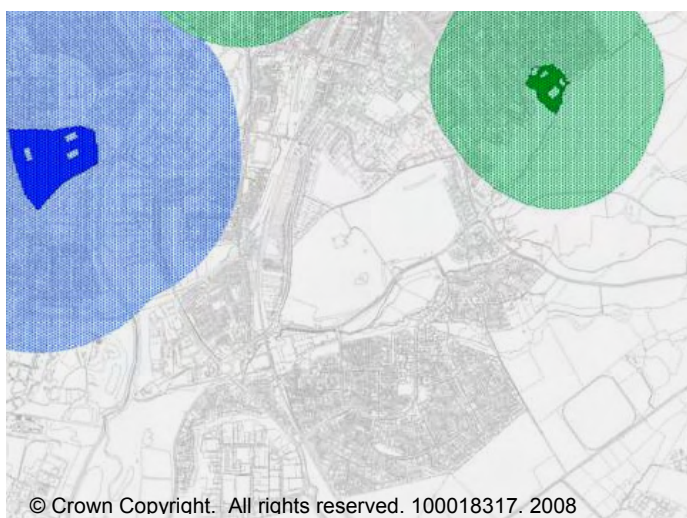
- 4.58 Application of the accessibility standard for town parks highlights large areas of deficiency in the Kidderminster East analysis area, with the majority of residents unable to access a town park within the recommended accessibility threshold (Figure 4.8). This shortfall is further highlighted with the Kidderminster East analysis area expected to have the largest quantitative deficiency in the District by 2026 (-7.41 ha per 1000 population).

Figure 4.8 – Deficiencies in Kidderminster East analysis area



- 4.59 Application of the quantity standard reveals the Kidderminster East analysis area has the greatest provision of local parks. However, as with town parks, accessibility is limited, with the majority of residents in the south of the analysis area outside the recommended catchment of a local park. When combining the provision of town parks and local parks, application of the accessibility standard reveals deficiencies in Greenhill, Offmore, Comberton, Aggborough and Spennells (figure 4.9).

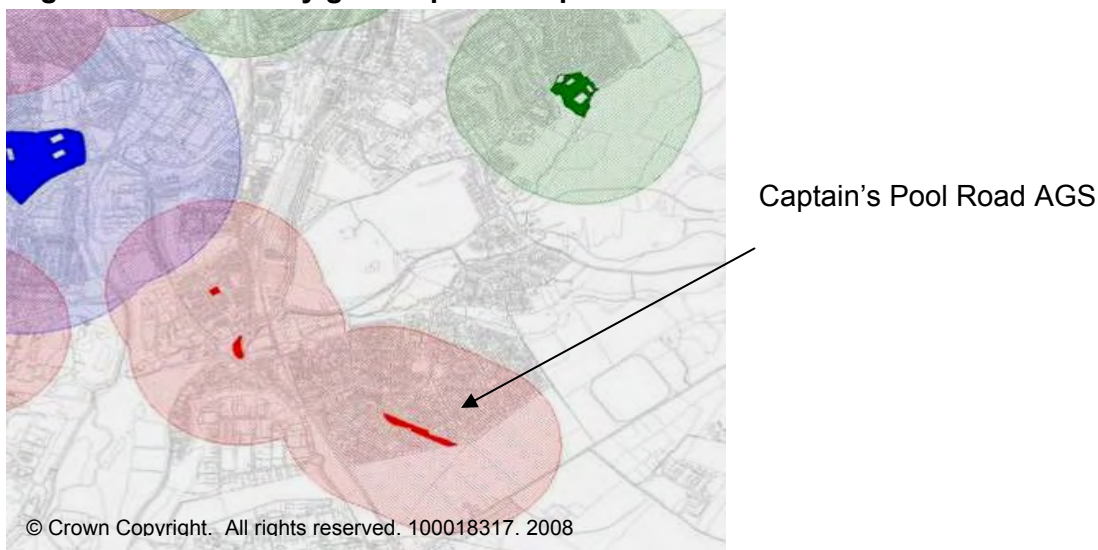
Figure 4.9 – Provision of town parks and local parks in Kidderminster East analysis area



- 4.60 Although the provision of amenity green space in the analysis area is insufficient in quantitative terms, accessibility mapping reveals that a large proportion of residents outside the recommended catchment of a park in Spennells and Aggborough have access to an amenity green space. While this means these residents have access to recreational open space, it also provides opportunities for the conversion of an amenity green space to a park.
- 4.61 Captain's Pool Road AGS, located in Spennells, is a large site (1.1 ha) that could be converted into a new park (Figure 4.10). This site is considered to be a poor quality amenity green space, achieving a quality score of just 50% and the site could

therefore benefit from investment. Provision of additional facilities on this site would maximise the value of this site to the local community.

Figure 4.10 – Amenity green space in Spennells



PG9	<p>Prioritise the development of a new local park within Spennells. This could be delivered through the enhancement of an amenity green space. The new site should encompass the recommendations set out within the quality vision.</p>
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4.62 The distribution of amenity green space in the analysis area is poor and although it provides recreational opportunities for residents in the south of the Kidderminster East analysis area, it does not reduce deficiencies in the centre and north east of the analysis area. Residents in these areas do not have access to a park, amenity green space or natural and semi natural open space (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11 – Deficiencies in the north of Kidderminster East analysis area



4.63 Due to the density of this area there are limited opportunities for new provision. Development of green linkages between residential areas and new sites should therefore be prioritised. Investment should be targeted at nearby parks to increase their value to the community.

PG10	Prioritise investment in parks located in the north of the Kidderminster East analysis area. Use the findings from the site assessments to prioritise those sites in need of enhancement. Develop green linkages between residential areas and existing sites. Opportunities for new provision should be seized.
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Kidderminster West analysis area

4.64 Unlike provision in the east of Kidderminster, the provision of town parks in the Kidderminster West analysis area is sufficient to meet demand. However, although the provision of town parks is sufficient, application of the accessibility standard highlights clear deficiencies to the north and south west of Kidderminster town centre (Figures 4.12 and 4.13). The reason for these deficiencies is due to the fact that only one town park, Brinton Park, is located in this area of the District.

Figure 4.12 – Deficiencies to the north west of Kidderminster town centre

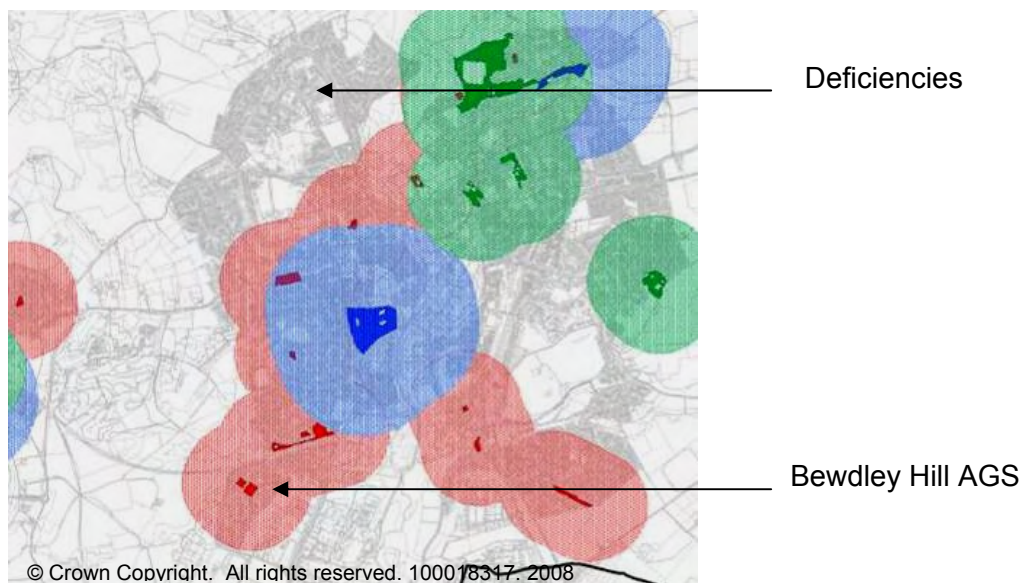


Figure 4.13 – Deficiencies south west of Kidderminster town centre



- 4.65 Analysis of the provision of local parks reveals there is insufficient provision within the analysis area, with no local parks at all. Provision of amenity green space in the area is also below the minimum standard, however accessibility mapping illustrates that sites are evenly distributed, with a large proportion of the population able to access an amenity green space within the recommended 10 minute walk time (Figure 4.14). Despite this good distribution, residents in Franche, Habberley and Blakebrook are outside the recommended catchment of both parks and amenity green space.

Figure 4.14 – Provision of parks and amenity green space in Kidderminster West analysis area



- 4.66 Although a number of residents outside the recommended catchment of a park can access an amenity green space, this does not negate the need for a park. Bewdley Hill AGS is a large amenity green space (1.77 ha) that is well used by local residents. This site is of good quality in comparison to other amenity green spaces in the District and provides an excellent opportunity for the provision of a local park.

PG11	Prioritise the development of a new park within the south of the Kidderminster West analysis area. This could be delivered through the enhancement of Bewdley Hill AGS. The new site should encompass the recommendations set out within the quality vision.
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- 4.67 Provision of a park at Bewdley Hill would not meet the needs of these residents in the north of the analysis area who are outside of the catchment of both parks and amenity green spaces. These residents have access to a wide range of open space within the area, including allotments, outdoor sports facilities and natural and semi natural open space. Due to the provision of these facilities and density of housing in the area there is limited scope to provide a new park. The closest park to these residents is Brinton Park, the largest park in the District. In the event that the provision of a park is not achievable, linkages should be developed to connect residents from the area to Brinton Park and to sites of other typologies.

PG12	Seek to increase access and enhance the quality of Brinton Park and to link this site with other sites in the District as well as local residential areas.
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The Rural analysis areas

- 4.68 No parks are located within the rural analysis areas and application of the quantity standard reveals shortfalls in the provision of both town and local parks within the Rural East and Rural West areas of the District. In reality, the provision of formal parks is not expected within the rural areas, and this is reinforced through the accessibility standards, which indicate that residents in these areas should expect to travel to an urban area for this type of open space.
- 4.69 Analysis of the application of the accessibility standard illustrates that virtually all residents within the rural analysis areas have access to a park within the recommended 15-minute drive time.
- 4.70 In light of the above, focus should be placed on improving access to all parks and gardens in the District. The enhancement of transport links, for example regular bus journeys, could be key to increasing access to parks and gardens for residents of the rural settlements of Wyre Forest.

PG15	Seek to improve access to all parks within the District. Consider the enhancement of transport links, including an increase in safe walk ways and cycle paths, as a way of increasing access to parks for residents within the rural analysis areas.
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Summary

- 4.71 Parks and gardens are particularly highly valued across Wyre Forest, with residents and visitors to the District using them frequently. There was a particular emphasis made during public consultation for the provision of local parks and gardens, with residents at drop in sessions and respondents to the household survey highlighting their value to the local community, particularly for children.
- 4.72 Based on the household survey, parks and gardens are one of the most frequently visited open spaces in Wyre Forest, indicated by 17% of respondents for local parks and 13% of respondents for town parks. Over 35% of residents also visit parks and gardens more than once a month.
- 4.73 The wider benefits of parks are far reaching, and it is evident that many residents use parks for informal recreation and walks, reinforcing the health benefits that these spaces offer. Parks were also perceived to offer significant landscaping and environmental benefits, particularly within the urban areas of the District. Parks were seen as a focal point of the community, encouraging social interaction and acting as a meeting place for the old and the young. The value of parks for children was regularly emphasised by residents.
- 4.74 The quality of parks is perceived to be good across the District although some problems with vandalism were identified, specifically at St Georges Park. Jubilee Gardens and Brinton Park were identified as examples of good practice, with the aesthetic benefits of Jubilee Gardens (a Green Flag park) widely recognised. Brinton Park was identified as a site of high importance to the District, offering a wide range of facilities and attracting residents and visitors to the area. Throughout consultation, residents regularly commended the recent improvements to Brinton Park.

SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

- 4.75 Application of the quantity standard highlights the need for additional parks across the District. Priorities for new provision are identified within the Kidderminster and Stourport analysis areas.
- 4.76 With no parks located within the rural areas of the District, increasing access by all means of transport, including walking and cycling, to existing parks in the urban area is particularly important.

SECTION 5

NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

Natural and semi natural open space

Introduction and definition

- 5.1 This type of open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrubland, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, and meadows), wetlands, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and bio-diversity within the settlement boundaries.
- 5.2 Natural and semi natural open space can frequently be found within other open space types, and in some instances there may be some sites classified as amenity green space or parks that play a similar role to natural and semi natural open space sites. This serves to highlight the overlap between typologies.
- 5.3 In line with PPG17, larger sites that sit outside of settlement boundaries have been excluded from the audit and calculations, however it is important to consider the role that these sites play in alleviating deficiencies and providing resources for both residents and wildlife. This will be returned to later in this section.
- 5.4 Although natural and semi natural open space plays a key role in wildlife conservation and biodiversity, the recreational opportunities provided by these spaces are also important. It is essential that a balance between recreational use and biodiversity and conservation is achieved.
- 5.5 This Section outlines the strategic context and key consultation findings relating to natural and semi natural open space within Wyre Forest and the recommended local standards. These local standards are then applied in order to understand local issues and priorities.

Figure 5.1 – Devil’s Spittleful/Rifle Range Nature Reserve



Local context

- 5.6 The key issues for natural and semi natural open spaces arising from a review of strategic documents are:
 - various policy statements within the **Wyre Forest District Adopted Local Plan** relate to natural and semi natural open space. Policy LR6 states that the Council will safeguard the areas shown on the proposals map in the Stour Valley north of Kidderminster for future development as a Country Park. Policy LR7 states the Council will safeguard the area shown on the proposals

map around Hurcott Pool and Woods for future development as a Local Nature Reserve

- Policy LR5 of the **Local Plan** states proposals for the development of informal countryside facilities will be permitted provided that they:
 - contain adequate provision for future maintenance
 - do not have an adverse impact on the quality of recreation opportunities
 - do not have an adverse impact on the surrounding land uses
 - do not have an adverse effect on wildlife and ecology
 - enable easy and safe access
- a key theme of the **Wyre Forest Sustainable Community Strategy** is *“that the built and natural environment of Wyre Forest District provides an accessible, attractive, enjoyable, healthy and wildlife-rich place to be, now and in the future”*.

5.7 These strategic documents reinforce the role of natural and semi natural open space in the local community and the importance of providing high quality, easily accessible natural and semi natural open space.

Consultation – Assessing local needs

5.8 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues relating to natural and semi natural open space:

- 35% of respondents to the household survey indicated that they visit natural and semi natural open spaces more frequently than any other. 58% of respondents to the household survey visit this typology more than once a month, reinforcing the value of natural and semi natural open space in the District
- respondents to the IT survey for young people and children identified natural and semi natural open space as their second favourite type of open space in Wyre Forest. The main reason for this preference was the proximity of natural open space to the home
- natural and semi natural open space was recognised as a key feature of Wyre Forest by residents at drop in sessions. The need to protect these sites from development was a key theme throughout all consultations. Consultation undertaken as part of the development of the Issues and Options LDF paper emphasised the views of residents that natural sites are valuable for wildlife as well as recreational use, with some residents quoting the importance of maintaining and increasing wildlife corridors
- the recreational and walking benefits offered by this typology were widely recognised. The importance of providing links between different open spaces was also recognised during the issues and options consultation.

Existing natural and semi natural open space in Wyre Forest

Quantity of existing provision

- 5.9 The provision of natural and semi natural open space in Wyre Forest is summarised in Table 5.1. Kingsford Country Park (ID 18) and Devils Spittleful Nature Reserve (ID 152) have been excluded from the calculations as a consequence of their size. Inclusion of such large sites would skew the findings and give a misleading picture as to the amount of local natural and semi natural open space.
- 5.10 These vast expanses have been excluded from the calculations, as their inclusion would result in an artificially high quantity standard across the District that would generate unrealistic expectations.
- 5.11 Although these sites have been excluded from calculations they remain important sites for the District and will be considered within the application of the local accessibility standards.

Table 5.1 – Provision of natural and semi natural open space across Wyre Forest

Analysis areas	Current provision	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	LDF population (2026)	Provision per 1000 population (2026)
Bewdley	3.64	2	0.01	1.87	9,697	2.23
Stourport	78.07	12	0.53	38.82	20,811	2.85
Kidderminster East	18.41	8	0.2	6.42	30,827	0.81
Kidderminster West	45.53	9	0.7	14.94	27,419	1.52
Rural East	70.11	4	1.18	42.92	10,772	6.51
Rural West	8.12	2	0.98	7.14	2,874	2.20
Overall	223.88	37	0.01	42.92	102,400	2.19

- 5.12 The key issues emerging from Table 5.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of natural and semi natural open space across the District include:
- based on the findings of the household survey there is an overall satisfaction with the provision of natural and semi natural open space, with 56% of respondents indicating that the quantity of provision is about right
 - this perception is similar across all analysis areas. The highest level of satisfaction can be found in the Kidderminster West analysis area, where 87% of residents feel that provision is about right (or more than sufficient). This is surprising given the urban nature of this area, however over 50% of respondents in each analysis area stated the provision of natural and semi

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

natural open space was about right, suggesting a high level of satisfaction across the whole of the District

- the high levels of satisfaction corresponds to the actual levels of provision in the Rural East area, which has the highest level of provision (per 1000 population) and the second highest level of satisfaction. In contrast, despite high levels of satisfaction, provision in the Kidderminster West analysis area is lower than in other areas
- the lowest level of provision per 1000 is found in the Kidderminster East analysis area (0.8055 ha per 1000). Unsurprisingly residents in this area portrayed the greatest dissatisfaction with the current quantity of provision.

Setting provision standards – quantity

- 5.13 The recommended local quantity standard for natural and semi natural open space has been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix F.

Quantity Standard (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
2.30 ha per 1000 population	2.30 ha per 1000 population
Justification	
<p>The overall perception established through local consultation was that the provision of natural and semi natural open space in Wyre Forest is sufficient. A number of residents at the drop in sessions further emphasised the value of this typology, identifying natural and semi natural space as a key contributor to the character of the District.</p> <p>Both quantitative and qualitative issues were raised during local consultation, however the key theme established by residents was the need to protect natural and semi natural open space from development. The local standard has therefore been set at the existing level of provision. This will enable a focus on the protection and enhancement of sites across Wyre Forest. In particular the Council should concentrate on the improvement of footpaths and access to sites, as this was one of the main issues raised by residents. Accessibility to sites will be a key area for improvement and a challenging accessibility standard has been set.</p> <p>The green nature of Wyre Forest is enhanced by several extremely large natural and semi natural open spaces across the District. These vast expanses have been excluded from the calculations, as their inclusion would result in an artificially high quantity standard across the District that would generate unrealistic expectations.</p>	

Current provision - quality

- 5.14 The quality of existing natural and semi natural open space in the District was assessed through site visits and is summarised in Table 5.2 overleaf. Full details of

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

all the scores achieved can be found in Appendix C. Each site was measured against a site assessment matrix (Appendix C).

- 5.15 It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.
- 5.16 The quality scores are weighted according to the findings of the local consultation. Those elements that were highlighted through consultation as being particularly important determinants of quality have been weighted higher to ensure that they have a greater influence on the overall quality score achieved.
- 5.17 In particular, the quality and variety of the vegetation was perceived to be particularly important for natural and semi natural open spaces. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix G.

Table 5.2 – Quality of natural and semi natural open space across Wyre Forest

Analysis area	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bewdley	2	46 – 54	50	Riverside NSN – ID 311	Snuff Mill Walk – ID 308
Stourport	12	40 – 67	53	Power Station Road – ID 185	Leapgate Country Park – ID 206
Kidderminster East	8	38 – 56	48	Aggbrough Crescent – ID 42	Spennells Valley Nature Reserve – ID 170
Kidderminster West	9	40 - 56	51	Puxton Lane NSN – ID 114	Habberley Road – ID 34
Rural East	4	54 – 60	56	Bridge Road – ID 281	Blakedown Millenium Green – ID 208
Rural West	2	-	60	-	Blackstone Meadows Country Park – ID 147
Overall	37	38 - 67	52	Aggbrough Crescent – ID 42	Leapgate Country Park – ID 206

- 5.18 The key issues emerging from Table 5.2 and the consultation relating to the quality of natural and semi natural open space include:

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- the majority of respondents to the household survey feel the quality of natural and semi natural open space is good (66%). Very few residents perceive the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces to be poor
- findings within the individual analysis areas mirror the overall responses, with over 60% of respondents in each analysis area stating the quality of natural and semi natural open space is good. However, the average quality score (52%) and range of quality scores indicates that the quality of sites is poor and that there is a significant variation between the quality of sites, with some poor quality sites in the District scoring below 45%
- the poor maintenance of footpaths was a key issue for residents with many identifying this as a major barrier to access, sometimes prohibiting use of a site. Litter and dog fouling were also perceived to be problematic.

Setting provision standards – quality

- 5.19 The recommended local quality standard for natural and semi natural open space is summarised below. This standard sets out the essential elements of a high quality natural open space. These findings are derived from the key themes of local consultations. Full justification and consultation relating to the quality of provision is provided within Appendix G.

Quality standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
Essential	Desirable	
Clean/litter free	Flowers and trees	
Nature features	Litter bins	
Footpaths	Parking facilities	
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to natural and semi natural areas, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:		
Component of quality	Proportion of possible total responses received	Weighting
Security and safety	10%	1
Cleanliness and maintenance	32%	3
Vegetation	39%	4
Ancillary accommodation	10%	2

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 5.20 The local accessibility standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations. It considers the distance that residents are willing to travel to access different types of facilities as well as the mode of transport that they would anticipate using.
- 5.21 Site specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the programme of site visits where information and signage, transport and general accessibility issues were assessed. Where access to specific sites is limited, this will impact on usage of the site.
- 5.22 Consultation and analysis highlights that the key issues with regards accessibility include:
- findings from the household survey reveal 62% of current users walk to access this typology – this suggests that natural and semi natural open space is expected to be located relatively close to the home
 - similar to the patterns exhibited by regular users, responses from the household survey regarding preferred methods of travel to natural and semi-natural open spaces are dominated by those residents who expect to walk (63%) – again this indicates that local provision is expected
 - site assessments reveal access to natural and semi natural open space is average. The main area of concern was a lack of access by appropriate public transport.
- 5.23 The recommended local accessibility standard for natural and semi natural open space is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H.

Accessibility standard (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
10 MINUTE WALK TIME
Justification
<p>Local consultation indicates the majority of current users walk to this typology (62%). Similar to the patterns exhibited by regular users, 63% of respondents expect to walk to natural and semi natural open space. Therefore, it is recommended a walk time is set across the District. This is deliverable in both the urban and rural areas of the District. It is also important to enhance access to areas of nearby countryside.</p> <p>75% of respondents to the household survey would expect to walk for 10 minutes (480m) on foot to access this open space, with a modal response of 10 minutes. Current user patterns also support a 10 minute walk time, with 65% of respondents currently travelling 10 minutes or less to a natural or semi natural open space. A 10 minute walk time is therefore recommended in line with both user expectations and current user patterns.</p>

*a straight-line distance of 480m has been used rather than the pedestrian distance of 800m. This is based on average walking distances reduced by a factor of 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in straight lines. The 40% factoring is based on the approach set out in the NPFA Six Acre Standard.

Applying provision standards

- 5.24 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential to understand the existing distribution of open space, sport and recreation facilities and identify areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 5.25 The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help determine where those deficiencies are of high importance. Applying the standards together is a much more meaningful method of analysis than applying the standards separately.
- 5.26 The application of the local standard for quantity is set out in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 – Application of quantity standard

Analysis areas	Current balanced against local standard (2.30 hectares per 1000 population)	Future balanced against local standard (2.30 hectares per 1000 population)
Bewdley	0.53	-0.66
Stourport	14.07	11.54
Kidderminster East	-42.34	-46.07
Kidderminster West	-18.18	-21.50
Rural East	46.66	45.33
Rural West	0.09	-0.28
Overall	0.82	-11.64

Green = above the minimum standard, Red = below the minimum standard

- 5.27 It can be seen that the application of standards results in the following issues:
- the current provision of natural and semi natural open space is sufficient to meet the local standard, however, when taking into account projected population growth there will be a shortfall of –11.64 ha by 2026
 - four of the six analysis areas will be deficient in natural and semi natural open space based on projected population growth across the LDF period
 - the largest existing deficiency is in the Kidderminster East analysis area (42.34 ha) and this is expected to increase to -46.07 ha by 2026. In contrast, the provision of natural and semi natural open space in the Rural East analysis area is significantly above the recommended local standard (45.33 ha). This indicates an abundance of natural and semi natural open space in

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

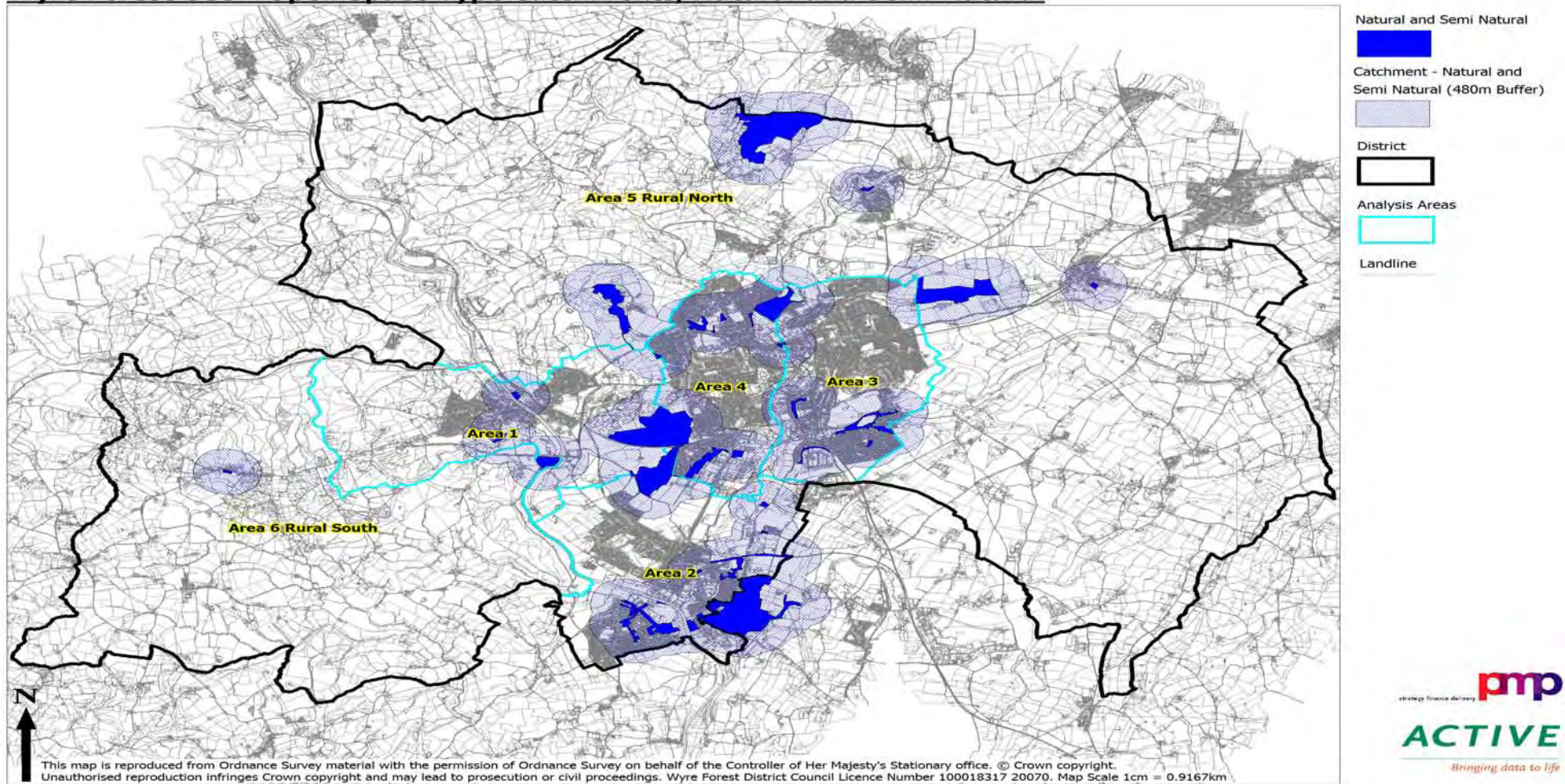
this area of Wyre Forest. Residents in this area are also likely to benefit from nearby areas of accessible countryside.

- 5.28 The application of the local accessibility standards for natural and semi natural open space is set out in Map 5.1 overleaf.

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

Map 5.1 - Provision of natural and semi natural open space in Wyre Forest

Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Natural and Semi Natural



SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- 5.29 Map 5.1 illustrates there is an even distribution of natural and semi natural open space within the District. The majority of residents in Wyre Forest are able to access a natural or semi natural open space within the recommended 10 minute walk time.
- 5.30 Despite a good distribution of natural and semi natural open space, there are a number of areas of deficiency, predominantly in the urban areas. Key areas of deficiency exist in the north of Kidderminster East analysis area, the centre of Kidderminster West analysis area and the west of Stourport analysis area. These will be discussed later in the section.
- 5.31 The local quantity standard equates to the current District wide level of provision, indicating that currently there is sufficient provision of natural and semi natural open space in Wyre Forest. Although future population projections indicate there is expected to be a shortfall of this typology by 2026 (-11.64 ha), local consultation established an overall satisfaction with the provision of natural and semi natural open space. This suggests that the focus should be on the enhancement of the quality of existing sites in the short term, as opposed to encouraging the development of more natural open space.
- 5.32 The importance of qualitative enhancements is reinforced by the findings of the site assessments, which suggest that the quality of natural areas was significantly lower than many other types of open space, with an average score of just 52%. Future efforts should therefore be concentrated into improvements to the quality of natural and semi natural spaces.
- 5.33 Key aspirations for natural and semi natural open spaces identified by residents included a clean and litter free site, nature features and good footpaths. To improve the quality of existing sites in the District, these features should be enhanced. In particular the maintenance of footpaths is a key issue to be addressed, with many residents identifying the poor maintenance of footpaths as a key barrier to access.

NSN1	Identify opportunities for improving the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces both in terms of the wildlife and habitat values of the site, but also for recreational purposes. Key improvements should include increased maintenance of footpaths and cyclepaths. Enhancements should be informed by the quality scores.
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- 5.34 While enhancement of sites for recreational purposes is important, consideration should also be given to the ecological and conservation opportunities provided.

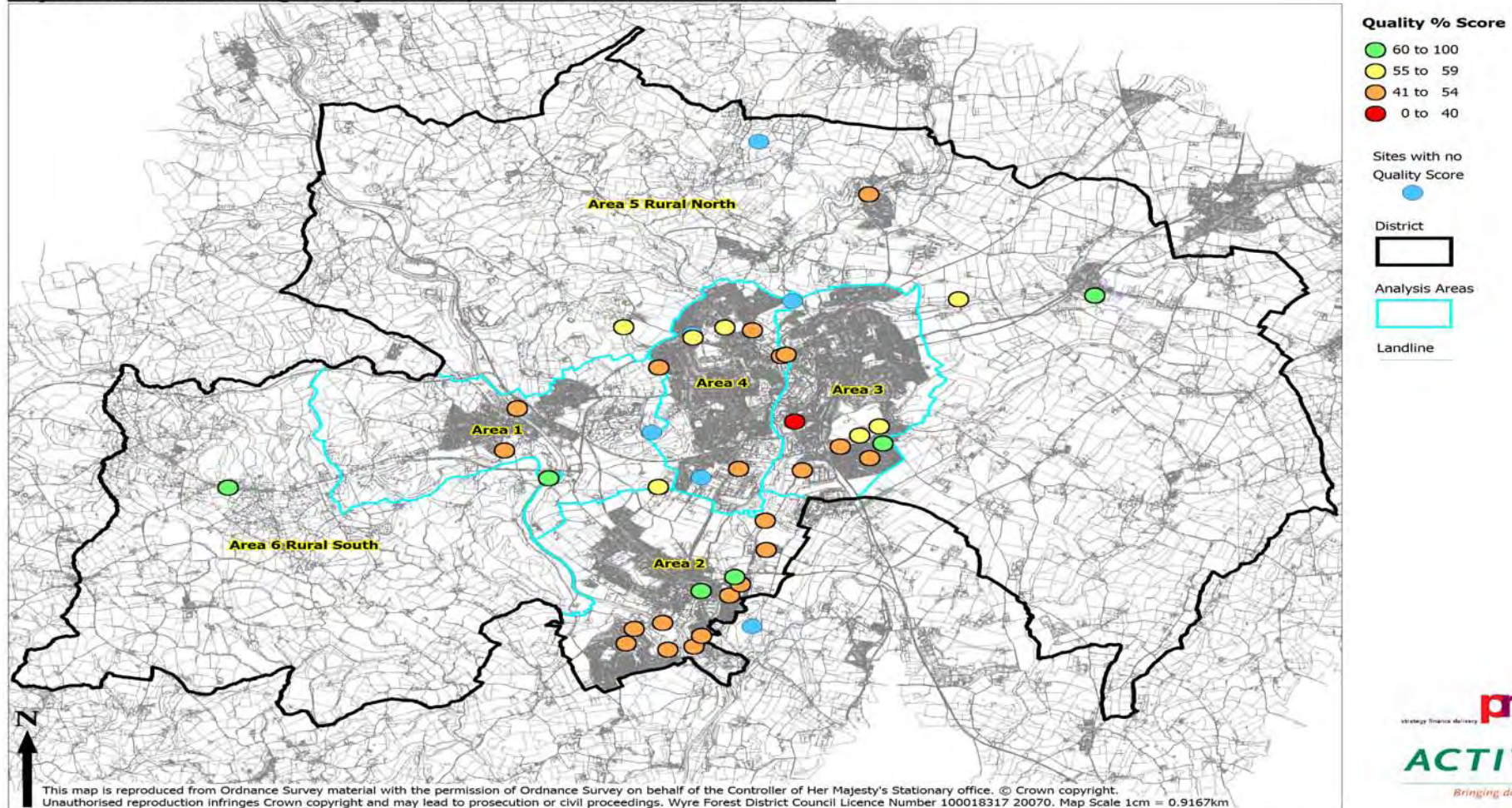
NSN2	Maximise biodiversity on natural and semi natural open spaces through the implementation of effective management and maintenance regimes.
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- 5.35 The application of the quality standard for natural and semi natural open space is set out in Map 5.2 overleaf.

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

Map 5.2 – Quality of natural and semi natural open space in Wyre Forest

Wyre Forest OSS - Quality Scores, Natural and Semi Natural



SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- 5.36 Map 5.2 highlights the poor quality of existing natural and semi natural open spaces within Wyre Forest. Despite this, the distribution of high quality sites is good with one good quality site located in each of the analysis areas, except Kidderminster West.
- 5.37 As consultation highlights, natural and semi natural open spaces are the most popular of all the open spaces in the District. The nature of these spaces and the wildlife and habitat value offered within them means that balancing the recreational use of these sites and monitoring any impact of use is essential.

NSN3	Monitor the impact of recreational use on natural and semi natural open space sites and ensure that recreational opportunity is balanced with biodiversity.
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- 5.38 The provision of natural and semi natural open space in each area is outlined in the sections that follow.

Bewdley analysis area

- 5.39 Application of the quantity standard reveals that the Bewdley analysis area will have a small shortfall in the provision of natural and semi natural open space by 2021 (-0.66 ha). Accessibility mapping reveals a poor distribution of sites in this area, with sites predominately focused in Bewdley town centre. The poor distribution of sites creates clear deficiencies to the west and east of Bewdley town centre. These deficiencies are highlighted in Figures 5.2 and 5.3.

Figure 5.2 – Deficiency west of Bewdley town centre



Figure 5.3 – Deficiency east of Bewdley town centre



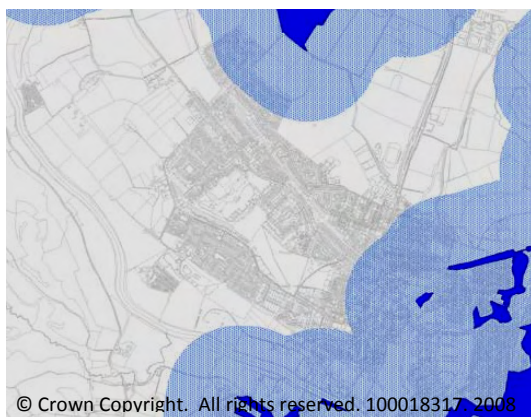
- 5.40 When measured against the local standard, Bewdley analysis area is deficient in the provision of natural and semi natural open space, however Devils Spittleful Nature Reserve is also located in this analysis area. This site is excluded from the application of the quantity standards, but is a large strategic site of importance (85 ha) and one of the few extensive areas of lowland heathland remaining in the county. Given the importance and opportunities presented by this site, it is likely that residents will be willing to travel further to access this site and its presence may alleviate demand for additional spaces.
- 5.41 Although there are deficiencies in natural and semi natural open space in the Bewdley analysis area, the quantity of amenity green space is sufficient to meet both current and future need. Furthermore, application of the accessibility standard reveals the majority of residents outside the recommended catchment for a natural and semi natural open space can access an amenity green space, although they are also outside of the catchment area for parks.
- 5.42 In consideration of the adequate provision of amenity green space in the area and the high level of satisfaction with the current provision of natural and semi natural open space (despite deficiencies in provision) the focus should be placed on protecting existing sites and increasing access both to natural areas and the nearby countryside. The residents to the west of Bewdley are in close proximity to woods which compensate to an extent for the lack of natural and semi natural space within the settlement.

NSN4	<p>Protect natural open spaces in Bewdley analysis area from development. Seek to improve access to existing sites in the area, particularly sites located outside Bewdley town centre and areas of nearby countryside.</p> <p>Opportunities to provide any new natural areas in areas currently deficient should be explored.</p>
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Stourport analysis area

- 5.43 The Stourport analysis area has the greatest quantity of natural and semi natural open space in the District (78.07 ha). Application of the quantity standard further supports the abundance of this typology in the area, and there is sufficient provision to meet both the current and future needs of residents. Despite an abundance of natural and semi natural open space in this area of Wyre Forest, accessibility mapping reveals a poor distribution of sites, with sites primarily located in the southern region. Due to a poor distribution of sites, residents to the north west of Stourport town centre cannot access a natural or semi natural open space within the recommended accessibility catchment (Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4 – Deficiency to the north west of Stourport town centre



- 5.44 The area deficient in the provision of natural and semi natural open space is located close to Stourport Memorial Park. This park is the largest in the Stourport analysis area and provides a valuable resource to local residents.
- 5.45 The location of Devils Spittleful Nature Reserve on the edge of Stourport and Leapgate Country Park just outside the area boundary means residents have access to large strategic sites within and adjacent to the District. Due to the nature of these sites, their catchment areas may be larger, with residents willing to travel further to access these sites. While this does not negate the need for localised provision, these sites help alleviate demand, particularly Devils Spittleful Nature Reserve, located near the existing area of deficiency.
- 5.46 The protection of these valuable sites should be a priority, as well as increasing access and linkages for both recreational use as well as wildlife migration.
- 5.47 In light of the proximity of the area of deficiency to the Memorial Park, provision of new natural and semi natural open space should not be prioritised. In line with this, consideration should be given to the integration of natural open space within Memorial Park.

NSN5	Protect natural and semi natural open space in the Stourport analysis area, particularly larger sites of strategic importance. Increase access to existing sites in the area through the enhancement of linkages between open spaces.
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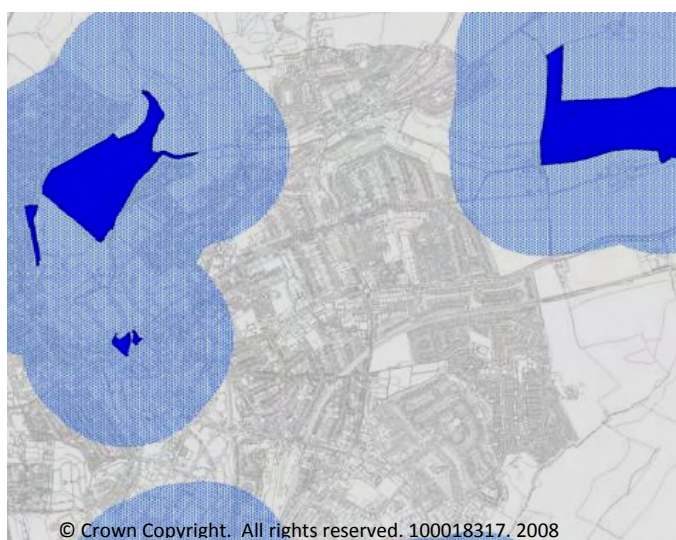
5.48 Much regeneration work is scheduled to take place in Stourport over the next 2 – 3 years. Plans include improvements to biodiversity being secured on an area of land adjacent to housing in The Walshes (an area of deprivation) and the adoption of land on the outskirts of the old power station for open space. While this scheme does not fall within the area of deficiency, these and other plans should be encouraged as a way of improving access to natural and semi natural open space and other types of space across the District. Linkages between and within spaces emerged as a key theme throughout consultation.

NSN6	Recognise schemes designed to link open spaces as examples of good practice.
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Kidderminster East

5.49 Application of the quantity standard reveals that Kidderminster East analysis area contains the greatest quantitative shortfall of natural and semi natural open space. Based on the current population there is an undersupply of -42.34 hectares and future population projections show this deficiency is set to increase to -46.07 hectares by 2026. Accessibility mapping supports the findings of the quantity standard, with the majority of residents in the analysis area outside the recommended catchment of a natural or semi natural open space (Figure 5.5). Provision of natural and semi natural open space is particularly challenging within an urban area.

Figure 5.5 – Deficiency in Kidderminster East analysis area



SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

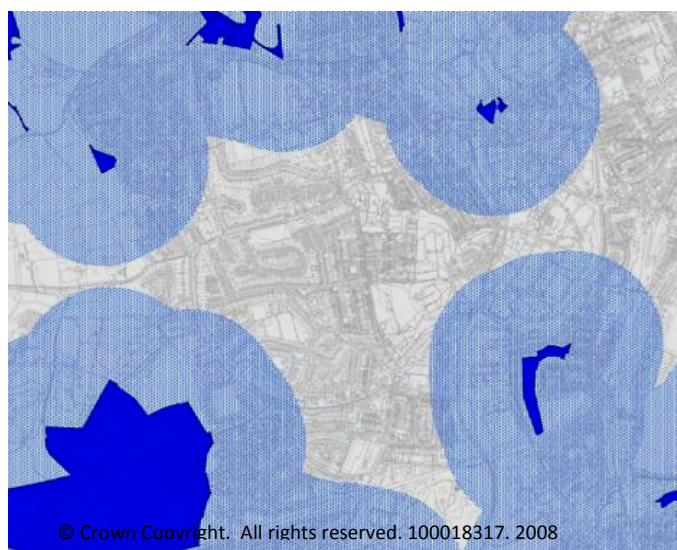
- 5.50 As well as having insufficient provision of natural and semi natural open space; Kidderminster East analysis area also has the greatest quantitative shortfall of amenity green space and town parks. The amenity green space sites in the south of the analysis area provide little access for residents in the area deficient in the provision of natural and semi natural open space. However, the excellent provision and good distribution of local parks and the location of Broadwaters Park in the north of the analysis area means the majority of residents in the area of deficiency have access to either a local park or town park.
- 5.51 In light of the existing large deficiencies in the provision of natural and semi natural open space and amenity green space in Kidderminster East analysis area, consideration should be given to the provision of new natural and semi natural open space sites in the area. Development of natural areas is both a lengthy process and challenging in an urban environment. Consideration should therefore be given to the integration of natural areas and other types of open space.

NSN7	Investigate opportunities to provide natural and semi natural open space in the north of Kidderminster East analysis area. Consider the provision of natural and semi natural open space within existing open spaces.
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Kidderminster West

- 5.52 Similar to the Kidderminster East analysis area, within the Kidderminster West analysis area there is a large future quantitative shortfall in the provision of natural and semi natural open space (-21.50 ha). The existing deficiency in this area of the District is further highlighted through the application of the accessibility standards where it can be seen that there is a large deficiency in the centre of Kidderminster (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6 – Deficiency in the centre of Kidderminster



- 5.53 Analysis further reveals that this analysis area is deficient in the provision of amenity green space and local parks.

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- 5.54 However, Brinton Park is located in the region of the analysis area where residents cannot access a natural or semi natural open space within the recommended travel time. Due to the location of Brinton Park in the area of existing deficiency, all residents who cannot access a natural or semi natural open space are within the local accessibility catchment of Brinton Park. Brinton Park provides a wide range of facilities including sports facilities, children’s play area, skatepark and ornamental beds and gardens. The park is therefore an important resource to local residents and those living in other areas of the District, proving a number of opportunities for sport and recreation.
- 5.55 Despite a shortfall of natural and semi natural open space in Kidderminster West analysis area, the location of Brinton Park (in an area of deficiency) and the local access to Devils Spittleful Nature Reserve, means that focus should be placed on improving access to existing natural and semi natural open spaces in the analysis area. The distribution of sites provides the opportunity for a network of linked natural and semi natural open spaces within the area.

NSN8	Seek to increase access to existing natural and semi natural sites in Kidderminster West analysis area. Consider the possibility of providing a network of linked open spaces. Seize opportunities to increase the provision of natural and semi natural open space.
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Rural East analysis areas

- 5.56 The Rural East analysis area has the greatest provision of natural and semi natural open space when applied against the local standard for 2026 (45.33 ha). Application of the accessibility standard further exemplifies this with nearly all residents in larger settlements in the area able to access a natural and semi natural open space within the recommended travel time. Only in Fairfield are residents outside the catchment of a natural or semi natural open space (Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7 – Deficiency in Fairfield



- 5.57 Although residents in Fairfield are unable to access a natural or semi natural open space within the recommended travel time, they are in close proximity to the proposed Stour Valley Country Park. The good provision of local countryside and woods also provides residents with access to natural and semi natural open space.

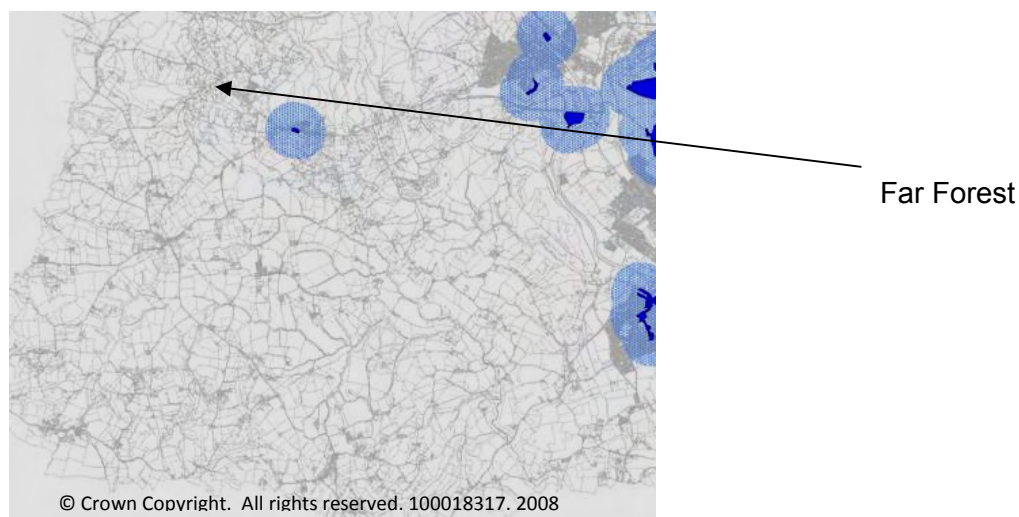
- 5.58 Two of the largest natural and semi natural open spaces in the District are located within the Rural East analysis area, Kingsford Country Park (81 ha) and Hurcott Pool and Woods (43 ha), which is classified as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- 5.59 In consideration of the sufficient provision of natural and semi natural open space and the good distribution of high quality facilities in the analysis area, the focus should be placed on the qualitative enhancement of existing sites, particularly the larger strategic sites in the area. All opportunities to increase access to nearby sites should be seized.

NSN9	Seek to implement the recommended quality vision at all sites within the Rural East analysis area and target improvements at sites where quality does not reach this level.
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Rural West analysis area

- 5.60 Application of the quantity standard reveals the Rural West analysis area will have a minor shortfall in provision by 2026 (-0.28 ha). However, accessibility mapping reveals that only residents in Callow Hill can access a natural or semi natural open space within the recommended 10 minute walk time. The location of the only natural or semi natural open space in Callow Hill creates deficiencies in the settlements of Far Forest, Bliss Gate, Rock and Clows Top (Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8 – Deficiencies in Rural West analysis area



- 5.61 Although there is a minor quantitative shortfall in the provision of natural and semi natural open space in the Rural West analysis area, the abundance of surrounding countryside means residents do have access to informal natural open space. Therefore focus should be placed on enhancing access to natural and semi natural open space within this area of Wyre Forest. Although increases in access to open space should be prioritised, opportunities to provide more formal spaces within the larger settlements such as Far Forest and Rock should be taken if they arise. There is potential for natural and semi natural open space to be integrated within the provision of other typologies.

NSN10	Seek to increase access to natural and semi natural open space within the Rural West analysis area. Should the opportunity arise, consider the provision of more formal natural or semi natural open spaces in larger settlements in the area, such as Far Forest and Rock.
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Summary

- 5.62 Natural and semi natural open space is the most popular of all typologies in Wyre Forest, with 35% of residents indicating they use natural and semi natural open space more frequently than any other open space in the District.
- 5.63 In addition to the recreational value of natural resources, residents also recognised the wider benefits of natural open spaces, particularly in terms of providing opportunities for biodiversity and habitat creation.
- 5.64 Natural and semi natural open spaces, alongside areas of countryside, were perceived to be a key part of the character of the District and the value placed on these sites was clear. The need to protect these sites from development was a key theme throughout the consultation process. Residents and visitors recognised the benefits they draw from the excellent provision of nature reserves and large natural and semi natural sites in the area.
- 5.65 Application of the recommended standards highlights that the key priority for natural and semi natural open space is improvements to the quality of sites. Maximising access to natural and semi natural sites both within settlements and to those in the surrounding countryside should also be a key future priority, as well as conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
- 5.66 While there is an even distribution of natural open space sites across the District, opportunities to address deficiencies in the Kidderminster area should be taken. Development of linkages between existing natural and semi natural open space sites, other open space typologies and the nearby countryside is also seen as a future priority, particularly within the more urban areas of the District.

SECTION 6

AMENITY GREEN SPACE

Amenity green space

Introduction and definition

- 6.1 This type of open space is most commonly found in residential areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and green spaces in and around housing, with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work. Amenity green space is also often used for landscaping purposes.
- 6.2 Amenity green space is also often found in villages, in the form of village greens. Amenity green spaces can have an overlapping function with parks and gardens and natural areas and also provide informal opportunities for children's play where there are no other facilities. It is important therefore to consider the provision of amenity green spaces in the context of other types of open space.
- 6.3 This section relates to amenity green spaces and sets out the strategic context, key findings of the consultations and recommended local standards. The standards are then applied to evaluate the adequacy of the existing amenity green space and the associated demand for these spaces. Standards are also applied in the context of other open spaces with overlapping functions.
- 6.4 Policy LR2 of the **Wyre Forest District Adopted Local Plan** states that development proposals must, where appropriate, include provision for amenity green space (including LAPs) for the recreation and enjoyment of users. S106 obligations may be sought for contributions to the provision and enhancement of amenity green spaces. Development that will have an adverse impact on the provision of amenity green space will not be permitted.

Figure 6.1 – Example of an amenity green space



Consultation – Assessing Local Needs

- 6.5 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted that:
- the value of amenity green space was not particularly recognised by respondents to the IT survey for young people. Only a minority of children and young people identified amenity green space as their favourite open space
 - amenity green space is one of the least frequently visited open spaces, with only 2% of respondents to the household survey stating they use this open space most frequently. However, 24% of respondents visit amenity green space more than once a month. These low levels of usage in comparison to

SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

other types of open space are perhaps reflective of the emphasis on amenity green space for landscaping purposes rather than recreational usage

- residents reinforced the importance of achieving a balance between the appropriate quality and quantity of provision.

Existing provision - Quantity

6.6 The quantity of amenity green space in Wyre Forest is summarised in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 – Provision of amenity green space across Wyre Forest

Analysis areas	Current provision	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	LDF population (2026)	Provision per 1000 population (2026)
Bewdley	5.40	8	0.22	2.14	9,697	0.56
Stourport	11.82	8	0.4	6.15	20,811	0.57
Kidderminster East	2.72	6	0.15	1.1	30,827	0.09
Kidderminster West	5.90	7	0.26	2.05	27,419	0.22
Rural East	1.54	3	0.23	0.97	10,772	0.14
Rural West	0.00	0	-	-	2,874	0.00
Overall	27.38	32	0.15	6.15	102,400	0.27

6.7 The key issues emerging from Table 6.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of amenity green space across the District include:

- based on the findings of the household survey, there is a split in opinion regarding the provision of amenity green space, with 42% of respondents stating provision is sufficient while 44% indicate that there is insufficient provision. This split in opinion may be reflective of the interrelationship between quality and quantity highlighted earlier
- findings from the individual analysis areas also illustrate this split in opinion. The lowest level of satisfaction (and one of the only areas where the split in opinion is not evident) is located in the Kidderminster West analysis area, where only 28% of residents feel provision is about right. This is in contrast to the actual provision of amenity green space, with the Kidderminster West analysis area containing the second greatest quantity of this typology
- the greatest level of provision is located in the Stourport analysis area (11.82 ha) and this also results in the highest level of provision per 1000 of the population (0.5680 ha). 41% of residents from the household survey in the Stourport analysis area indicated that the level of provision is sufficient

- although the lowest level of provision is located in the rural analysis areas, residents are the most satisfied. It is likely that this is influenced by the abundance of natural and semi natural open space and countryside in this area of the District.

Setting provision standards – quantity

6.8 The recommended local quantity standard for amenity green space has been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix F. The standard has been set marginally above the existing level of provision to promote a balance between new provision in areas where it is most needed and qualitative enhancements where new provision is not required.

Quantity standard (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.28 ha per 1000	0.29 ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>Local consultation findings highlight a split in opinion regarding the current provision of amenity green space, with 44% of residents indicating provision is insufficient and 42% stating provision is sufficient. Drop in session attendees further identified the need for balance between quantity and quality.</p> <p>In consideration of local consultation identifying a split in opinion with regards to the provision of amenity green space it is recommended the standard is set slightly above the current level of provision. Setting the standard at this level will enable the Council to identify priorities for new provision and also focus on enhancing the quality of existing sites within the District.</p>	

Current provision - quality

6.9 The quality of existing amenity green space in the District was assessed through site visits and is set out in Table 6.2 overleaf. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.

SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

- 6.10 The quality scores are weighted according to the findings of the local consultation. Those elements that were highlighted through consultation as being a particularly important determinant of the quality of amenity green spaces have been weighted higher to ensure that they have a greater influence on the overall quality score that each site achieves. In particular, the cleanliness and maintenance and ancillary accommodation was perceived to be important for amenity green spaces. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix G.

Table 6.2 – Quality of amenity green space across Wyre Forest

Analysis area	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bewdley	8	40– 67	55	Open Space adjacent to QEII Gardens – ID 581	Severn Side North AGS – ID 304
Stourport	8	42 – 60	55	River Stour AGS- ID 180	Riverside Walk AGS - ID 179
Kidderminster East	6	47 - 60	52	Upton Road – ID 200	Green adjacent to Viaduct Pub – ID 194
Kidderminster West	7	30 – 60	53	Jubilee Drive AGS – ID 65	Ferguson Drive AGS – ID 60
Rural East	3	-	54	-	The Green – ID 247
Rural West	0	-	-	-	-
Overall	32	30 – 67	55	Jubilee Drive AGS – ID 65	Severn Side North AGS – ID 304

- 6.11 The key issues emerging from Table 6.2 and the consultation relating to the quality of amenity green space include:
- the general consensus of respondents to the household survey is that the quality of amenity green space is average – over half of all respondents hold this view. Site assessments indicate that the quality of amenity green space in Wyre Forest is poorer than many other typologies, with the average quality score of a site being 55%
 - the average quality score within each analysis area is similar. Despite this, the range of quality scores (30% - 67%) indicates that there is significant variation in the quality of provision. All areas contain some sites of low quality.

Setting provision standards – quality

- 6.12 The recommended local quality standard for amenity green space is summarised below. Full justifications and consultation relating to the quality of provision for the

SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

local standard is provided within Appendix G. Improvements to the quality of amenity green space were perceived to be particularly important to local residents.

Quality Standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – AMENITY GREEN SPACE		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
Essential	Desirable	
Well kept grass	Dog walking facilities	
Clean/litter free	Level surface	
Dog free area		
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to amenity green spaces, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:		
Component of quality	Proportion of possible total responses received	Weighting
Security and safety	4%	1
Cleanliness and maintenance	56%	4
Vegetation	11%	2
Ancillary accommodation	15%	3
<i>Analysis suggests the improvement in quality of amenity green space is considered to be more important than increasing its provision.</i>		

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 6.13 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing an opportunity for all people to use the site. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.
- 6.14 Site specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the site visits. Information and signage, transport and general accessibility issues were assessed.
- 6.15 78% of residents would expect to walk to amenity green spaces. This emphasises the expectation that these sites are perceived to be local resources.
- 6.16 The recommended local accessibility standard for amenity green space is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H.

Accessibility Standard (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
10 MINUTE WALK TIME
Justification
A walk time standard has been set based upon the high level of expectation to travel by foot to access an amenity green space emphasised throughout consultation.
The 75% threshold level established from responses to the household survey is a 10 minute walk time. It is therefore recommended the local standard be set at a 10 minute walk time across the District. At least one site of recreational value should be provided within 10 minutes walk time of the home. Additional amenity green space may be required for landscaping purposes.

Applying provision standards

- 6.17 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of open space sport and recreation facilities and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 6.18 Table 6.3 summarises the application of the quantity standard both at the existing time and up to 2026.

Table 6.3 – Application of quantity standard

Analysis areas	Current balanced against local standard (0.29 hectares per 1000 population)	Future balanced against local standard (0.29 hectares per 1000 population)
Bewdley	2.78	2.64
Stourport	6.20	5.89
Kidderminster East	-5.60	-6.07
Kidderminster West	-1.50	-1.91
Rural East	-1.37	-1.53
Rural West	-0.77	-0.82
Overall	-0.26	-1.80

Green = above the minimum standard, Red = below the minimum standard

SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

6.19 It can be seen that:

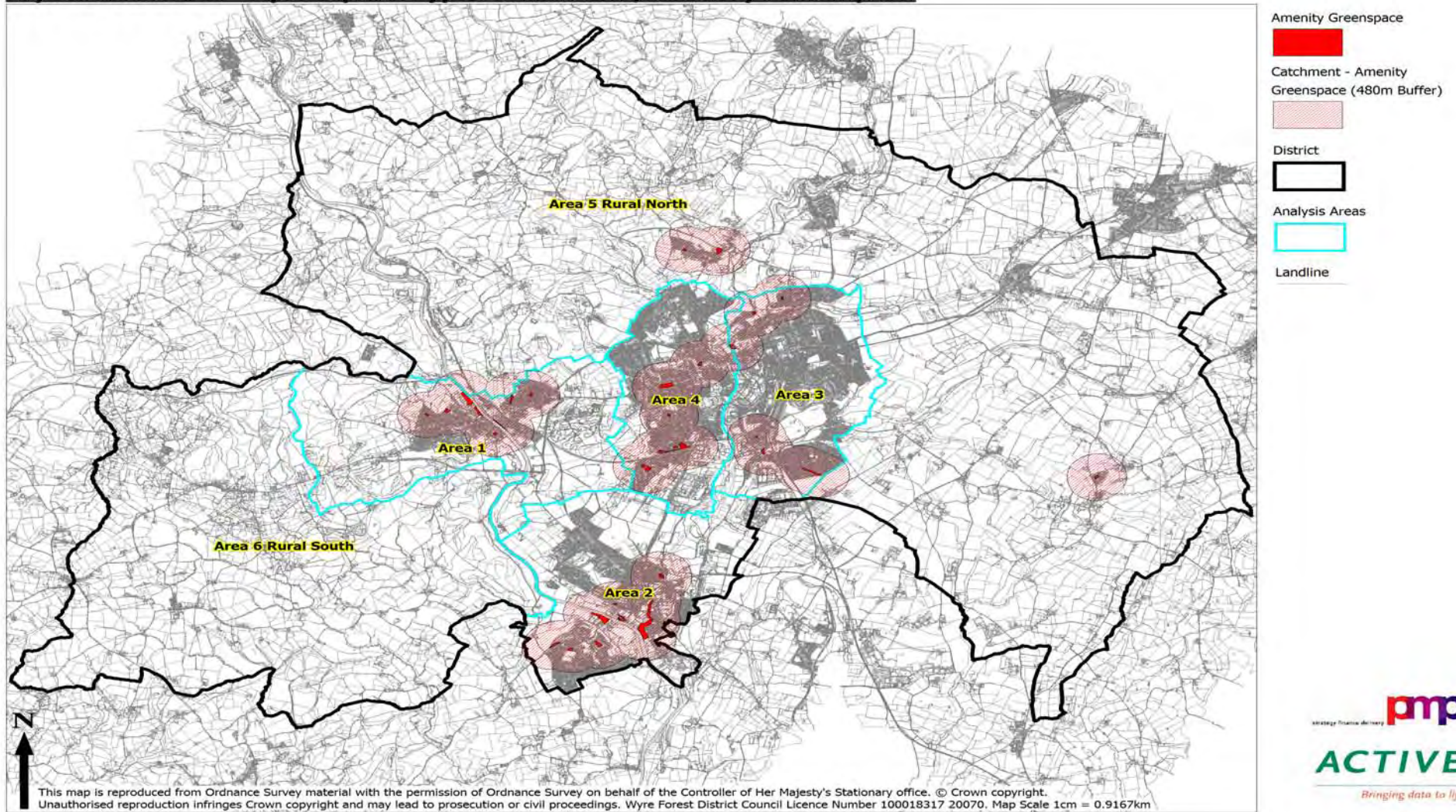
- the application of the quantity standard shows there is currently a small overall shortfall in the provision of amenity green space (-0.26 ha). Taking into account future population projections the overall shortfall in Wyre Forest will rise to -1.80 ha by 2026
- only Bewdley and Stourport will have sufficient provision of amenity green space by 2026. These areas are also the only areas where current provision is sufficient
- residents in Kidderminster West indicated the greatest dissatisfaction with the current provision of amenity green space. The provision of amenity green space in this area will be below the recommended quantity standard by 2026 (-1.91 ha). Other areas however exhibit greater deficiencies.

6.20 The application of the local accessibility and quality standards for amenity green space is set out overleaf (Map 6.1). Provision of amenity green space is also considered in relation to the location of parks and gardens and this can be seen in Map 6.2.

SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

Map 6.1 – Provision of amenity green space in Wyre Forest

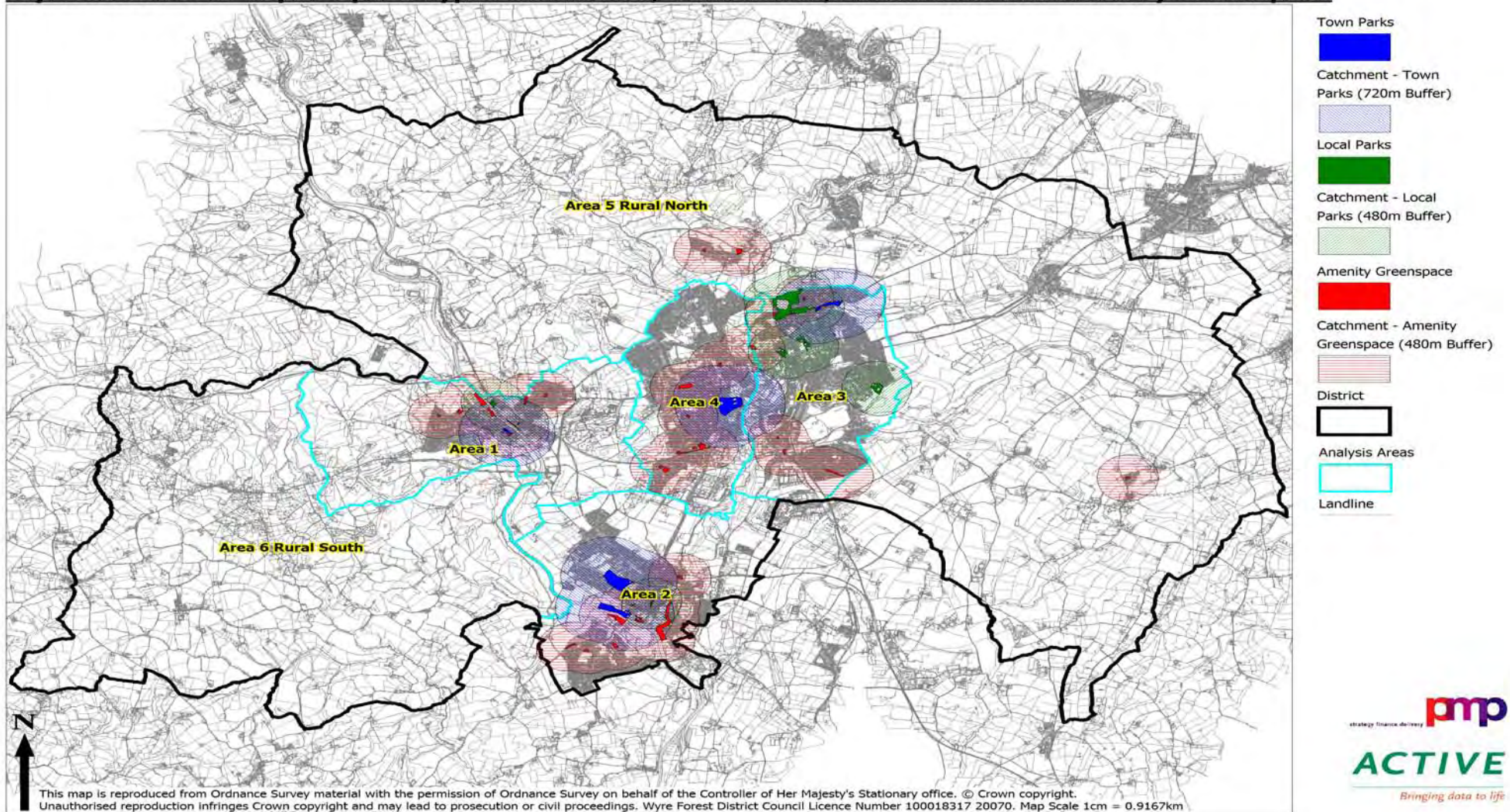
Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Amenity Greenspace



SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

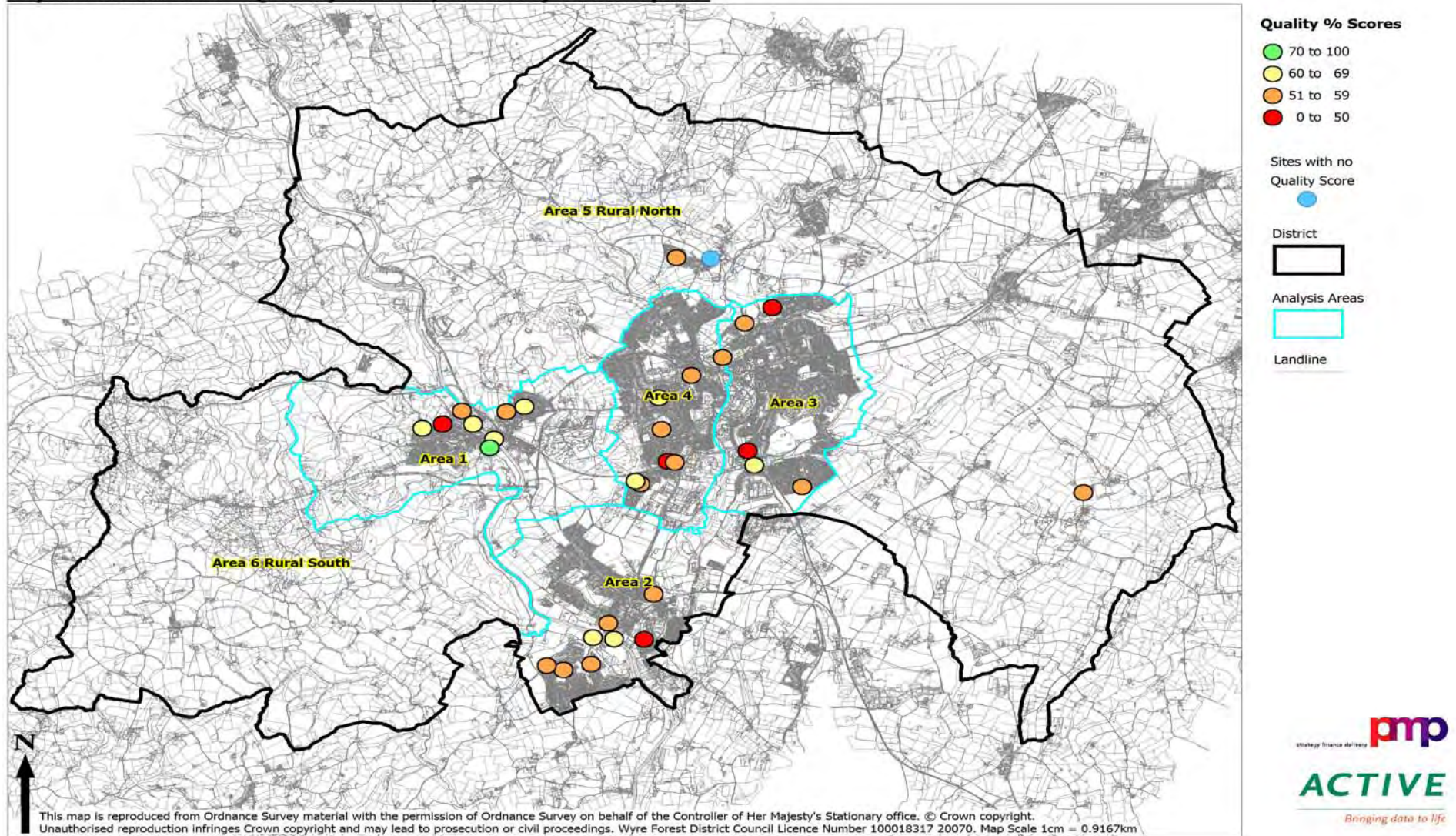
Map 6.2 – Provision of amenity green space and parks and gardens in Wyre Forest

Wyre Forest OSS - Open Space Type Catchments, Town Parks, Local Parks and Amenity Greenspace



Map 6.3 – Quality of amenity green space sites in Wyre Forest

Wyre Forest OSS - Quality Scores, Amenity Greenspace



SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

- 6.21 Map 6.1 highlights that amenity green space is poorly distributed across the District. Only in the Bewdley analysis area can the majority of residents access an amenity green space within the recommended 10-minute walk time. Overlapping catchments are evident in all areas of the District, particularly within the Stourport and Kidderminster West analysis area. Key areas of deficiency exist in the Kidderminster East analysis area, in the north of the Kidderminster west analysis area and the north of Stourport analysis area and these are set out below in Figures 6.2 – 6.4.

Figure 6.2 – Deficiencies in the Kidderminster East analysis area

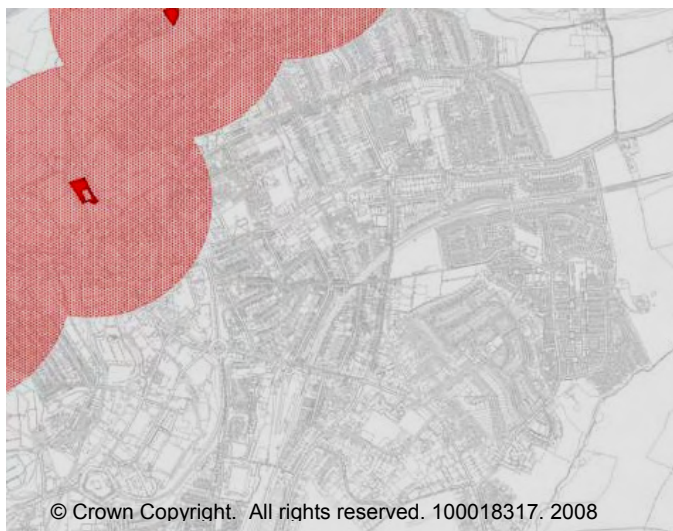


Figure 6.3 – Deficiencies in the north of the Kidderminster West analysis area

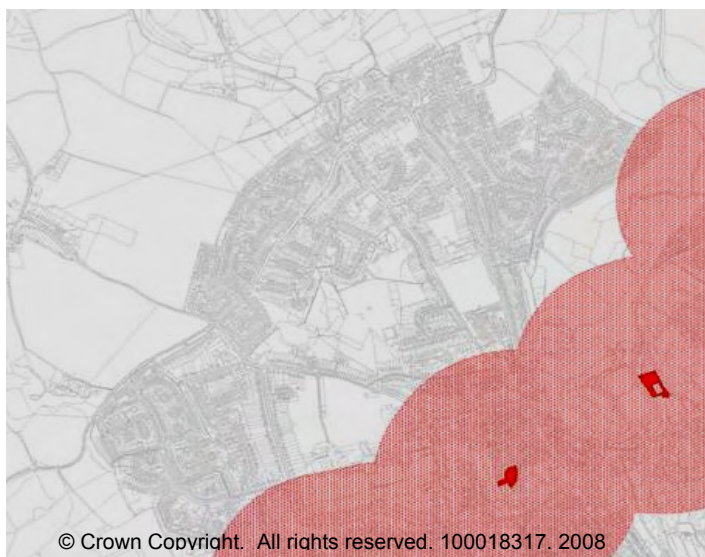


Figure 6.4 – Deficiencies in the north of the Stourport analysis area



6.22 The key issues emerging from the quality of existing amenity green space in Wyre Forest (Map 6.3) are:

- within the District there is generally an even distribution of similar quality sites
- in the Kidderminster East analysis area there is a large number of poor quality sites
- the only high quality site is located in the Bewdley analysis area.

Applying the quantity, quality and accessibility standards

6.23 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas where there is potential unmet demand we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify whether areas are quantitatively above or below the recommended minimum standard and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

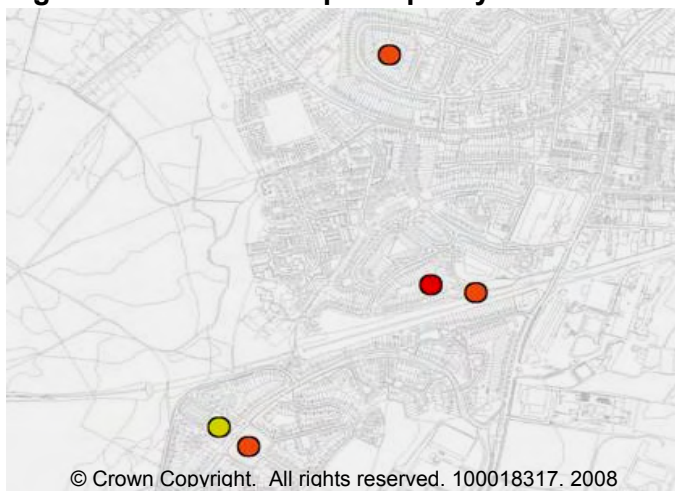
6.24 Consultation highlights the importance of obtaining a balance between the quality and quantity of amenity green space and the quality was considered to be of particular importance. The interrelationship between quality and quantity was clear.

6.25 The existing quality of amenity green spaces is variable, with all areas containing a mixture of poor and average quality sites. Three of the six poorest quality sites are located within the Kidderminster East analysis area, where the lowest levels of provision can be found. Examples of clusters of poor quality provision can be seen in Figures 6.5 and 6.6.

Figure 6.5 – Cluster of poor quality sites in Kidderminster East analysis area



Figure 6.6 – Cluster of poor quality sites in Kidderminster West analysis area



6.26 In light of the importance of the quality of amenity green spaces, sites have been divided into quartiles according to their quality in order to identify those sites where particular improvement is required. This analysis is set out in Table 6.4 overleaf and a selection of sites falling into each category are listed. A full list of all scores achieved during site assessments can be found within Appendix C. It can be seen that to fall within the top quartile, a score of 70% would be required.

AGS1	Seek to improve the quality of amenity green spaces, aiming to achieve a minimum score of 70% (the score required to fall within the top quartile). In particular, it is likely that improvements to the provision of ancillary facilities will be of particular benefit to the overall quality of amenity green space.
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Table 6.4 – Detailed analysis of the quality of existing sites

Above upper quartile	61% +	(67%) Severn Side North AGS – ID 304
Median – upper quartile	57% - 60%	(60%) Riverside Walk AGS – ID 179 (58%) Sion Gardens – ID 138
Lower quartile – median	51% - 56%	(54%) Dunley Road AGS – ID 143
Less than lower quartile	Below 50%	(50%) Captain’s Pool Road AGS – ID 46 (30%) Jubilee Drive AGS – ID 65

6.27 The key issues emerging from Table 6.4 and the site assessments include:

- only one site achieved a score of 61% or above (the quality standard) indicating that there is a need for improvements to the majority of sites
- seven sites scored 50% and below and consequently fall within the bottom quartile. These sites should be prioritised for improvement.

6.28 In order to ensure the future quality of open spaces, consideration should be given to the size of sites. Smaller sites (particularly those located in proximity to larger facilities) may be of limited value to local residents and costly in terms of maintenance to the provider.

6.29 In addition to the required improvements to the quality of provision, the breakdown of provision by analysis area has revealed a requirement for additional amenity green space over the Local Development Framework period in all analysis areas except Bewdley and Stourport.

6.30 The most appropriate priorities for each area of the District are therefore discussed taking into account the relationship between quality, quantity and accessibility.

Bewdley analysis area

6.31 As indicated, the application of the local quantity standard suggests there is currently adequate provision within Bewdley analysis area. Accessibility mapping further reflects this, with the majority of residents able to access an amenity green space within the recommended 10 minute walk time.

6.32 The quality of amenity green space in the Bewdley analysis area is the highest in Wyre Forest with the average quality score being 60%. Despite this, Millennium Green Wribbenhall (54%), Greenacres Lane (54%) and Bark Hill Park (42%) are particularly poor quality sites (Figure 6.7). In light of the even distribution of sites, qualitative improvements should be prioritised in this area.

Figure 6.7 – Poor quality sites in Bewdley analysis area



- 6.33 Bark Hill Park and Greenacres Lane are located in close proximity to one another and provide valuable recreational resources to residents to the west of Bewdley town centre. These sites should be identified as priorities for improvement.
- 6.34 Although there are some residents of Bewdley outside the recommended catchment of an amenity green space, the provision of Jubilee Gardens in the analysis area alleviates deficiencies in this area, negating the need for additional amenity green space in this area of Bewdley.

AGS2	Focus on the qualitative enhancement of existing facilities within Bewdley analysis area. Use the findings of the site assessments to prioritise sites for improvement. Any improvements should take account of the quality vision, which identified maintenance and cleanliness as important to local residents.
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Stourport analysis area

- 6.35 Analysis of amenity green space in Stourport indicates that in quantitative terms, there is sufficient amenity green space to meet current and future needs. Despite this, accessibility mapping reveals that sites are unevenly distributed, with amenity green space predominantly concentrated in the south of the analysis area. Due to the poor distribution of amenity green space, residents in the north of the analysis area cannot access a site within the recommended 10 minute walk time (Figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8 – Deficiencies in the north of Stourport analysis area



- 6.36 When considering the provision of amenity green space in the context of parks it can be seen that nearly all residents in the Stourport analysis area have access to either a park or amenity green space within the recommended distance threshold. Only a small amount of residents in the north of the analysis area are outside the accessibility threshold of either a park or amenity green space (Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9 – Deficiency in the north of Stourport analysis area



- 6.37 Due to the high density of housing in this area of Stourport it will be challenging to provide a new amenity green space. In addition, access to natural and semi natural open space and the location of Memorial Park provides many potential recreation opportunities. Green linkages from the area of deficiency to nearby open spaces should be developed.

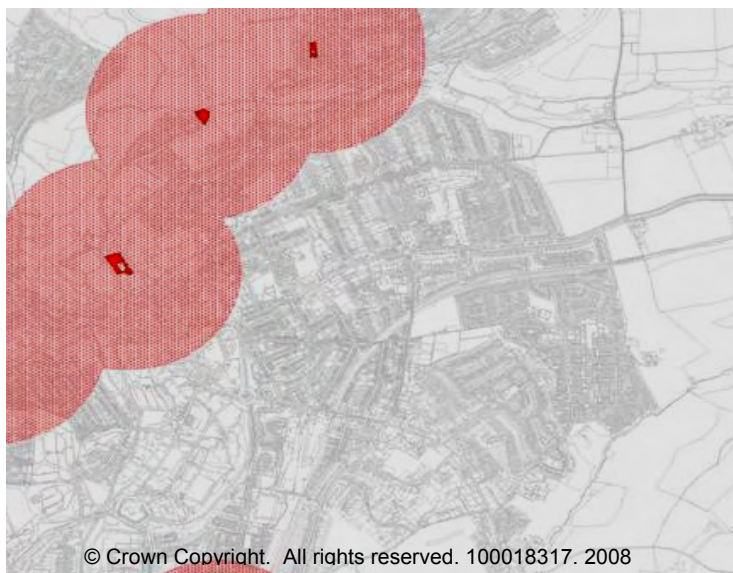
AGS3	Develop green linkages from the area of deficiency to Memorial Park and areas of nearby natural open space.
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Kidderminster East analysis area

- 6.38 The largest quantitative deficiency of amenity green space is located in the Kidderminster East analysis area (-6.07 ha). Application of the accessibility standard

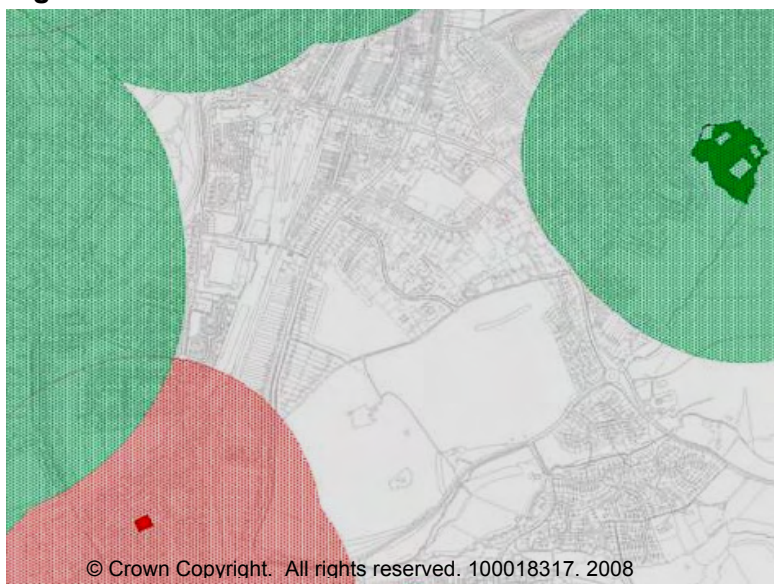
reveals that sites are located in close proximity to one another and concentrated in the south of the analysis area. As a consequence, there are large deficiencies in the centre and north of the analysis area (Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 – Deficiencies in the Kidderminster east analysis area



- 6.39 When considering the provision of parks in the area application of the accessibility standard illustrates parks are concentrated in the North East of Kidderminster meaning that a large proportion of residents outside the catchment of an amenity green space are able to access a park. Only residents in Offmore and to the west of Comberton do not have access to an amenity green space or park (Figure 6.11).

Figure 6.11 – Deficiencies in Offmore and to the west of Comberton



- 6.40 Although residents cannot access an amenity green space or park within the recommended accessibility standards there is good provision of other open spaces in the area that do provide many recreational and sporting opportunities. Due to the dense urban nature of this area of Kidderminster, there is little potential to provide new amenity green space sites. In light of this, focus should be placed on investing

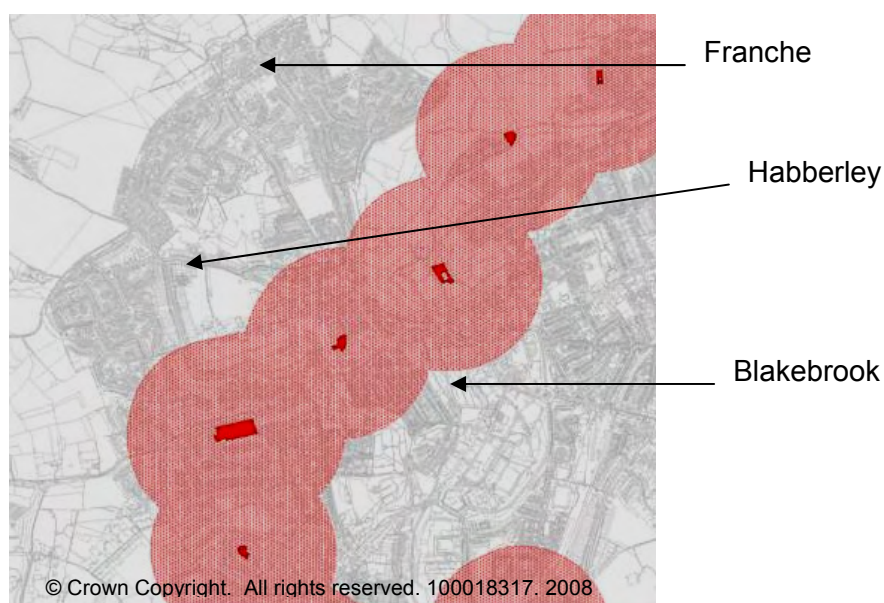
in near by parks to increase their value to the local community and developing green linkages to these sites.

AGS4	Prioritise investment in parks located in the north of the Kidderminster East analysis area. Use the findings from the site assessments to prioritise those sites in need of enhancement. Develop green linkages to provide access to these sites for residents in areas of deficiency. Seize opportunities to provide new open space in this area.
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Kidderminster West analysis area

- 6.41 As with the Kidderminster East analysis area the Kidderminster West analysis area has insufficient provision of amenity green space. Application of the quantity standard highlights this shortfall with clear areas of deficiency located in Habberley, Franche and Blakebrook (Figure 6.12).

Figure 6.12 – Deficiencies in Kidderminster west analysis area



- 6.42 While the location of Brinton Park alleviates deficiencies in Blakebrook, residents in Franche and Habberley cannot access a park or amenity green space within the recommended local standard (Figure 6.13).

Figure 6.13 – Deficiencies in Habberley and Franche



- 6.43 As previously highlighted, the dense urban nature of Kidderminster provides little opportunity for the new provision of open space, however should the opportunity arise new amenity green space should be provided within Habberley and Franche to offset deficiencies in these areas. Alternatively, linkages should be developed to maximise opportunities for local residents.

AGS5	Should the opportunity arise, provide new amenity green space within Franche and Habberley. Develop linkages in these areas to existing green spaces.
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- 6.44 Although residents of Habberley and Franche are within relatively close proximity of Brinton Park and are likely to use this site (it attracts residents from a wider catchment due to the opportunities it offers), its presence does not negate the need for a local facility.

Rural East analysis areas

- 6.45 Application of the quantity standard highlights a shortfall in the provision of amenity green space in the Rural East analysis areas. Based on future population projections there is expected to be a deficiency of –1.53 ha by 2026 and accessibility mapping reveals a number of settlements, particularly Cookley and Blakedown, do not contain amenity green space.
- 6.46 Based on the local quantity standard and the average size of an amenity green space within the rural area (used to define the minimum size) it could be suggested that as a minimum, amenity green space should be provided in settlements where the population exceeds 1750. Those settlements without sufficient provision should therefore be prioritised for improvement. This links with the provision for children, where a slightly smaller population is required before an equipped facility should be provided.

SECTION 6 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

- 6.47 Although there are no settlements in the rural analysis areas with a population above 1750 demand for amenity green space within the larger settlements such as Cookley and Blakedown, where there are currently no formal amenity areas, should be monitored. Despite having access to natural and semi natural open space and the countryside, amenity green space can play an important role in village life and is frequently of significant value to the local community.

AGS6	Monitor the demand for amenity green space within areas currently devoid of this typology. Particular consideration should be given to Cookley and Blakedown.
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- 6.48 Where there is existing provision, support should be given to providers of facilities in the rural areas to enhance the functionality of their existing open spaces.

AGS7	Provide support to providers of amenity green spaces in village areas to make qualitative improvements to sites to enhance the functionality of spaces.
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Rural West analysis area

- 6.49 There are no amenity green space sites located within the Rural West analysis area and unsurprisingly quantitative analysis of the provision of amenity green space in the Rural West analysis area reveals there is insufficient provision to meet current and future needs.

- 6.50 As previously mentioned there is no specific need to provide amenity green space in settlements with a population below 1750. However, in light of the quantitative shortfalls the Council should monitor demand in the area, particularly in larger settlements and consider the new provision of amenity green space if required.

AGS8	Monitor the demand for amenity green space within the Rural West analysis area. Consider the provision of new amenity green space where there is expressed demand.
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- 6.51 In many instances, improving access to the countryside is more important to residents than the creation of local amenity areas, although local provision is important to ensure that children have informal spaces. It is important to ensure an appropriate balance between local provision and maximising the use of natural resources.

AGS9	Improve links to areas of nearby countryside for residents in the rural areas through the enhancement of the public rights of way network and the maximisation of opportunities to further develop green corridors.
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Summary

- 6.52 For many residents amenity green space will be the most accessible form of open space provision. The value of amenity green spaces within close proximity to residents was noted through the local consultation. While amenity green space often fulfils a similar role to larger informal open spaces (eg parks and natural areas) the local nature of this type of open space is of particular importance.
- 6.53 Local consultation highlighted the importance of the balance between quality and quantity.
- 6.54 Application of the local standards highlighted that there is an imbalance in provision, with large quantities of amenity green space located in the urban areas of the District, particularly within the Bewdley and Stourport analysis areas and a more sporadic distribution elsewhere across the District. In many instances those areas deficient in amenity green space also exhibit shortfalls in the provision of parks. Many of these areas are densely populated and there are therefore few opportunities for new provision. Linkages between existing green spaces and areas of deficiency will therefore be of particular importance.
- 6.55 While the overall direction should remain on enhancing the quality of amenity green spaces (particularly with regards cleanliness and maintenance and increasing the range of facilities provided), opportunities to address the identified deficiencies should also be taken. The priority for new provision should be focused within the Kidderminster East analysis area. Demand within the rural settlements should be monitored and new amenity green space sites provided where there is sufficient expressed demand to warrant provision.