

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Open  
Space, Sport and Recreation Study  
(2013 – 2033)**



**Open Space Study  
(June 2018)**



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# Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Open Space Study

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## Glossary of Terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>ANGSt</b>	Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
<b>AONB</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<b>CIL</b>	Community Infrastructure Levy
<b>DPD</b>	Development Plan Document
<b>FIT</b>	Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
<b>GI</b>	Green Infrastructure
<b>GIST</b>	Green Infrastructure Strategy
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
<b>IMD</b>	Index of Multiple Deprivation
<b>KCC</b>	Kent County Council
<b>LAP</b>	Local Area for Play
<b>LEAP</b>	Local Equipped Area for Play
<b>LSOA</b>	Lower-layer Super Output Area
<b>MUGA</b>	Multi Use Games Area
<b>NEAP</b>	Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
<b>NEWP</b>	Natural Environment White Paper
<b>NGB</b>	National Governing Body
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>NSALG</b>	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
<b>OAN</b>	Objectively Assessed Need
<b>PPG17</b>	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
<b>PROW</b>	Public Right of Way
<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Planning Document
<b>SUD</b>	Sustainable Urban Drainage
<b>TWBC</b>	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities. The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to set out policies to help enable communities to access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies must be based on a thorough understanding of the local needs for such facilities and opportunities available for new provision.

1.1.2 Ethos Environmental Planning Ltd (in conjunction with Leisure and the Environment) were commissioned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to undertake an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. The Study responds to national policy requirements and will inform the preparation of the Council's emerging Local Plan, to cover the period 2013 - 2033.

### **1.2 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study**

1.2.1 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study examines existing and projected needs for open space, sport and recreation provision, using a variety of data sources, together with independent investigation, stakeholder and community consultation and surveys. Analysis of the data gathered, and the reporting of findings has followed appropriate national guidance.

1.2.2 In brief, the scope of the Study covers:

- Open space, including amenity and natural space, parks and recreation grounds, play space, allotments;
- Non-pitch sports; and
- Built sports facilities (primarily sports halls and swimming pools).

1.2.3 The Council's Environment/Parks team is also undertaking a separate Playing Pitch Needs and Opportunities Assessment (PPS). The PPS builds upon the preceding Assessment Report (Stage C) and provides a framework for future provision and management of sports pitches to serve existing and new communities across the borough of Tunbridge Wells and should be read in conjunction with the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study.

### **1.3 How does this Report relate to the Open Space Sport and Recreation Assessment?**

1.3.1 This Open Space Study has been undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning to inform the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan and the Council's decision-making process in relation to open space provision up to 2033. The Open Space Study is one of four reports provided as part of the overall Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Evidence.

1.3.2 The four reports which make up the evidence base are the:

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- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report;
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Open Space Study (this report);
- Tunbridge Wells Indoor, Built, Sports Facility Needs Assessment;
- Tunbridge Wells Playing Pitch Needs and Opportunities Assessment (this report has been prepared by consultants Strategic Leisure as a separate commission by the Borough Council).

1.3.3 The Study has been carried out in-line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 (*Para 73 and 74*). The Study has primarily been affected by the omission of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) from the new national policy framework. Whilst the government has not published anything specifically to replace this document (it does signpost the Sport England guidance for sports facilities assessments<sup>1</sup>), there is however, still a clear reference made in the new guidance to the principles and ideology established within PPG17. As such the underlying principles of this Study have been informed by the former guidance provided in '*Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*', and its Companion Guide '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities*', which is a tried and tested methodology and takes a consistent approach with many other local authorities.

1.3.4 It should be noted that this Study provides an evidence base for planning policy and is not a strategy document. The recommendations (Section 8) of this assessment include the basis for the formulation of policies related to open space that will be included within the new Local Plan.

## 1.4 The Local Plan

1.4.1 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has commenced work on preparing a new Local Plan that will guide future development in the borough up to 2033. The new Local Plan will replace the existing Local Plan 2006, Core Strategy 2010 and the Site Allocations Local Plan 2016. The new Plan will cover the period 2013-2033.

1.4.2 The Council's Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) as part of the production of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015 has identified an unconstrained need of 12,960 or 648 dwellings per annum, within the above period. However, the Government's "Standard Methodology" figure (as opposed to the OAN) for calculating housing need has been used for this Study as it is not vastly different from the OAN figure and the OAN figure is likely to be challenged.

1.4.3 The Standard Methodology Figure (692 dwellings per annum, or 13,840 dwellings over the plan period) is currently out to consultation, but the Council are using the figure with other evidence base documents and as a basis for their Plan preparation. The Council has recorded 5,912 dwellings as either completed or in the pipeline (with planning consent but either not started or currently under construction as at 2018), so this figure can be taken off the 13,840.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities>

1.4.4 The Council is therefore looking to allocate sites within the new Local Plan to meet this need of approximately 7,928 dwellings, which are estimated to accommodate 17,600 people<sup>2</sup>.

1.4.5 The Issues and Options Stage of the new Local Plan published five potential options for accommodating (individually or as a hybrid solution) this required growth. These being, as follows (a preferred growth option is still to be determined):

- **Option 1: Focused Growth.** Development distribution focused as per existing Core Strategy, i.e. majority of new development directed to Royal Tunbridge Wells/Southborough, a smaller proportion to the other three main settlements of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst and limited development within the villages and rural areas.
- **Option 2: Semi-dispersed Growth.** Development distribution semi-dispersed, with the majority of new development directed to Royal Tunbridge Wells/Southborough and a proportion distributed to the other three main settlements of Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst (as per Option 1), but additionally a percentage of development directed to some of the larger villages (taking account of settlement hierarchy). Limited development within the remaining villages and rural areas.
- **Option 3: Dispersed Growth.** Development distribution proportional across all of the borough's settlements.
- **Option 4: Growth Corridor-led Approach.** Development distribution focused around the A21, close to Royal Tunbridge Wells and Pembury, as a new 'growth corridor'.
- **Option 5: New Settlement Growth.** New freestanding 'Garden Village' settlement. There is no location identified with this option. A new settlement could be located anywhere within the borough (we are inviting views on the principle of a new settlement in providing for the future development needs of the borough).

## 1.5 Purpose of this Report

1.5.1 The aims of the Study are to provide a robust assessment of needs and provision of open spaces in order to establish local provision standards and create an up-to-date evidence base which can be used to inform the new Local Plan. The standards will be used to assess proposals for open spaces during the Local Plan period, recognising the need for improving the quality of existing open spaces in addition to requiring new provision as part of new development/site allocations within the local plan.

1.5.2 The Study will provide the Council with up to date information on open space location, coverage and provision. It will provide a comprehensive assessment of the current level of provision of the different types of open space.

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<sup>2</sup> The figure of 17,600 people is derived from multiplying the figure of 7,928 dwellings by the projected average household size in the Local Plan period (which is 2.22 persons per household by 2033). The figure of 2.22 is itself derived from dividing the ONS 2014-based borough population estimate for 2033 by the number of households that are projected for the borough in the year 2033 (taken from Table 401: Household projections, United Kingdom, 1961-2039 (from Household projections for England and local authority districts (2014 based))).

1.5.3 The brief for the Study highlighted that the core outcomes are:

- A comprehensive **audit of existing spaces and facilities** (irrespective of ownership and extent of public access and covering all types of provision) working with necessary groups and stakeholders to identify local provision. This audit should be borough wide, covering the rural areas as well as the urban area of Royal Tunbridge Wells. There must also be consideration of neighbouring authorities. The audit should assess each open space, sporting or recreational facility in terms of accessibility, quantity and quality of provision.
- Based upon the findings of the earlier stage, the consultants must **identify and recommend future standards of provision**, including those associated with ANGSt (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard).
- **Analysis of existing deficiencies and surpluses** in provision in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility and size. There should also be a forecast of future needs based on socio-demographic trends, trends in the popularity of different activities, and the impact of planning and other Council policies, and of currently planned provision. This should also identify the land use implications that would follow from making up deficiencies in provision.
- An indication of **strategic options and opportunities** including:
  - Which existing provision should be retained
  - Which existing provision should be enhanced
  - Which existing provision should be relocated
  - Which existing provision is surplus to requirement
  - Proposals, opportunities and requirements for new provision
  - Recommendation of policy / policies which should be included within the new Local Plan

## 1.6 Structure of the Report

1.6.1 The open space Study follows the five key stages as summarised below:

- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
- Step 2 – Audit of Existing Open Space Assets
- Step 3 – Setting Local Standards
- Step 4 – Applying Local Standards
- Step 5 – Drafting Policy Recommendations

## 1.7 The Study Area

### Overview of Tunbridge Wells Borough

1.7.1 Tunbridge Wells borough lies in the south west of Kent, bordering East Sussex. It covers an area of 326 square kilometres. The borough borders the authorities of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Maidstone and Ashford in Kent; and Rother and Wealden in East Sussex.

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1.7.2 Royal Tunbridge Wells forms the majority of the main urban area and provides a large proportion of the social, cultural and economic opportunities available in the borough. In addition to being the borough's principal retail centre, the town provides a wide variety of services, including primary and secondary schools, sports and community facilities and train stations. Historical and architectural features of the town, such as the Pantiles, also provide a high quality environment that attracts a significant amount of tourism to the borough. There are also a number of parks and commons that are integral to the character of the town.

1.7.3 Southborough also lies within the main urban area with Royal Tunbridge Wells (approximately 2 miles to the north of Tunbridge Wells) but has a separate smaller town centre and local 'Neighbourhood Centre' at High Brooms within its parish. As well as providing its own independent shopping facilities, Southborough also has a number of local and community services such as primary schools and specialist education facilities and a good range of recreational facilities.

1.7.4 Both Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough lie within the western part of the borough that is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and/or the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

1.7.5 The other towns are Paddock Wood, approximately 6 miles to the north east of Tunbridge Wells, and Cranbrook and Hawkhurst which are approximately 12 miles to the east/south east of Tunbridge Wells.

1.7.6 Paddock Wood benefits from good transport links and higher-order facilities, such as a secondary school and sports centre. There is a large employment area to the north of the railway line, which supports the town, the rural hinterland and beyond. In addition to a supermarket, existing retail is mainly devoted to the provision of local services. The western edge of the town abuts the Green Belt and the results of the previous Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2009), currently being updated, show that areas, particularly to the north of the town, are at risk of flooding.

1.7.7 Cranbrook is an attractive, vibrant rural town located within the High Weald AONB. The local architecture and features give it a distinctive character. Cranbrook also benefits from a range of comparison shopping facilities, a supermarket, secondary schools, a sports centre and the Weald Information Centre.

1.7.8 Hawkhurst features local architecture that is distinctive to the area and is located within the High Weald AONB. It supports a wide rural hinterland and benefits from a primary school, small independent cinema and two supermarkets.

1.7.9 The borough is also home to a variety of village settlements, each with its own character. Most villages are in the High Weald AONB and some in the western part of the borough are also in the Green Belt. All provide some facilities, such as a primary school, shop, public house or church. In addition, there are a number of hamlets and other more remote clusters of buildings and farmsteads dispersed across the borough, many of which are located

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within the High Weald AONB and/or Green Belt and provide important features of the landscape.

1.7.10 The quality of the landscape across the borough is generally high or very high, with 70% designated as High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is described in the borough Landscape Character Assessment. The AONB is of national importance but many local features and views inside and outside the AONB are valued by residents, with Commons, village greens and parks providing important spaces and links to the countryside.

### **Administrative Boundaries**

1.7.11 In order to analyse the current provision and future requirements for open space across Tunbridge Wells, parishes have been used as the geographical areas, the exception being for Royal Tunbridge Wells which is unparished and uses the wards that make up this area (as shown in figure 1). These boundaries are the basis for collating census data across the Council area. Of particular relevance to this Study are population statistics (Census, 2011), which have been used as the basis for much of the current and future assessment of need for open space.

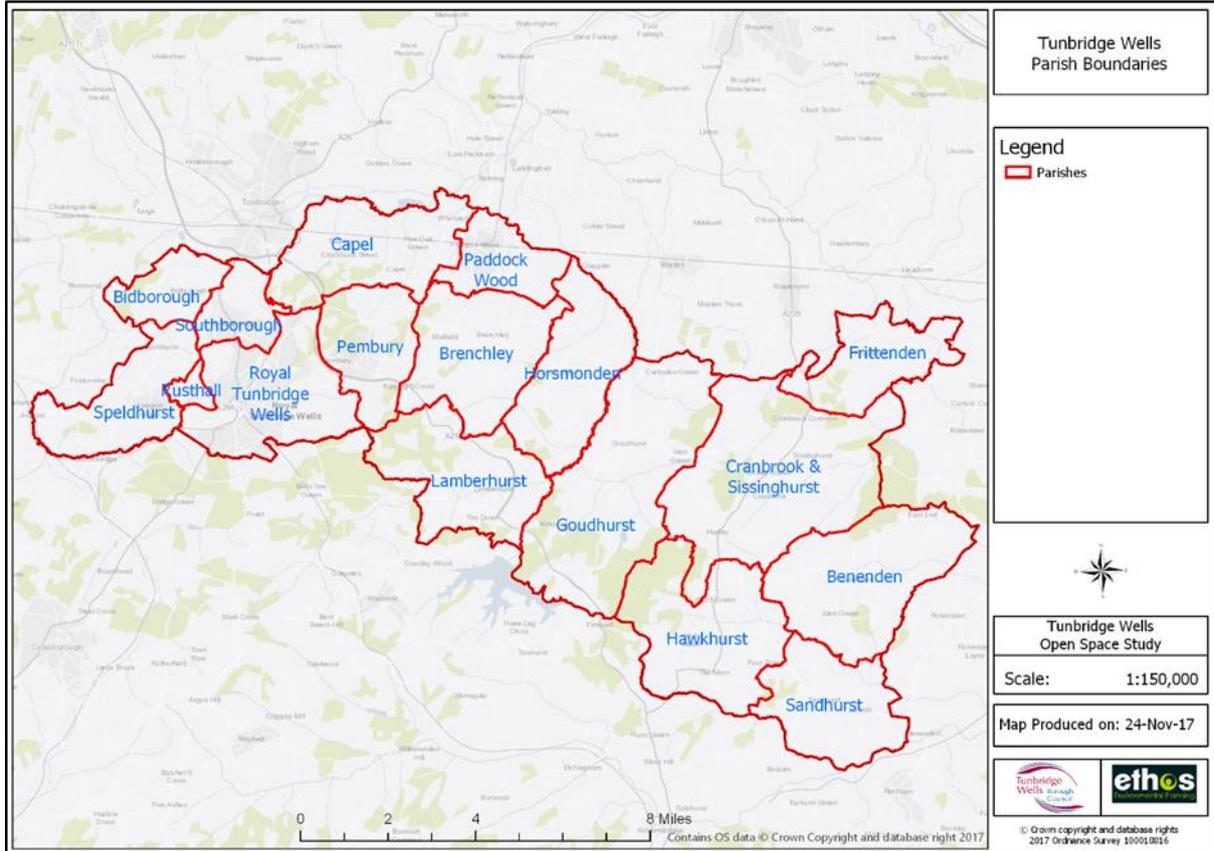
1.7.12 It should be noted that many parish boundaries include more than one key settlement, as follows:

- Benenden (including Iden Green);
- Brenchley (including Matfield);
- Cranbrook (including Sissinghurst);
- Capel (including Five Oak Green);
- Goudhurst (including Kilndown and Curtisden Green); and
- Speldhurst (including Ashurst, Langton Green and Old Groombridge).

1.7.13 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council shares borders with Ashford, Maidstone, Rother, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Wealden. Cross border issues are considered within the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report. It has been identified that there is cross boundary use of open space across a number of boundaries, most notably Wealden.

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Figure 1 Parish Boundaries in Tunbridge Wells borough



**Population Statistics**

1.7.14 The total population of Tunbridge Wells (based on the 2011 Census) is 115,049. Table 1 below shows the breakdown by Parish<sup>3</sup>.

Table 1 Parish population statistics (Census 2011)

Parish	Population
Benenden	2374
Bidborough	1163
Brenchley	2863
Capel	2467
Cranbrook	6717
Frittenden	888
Goudhurst	3327
Hawkhurst	4911
Horsmonden	2435
Lamberhurst	1706
Paddock Wood	8253
Pembury	6128

<sup>3</sup> Royal Tunbridge Wells is an unparished area, and therefore an aggregate of the 2011 census population data for the wards that make up this area (Broadwater, Culverden, Pantiles and St Mark’s, Park, Sherwood, St James’ and St John’s) have been used as these fit neatly with the parish boundaries.

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Population</b>
Rusthall	4976
Sandhurst	1478
Southborough	12061
Speldhurst	4978
Royal Tunbridge Wells (Unparished area - aggregated Wards)	48324

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## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

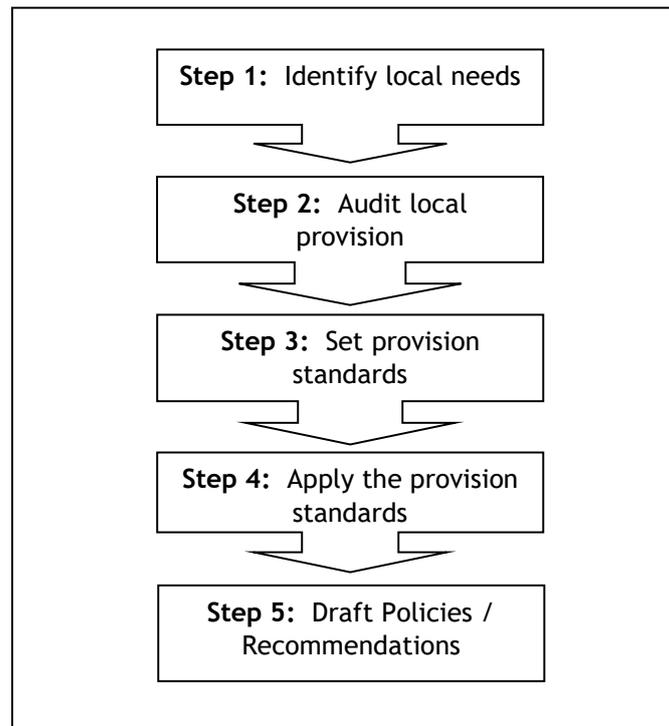
### 2.1 General

2.1.1 The starting point for this Study has been the guidance in Section 8 of the NPPF, which adheres to but has superseded PPG17. The policy gives clear recommendations for the protection of and appropriate provision for open space, however it does not provide any detailed guidance on how to conduct an open space assessment. It is therefore both logical and acceptable to reference the guidance for assessment provided in the former PPG17 and its Companion Guide. PPG17 placed a requirement on local authorities to undertake assessments and audits of open space, sports and recreational facilities in order to:

- identify the needs of the population;
- identify the potential for increased use; and
- establish an effective strategy for open space/sports/recreational facilities at the local level.

2.1.2 The Companion Guide to PPG17 recommended an overall approach to this kind of Study as summarised below:

*Figure 2 Summary of methodology*



2.1.3 Within this overall approach the Companion Guide suggests a range of methods and techniques that might be adopted in helping the assessment process. Where appropriate, these methods and techniques have been employed within this Study and are explained at the relevant point in the report. In addition, they are summarised in the paragraphs below.

## 2.2 Identifying Local Need (Step 1)

2.2.1 The Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report examines identified local need for various types of open space, sports and recreational opportunities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques as well as a detailed review of existing consultation data and other relevant documentation. The report details the community consultation and research process that has been undertaken as part of the Study as well as the main findings. The findings of this assessment are summarised in this document.

## 2.3 Audit of Existing Open Space Assets (Step 2)

### Defining the scope of the audit

2.3.1 In order to build up an accurate picture of the current open space and play provision in Tunbridge Wells, an initial desktop audit of the open space asset was carried out, this included:

- analysis of existing GIS data held by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council;
- desktop mapping of open space from aerial photography;
- desktop mapping of open space from the Ordnance Survey green space layer; and
- liaison with Council officers.

2.3.2 Following this, site visits were undertaken by Ethos at a total of 343 sites across the borough to assess the typology, access and quality of sites. A total of 225 sites were quality audited - 140 open spaces and 85 outdoor play spaces. The quality audit drew on criteria set out in the 'Green Flag Award<sup>4</sup>'. The audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach (explained in more detail in section 7.5). However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snap-shot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing and potential quality rather than a full asset audit. Clearly, local communities may have aspirations which are not identified in the quality audit, but it is hoped that these can be explored further through site management plans and neighbourhood/parish plans as appropriate.

### Approach to mapping

2.3.3 As part of the audit process, sites were mapped into their different functions using a multi-functional approach to mapping (demonstrated in figure 4). The advantage of the multi-functional approach is that it gives an accurate picture of the provision of the different types/typologies of open space. The primary typology approach (demonstrated in figure 3), which maps all open space as a single typology does not provide meaningful information for assessing different types of open space and in informing the production of standards.

2.3.4 Where open spaces cross parish boundaries, in order to calculate the quantity of open space by parish (and avoid double counting), these have been assigned a parish based on where the majority of the open space falls. For natural green space, which are generally large

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/judges/judging-criteria>

tracts of land, these have been split using the parish boundary, to ensure that the figures by parish are as accurate as possible.

2.3.5 Only open spaces within the borough have been mapped i.e. although cross border use of open space has been noted and considered (including within the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report), open spaces falling outside of the borough have not been mapped.

Figure 3 Primary approach to open space mapping

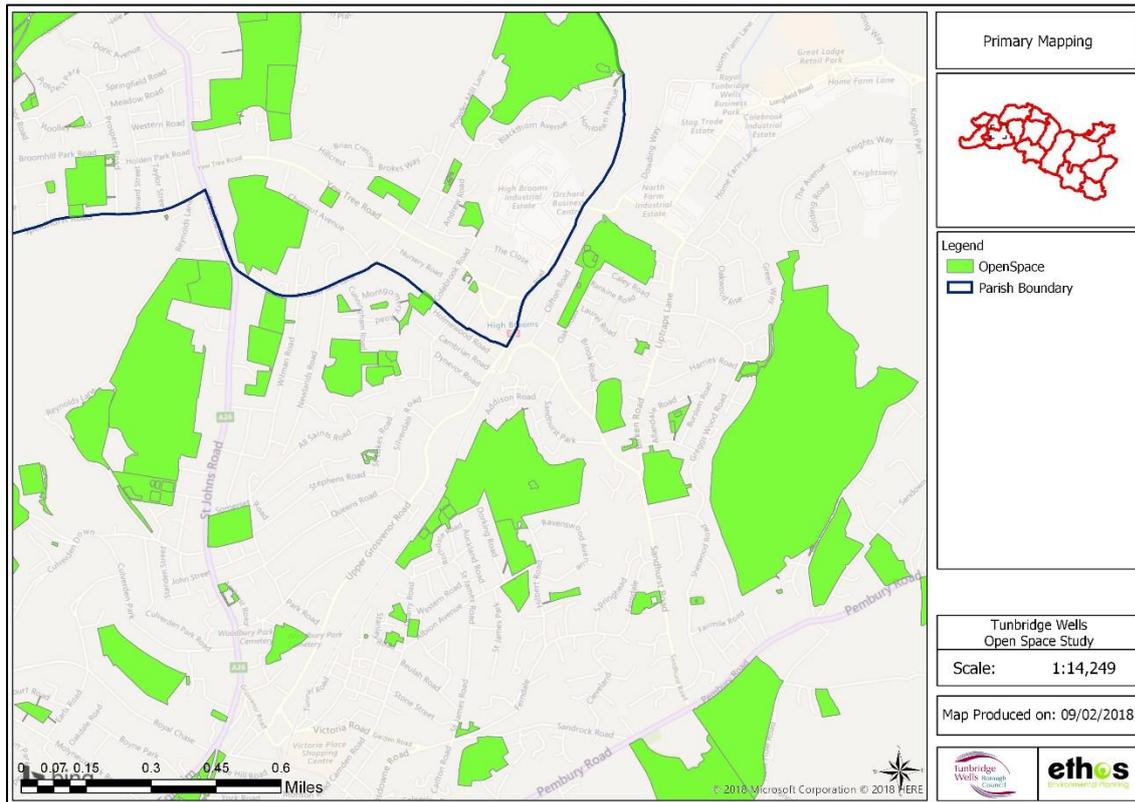
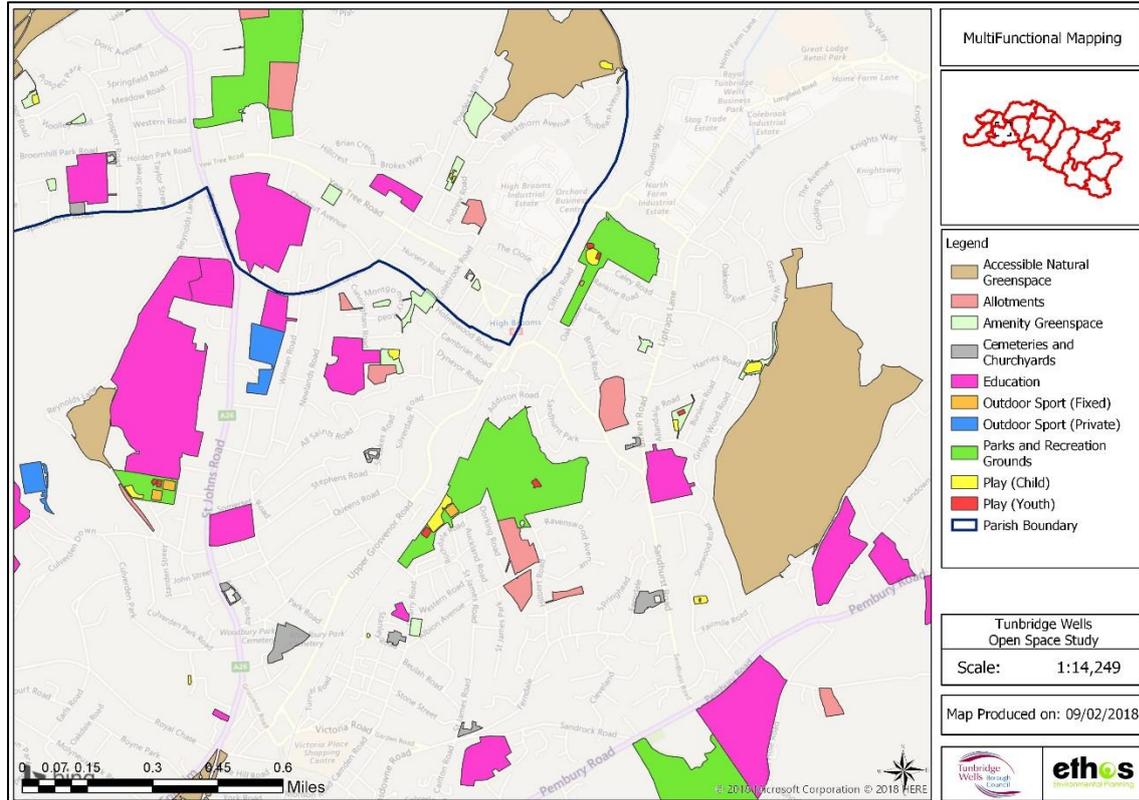


Figure 4 Multi-functional mapping of open space – used in this Study



## 2.4 Set and Apply Provision Standards (Steps 3 and 4)

2.4.1 Local provision standards have been set, with three components, embracing:

- quantity;
- accessibility; and
- quality.

### Quantity

2.4.2 The GIS database and mapping has been used to assess the existing provision of open space across the Study area. The existing levels of provision are considered alongside findings of previous studies, the local needs assessment and consideration of existing and national standards or benchmarks. The key to developing robust local quantity standards is that they are locally derived, based on evidence and most importantly achievable. Typically, standards are expressed as hectares per 1000 people. The recommended standards are then used to assess the supply of each type of open space across the Study area.

### Access

2.4.3 Evidence from previous studies, the needs assessment and consideration of national benchmarks are used to develop access standards for open space. Typically, standards are expressed as straight-line walk times. A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in the report.

## **Quality**

2.4.4 Quality standards have been developed drawing on previous studies, national benchmarks and good practice, evidence from the needs assessment and the findings of the quality audits. The quality standards also include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future.

## **2.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 5)**

2.5.1 This section outlines higher level strategic options which may be applicable at parish and borough wide level. The strategic options address five key areas:

1. Existing provision to be protected;
  2. Existing provision to be enhanced;
  3. Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space;
  4. Identification of areas for new provision; and
  5. Facilities that may be surplus to requirement.
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## 3.0 CONTEXT

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section sets out a brief review of the most relevant national and local policies and strategies related to the Study, which have been considered in developing the methodology and findings of the Study. Policies and strategies are subject to regular change, therefore the summary provided in this section was correct at the time of writing. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council reserve the right to change and update this section as policies change.

3.1.2 This section also provides contextual information regarding health and deprivation levels for the borough.

3.1.3 The PPG17 companion guide identified the importance of understanding the implications of existing strategies on the Study. Specifically, before initiating local consultation, there should be a review of existing national, regional and local plans and strategies, and an assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of existing planning policies and provision standards.

### 3.2 Strategic Context

#### 3.2.1 National Strategic Context

##### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.2.1.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF must be adhered to in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF contains the following references that relate to green infrastructure and open spaces:

- **Para 17 - Achieving Sustainable Development - Core Planning Principles:** Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.
  - **Para 58** - Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. **Para 73** - Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.
  - **Para 74** – Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
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- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.
- **Para 75** - Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
- **Para 99** - Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape.
- **Para 109** - The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

### Green Infrastructure

3.2.1.2 The concept of green infrastructure (GI) is now firmly embedded in national policy with the NPPF requiring local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. It defines green infrastructure as *‘a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities’*.

3.2.1.3 The borough has a wide range of existing green infrastructure assets such as open spaces, parks and gardens, allotments, commons, woodlands, street trees, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, meadows and grassland playing fields, as well as footpaths, cycleways and waterways. However, the concept of GI looks beyond existing designations, seeking opportunities to increase function and connectivity of assets to maximise the benefits for the community.

### The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)

3.2.1.4 The White Paper<sup>5</sup> recognised that a healthy natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. It sets out how the value of nature can be mainstreamed across our society by facilitating local action; strengthening the connections between people and nature; creating a green economy and showing leadership in the EU and internationally.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>

### **Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services, August 2011**

3.2.1.5 This biodiversity strategy for England builds on the Natural Environment White Paper and sets out the strategic direction for national biodiversity policy to implement international and EU commitments.

3.2.1.6 The vision for England is: ‘By 2050 our land and seas will be rich in wildlife, our biodiversity will be valued, conserved, restored, managed sustainably and be more resilient and able to adapt to climate change, providing essential services and delivering benefits for everyone’.

3.2.1.7 The mission of this strategy is to ‘halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people’. The Strategy contains four outcomes to be achieved by the end of 2020. These are:

#### 3.2.1.8 Habitats and ecosystems on land (including freshwater environments)

By 2020 we will have put in place measures so that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, further degradation has been halted and where possible, restoration is underway, helping deliver more resilient and coherent ecological networks, healthy and well-functioning ecosystems, which deliver multiple benefits for wildlife and people

#### 3.2.1.9 Marine habitats, ecosystems and fisheries

By 2020 we will have put in place measures so that biodiversity is maintained, further degradation has been halted and where possible, restoration is underway, helping deliver good environmental status and our vision of clean, healthy, safe productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

#### 3.2.1.10 Species

By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.

#### 3.2.1.11 People

By 2020, significantly more people will be engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action.

### **Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation, December 2015**

3.2.1.12 This cross-government strategy seeks to address flat-lining levels of sport participation and high levels of inactivity in this country. Through this strategy, the Government is redefining what success in sport means, with a new focus on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In future, funding decisions will be made on the basis of the outcomes that sport and physical activity can deliver.

3.2.1.13 It is the Government’s ambition that all relevant departments work closer together to create a more physically active nation, where children and young people enjoy

the best sporting opportunities available and people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the many benefits that sport and physical activity bring, at every stage in their lives.

3.2.1.14 Government is reaffirming its commitment to Olympic and Paralympic success but also extending that ambition to non-Olympic sports where it will support success through grassroots investment in those sports, and by sharing UK Sport’s knowledge and expertise. The strategy outlines what is expected of the sector to deliver this vision, and how the government will support it in getting there.

3.2.1.15 Public investment into community sport is to reach children as young as five as part of a ground-breaking new strategy. The move will see Sport England’s remit changed from investing in sport for those aged 14 and over to supporting people from five years old right through to pensioners, in a bid to create a more active nation.

3.2.1.16 Investment will be targeted at sport projects that have a meaningful, measurable impact on how they are improving people’s lives – from helping young people gain skills to get into work, to tackling social inclusion and improving physical and mental health.

3.2.1.17 Funding will also be targeted at groups who have low participation rates to encourage those who do not take part in sport and physical activity to get involved. This includes supporting women, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people.

### **Sport England Strategy – ‘Towards an Active Nation’ 2016-2021**

3.2.1.18 In response to the Government’s strategy, Sport England’s new strategy vision is that that everyone in England, regardless of age, background or ability, feels able to take part in sport or activity. Sport England’s new vision and its supporting aims will therefore contribute to achieving the Government's strategy. Key features of the new Strategy are:

- Dedicated funding to get children and young people active from the age of five, including a new fund for family based activities and offering training to at least two teachers in every secondary school in England to help them better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability.
  - Working with the sport sector to put customers at the heart of everything they do and using the principles of behaviour change to inform their work.
  - Piloting new ways of working locally by investing in up to 10 places in England – a mix of urban and rural areas.
  - Investing up to £30m in a new volunteering strategy, enabling more people to get the benefits of volunteering and attracting a new, more diverse range of volunteers.
  - Helping sport keep pace with the digital expectations of customers – making it as easy to book a badminton court as a hotel room.
  - Working closely with governing bodies of sport and others who support people who already play regularly, to help them become more efficient, sustainable and diversify their sources of funding.
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### 3.2.2 Local Context<sup>6</sup>

#### Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Five-Year Plan (2017-2022)

3.2.2.1 This is the Council's corporate strategy for the next five years, focusing on what the Council want to achieve for the borough and for the services the Council provide.

3.2.2.2 The overarching Vision of the Five-Year Plan is: To encourage investment and sustainable growth, and to enhance quality of life for all.

3.2.2.3 In order to achieve this Vision, the following priorities have been set:

##### Our borough

- To support a prosperous borough
- To support a well borough
- To support an inclusive borough

##### Our Services

- To provide digital choice
- To provide quality services
- To provide responsive services

##### Our People

- To have effective leadership
- To have relevant skills
- To have high levels of wellbeing

##### Providing Value

- To ensure innovation in our services
- To ensure effective partnership working
- To ensure we operate in a business-like way

3.2.2.4 All of these are of some relevance to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. Extracts from the plan directly relevant to this Study are noted below:

#### ***Creating new sports facilities across the borough***

3.2.2.5 Residents value the provision of facilities and activities that promote health and wellbeing, and access to these activities adds to the quality of life experienced in the borough. There is a high take-up of sports club activities across the borough, and the local football and rugby clubs have both had considerable success in recent years.

3.2.2.6 Options will be investigated to provide new sports facilities so that access is improved and increased, including the possibility of a new site that can act as a focus for a variety of sporting activities and as a catalyst for greater achievement.

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<sup>6</sup> This section sets out Tunbridge Wells Borough Council strategies and policies

### ***Support the development of the Community Centres in the borough***

3.2.2.7 The Council has worked closely with Southborough Town Council to help them secure a planning application for the delivery of new community facilities. We will continue to work with them to deliver this exciting project, and with Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council, and Paddock Wood Town Council, who have similar aspirations to increase the availability of local services in the heart of their communities and so enhance quality of life of residents.

### ***Enhancing the public realm in the borough***

3.2.2.8 An enhanced and more pleasant public realm will help to attract further tourism, and investment in local economies, and help our businesses to grow because they are located in a place people want to come to, where there is a high quality of life.

### ***Active travel***

3.2.2.9 We need to ensure every resident is supported to live a healthy lifestyle. Switching more car journeys to active travel (walking, cycling and public transport) can improve health outcomes, is good for the environment (including air quality) and will also help to support local businesses. The Council will work with partners to improve the cycle network in the borough.

### ***Improving social and health inequalities***

3.2.2.10 We know that there are significant pockets of deprivation in some wards, and that the life-chances of some of our residents are limited by this deprivation. Over the next plan period, we will continue to work with our partners to deliver the Health Inequalities Action Plan.

### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan (2013-2033)**

3.2.2.11 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has commenced work on preparing a new Local Plan that will guide future development in the borough up to 2033. The new Local Plan will replace the existing Local Plan 2006, Core Strategy 2010 and the Site Allocations Local Plan 2016. The new Plan will cover the period 2013-2033.

3.2.2.12 This Open Space Study (and the overall Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Study and Playing Pitch Strategy) will support the formulation of the policies within the Council's new Local Plan. It is anticipated that the new Local Plan will be adopted in 2019.

3.2.2.13 The draft Vision for the new Local Plan as set out within the Issues and Options Consultation is "In 2033 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will have delivered development to meet its local needs in a sustainable way. This includes the development of housing, economic, leisure and recreation uses identified within the new Local Plan. New development will seek to protect and enhance the exceptional quality of the built, natural and historic environment while promoting economic prosperity to ensure the borough remains a special

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place. It will be a place where people want to live, work and visit and where they have easy access to the services and facilities that they require on a day to day basis”.

3.2.2.14 To realise the Vision, it is considered that the new Local Plan should make clear that future development in the borough will need to focus on meeting a number of specific challenges, which are summarised in the following eight draft Strategic Objectives:

1. Meeting development needs: to provide sufficient, developable and deliverable land for a mix of uses in order to meet the borough's Local Plan development requirements to 2033.
2. The borough's distinctive environment: all new development will seek to protect and enhance both the natural, built and historic environment to ensure that its special character is maintained.
3. Delivering sufficient infrastructure: to ensure the provision of existing and future sufficient infrastructure to support the delivery of new development.
4. To provide high quality housing: to deliver the Local Plan's housing requirements, to include a range of housing types to meet local needs.
5. Provision of economic growth: to deliver the Local Plan's economic requirements in relation to employment and retail growth in order to deliver jobs and long term economic prosperity.
6. Ensuring adequate leisure and recreational facilities: ensuring the provision of high quality sports, recreation, community and cultural facilities that are accessible to all the borough's residents.
7. Delivering sustainable development: taking into account the economic, social and environmental impacts of all new development in light of local circumstances and opportunities.
8. Delivering adequate transport and parking capacity: in order to fulfil the transport needs of the borough and its residents and businesses and provide easy access to services and facilities.

3.2.2.15 The five potential options for growth identified within the Issues and Options Consultation document are set out in section 1.4 of this report.

### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan (2006)**

3.2.2.16 The Local Plan provides local planning policies to provide for both change and conservation in the borough. However, since its adoption some changes have been made to the Local Plan as a result of the 'saving' of policies in March 2009, the adoption of the Core Strategy in June 2010 and the adoption of the Site Allocations Local Plan in July 2016. As a result, some policies have been removed from the Local Plan as they are no longer valid.

3.2.2.17 The overall aim of this Local Plan is to promote sustainable development and for that reason the Planning Strategy is guided by three strategic objectives:

1. To protect the unique, high-quality environmental character of the area and to promote enhancement by encouraging excellence in the quality of all development;
2. To conserve finite, non-renewable resources such as land, energy, water, soil and air quality; and
3. To retain and provide an appropriate level and distribution of development to meet identified housing, economic and community needs.

3.2.2.18 A number of policies are then set out in order to achieve these objectives. The most relevant policies are as follows:

#### **POLICY R1**

3.2.2.19 Proposals that would result in the loss of recreation open space, as defined on the Proposals Map, or open land with existing or potential recreation value which is not protected by other policies in the Plan, will only be permitted where:

- 1) No deficiency in accessible open space in the area exists or would result from the development, or alternative provision, of at least equivalent size, suitability and accessibility is made within the locality; and
- 2) No suitable alternative previously-developed land is available to accommodate the development.

#### **POLICY R2**

3.2.2.20 This Policy applies to new residential developments in towns or parishes with an identified quantitative or qualitative deficiency in open space provision, or where the new development would lead to such a deficiency.

Youth and Adult Use:

3.2.2.21 New residential developments will be required to provide recreation open space for youth and adult use calculated at the rate of 1.6 ha per 1,000 population. Youth and adult recreation open space should be provided within or abutting the site as an integral part of the design unless any of the following circumstances defined below applies:

- (i) The development would generate a requirement for less than 0.2ha of recreation open space; or
- (ii) The required open space cannot be provided in a satisfactory manner due to the shape, size, topography, important landscape or nature conservation features of the site, or would have an adverse impact on the urban form of an area or the character of a conservation area, or risk of conflict with existing neighbouring residential properties or the future occupiers of the site.

3.2.2.22 In such cases the developer will be required to make a payment in lieu of onsite provision which would fairly and reasonably relate to the scale of the development. Payments will be used to improve an existing open space.

Children’s Playspace:

3.2.2.23 On residential developments of 150 bedspaces or more, equipped children’s playspace, calculated at the rate of 0.3 ha per 1,000 population, should be provided within or abutting the site, as an integral part of the design, unless the required open space cannot be provided in a satisfactory manner due to the shape, size or topography of the site, or would have an adverse impact on the urban form of an area or the character of a conservation area, or risk of conflict with existing neighbouring residential properties or the future occupiers of the site.

3.2.2.24 On residential developments of up to 150 bedspaces, and on those of 150 bedspaces or more where playspace cannot be provided on-site, if the circumstances defined below apply, the developer will be required to make a payment in lieu of on-site provision, calculated at the rate of 0.3 ha per 1,000 population, which would fairly and reasonably relate to the scale of the development. The circumstances referred to above are:

- (i) If a playspace within 400 metres walking distance of the site could be upgraded to a LEAP to meet demand generated by the proposed development; or
- ii) If a playspace within 1,000 metres walking distance of the site could be upgraded to a NEAP to meet demand generated by the proposed development.

#### **POLICY R6**

3.2.2.25 Proposals for the development of allotment land which is located within the defined Limits to Built Development will only be permitted if all the following criteria are satisfied:

- 1) It can be demonstrated that demand within the locality for allotments on the land under construction no longer exists or that suitable alternative provision can be made elsewhere;
- 2) The borough Council is satisfied that the land is not required to make good a shortage of public recreational open space; and
- 3) No suitable alternative previously-developed land is available to accommodate the development.

#### **POLICY EN21**

3.2.2.26 Proposals for development affecting Areas of Important Open Space, as defined on the Proposals Map, will only be permitted where no significant harm would be caused to the appearance or open character of the designated area and the development would not materially detract from the contribution which that area makes to the locality.

#### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010)**

3.2.2.27 The Core Strategy provides the overarching principles by which the essential development needs of the borough will be delivered. The key decisions about how much

development will happen in the borough and where and when it will take place, are made in the Core Strategy.

3.2.2.28 The overarching spatial vision is:

*'In 2026, Tunbridge Wells is a borough of economic and social prosperity founded on seized opportunities for business and enterprise and a respect for the exceptional quality of the environment that makes it unique.'*

*While ambition has driven development and service planning across the borough, so has demographic analysis, enabling traditional structural problems to be overcome and giving individuals and communities confidence that they will benefit from the general climate of success. The provision of a wider range of higher-skilled employment opportunities inside the borough has seen a reduction in out-commuting and in young people leaving to find work. At the same time, all residents, from older people to newly forming households, are benefiting from new housing development that meets their needs in terms of type, size and cost''.*

3.2.2.29 The Sustainable Development Objectives are as follows:

- SD1: To ensure that development takes account of the role and value of biodiversity and geodiversity; and aims to conserve and enhance locally important habitats, wildlife and geology
- SD2: To maximise the use of previously developed land and of the existing property stock
- SD3: To ensure that development is consistent with the principle of living within environmental limits by conserving finite non-renewable resources, including land, energy, water, soil and air quality wherever possible and ensuring that any trade-offs are made in an explicit and transparent way
- SD4: To avoid making adverse contributions to climate change, having regard to the potential impacts of already-unavoidable long-term changes and (where possible) mitigating such impacts
- SD5: To ensure development gives full consideration to good design principles, including energy efficiency, use of renewable energy technologies and sustainable construction.

### **Core Policy 8**

#### **Retail, Leisure and Community Facilities Provision**

3.2.2.30 This policy is particularly relevant to the open space Study and includes the following regarding Leisure and Community Facilities:

- A range of formal and informal open space, recreational and cultural facilities will be provided and maintained
- The capacity, quality and accessibility of open space, recreational, cultural and community facilities will be maintained and, where necessary, improved and all new development that generates an additional need for such facilities will provide for an adequate amount in easily accessible locations
- The links, including Public Rights of Way and cycle links, between existing and proposed areas of open space, recreational, cultural and community facilities and the communities they serve will be improved, where possible, as part of a multi-functional Green Infrastructure Network
- The loss of community facilities will be resisted as far as practicable and, where there is a demonstrable continuing need, the provision of additional facilities will be supported where they are deficient, particularly where this will provide a range of facilities on a single site or provide facilities that may be used for a variety of purposes

### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Site Allocations Plan (2016)**

3.2.2.31 The Site Allocations Local Plan allocates or designates all sites with a spatial element in order to take forward the strategy and level of growth set out within the Core Strategy. Allocations are set out for particular sites or areas. These are in the form of planning policies which are used to assess any planning applications that may come forward on the sites.

### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Green Infrastructure Plan SPD (2014)**

3.2.2.32 The Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan sets out a clear vision and framework for existing and future green infrastructure: setting out the current provision of green infrastructure assets; identifying areas where there are gaps in provision or linkages; and identifying potential opportunities for enhancing and filling these gaps. This GI Plan has formed a key part of the evidence base for supporting allocated sites and other policies within the Site Allocations Plan.

### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)**

3.2.2.33 This 2006 Study undertook a comprehensive analysis of the supply of and demand for the various kinds of indoor sport and open space typologies across the borough. It provided local standards for the following kinds of provision relevant to the current Open Space Study:

- Parks and Recreation Grounds;
  - Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space;
  - Bowling Greens;
-

- Outdoor Tennis Courts;
- Informal Open Space;
- Provision for Children & Young People; and
- Allotments.

### Local Standards

3.2.2.34 The local standards proposed for quantity and quality are summarised in the table below:

Table 2 Summary of standards from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Allotments	0.2 ha/1000 population (this was between the existing level of provision (0.32ha/1000 population), and what was considered as the nationally recommended standard of 0.12ha/1000 population)	1.48km (average walking distance identified from consultation <sup>7</sup> )
Informal open space (includes visual amenity greenspace)	0.21 ha/1000 population (based on existing provision)	0.80km (average walking distance identified from consultation)
Parks	1.32 ha/1000 population (based on existing provision)	1.06 km/ 9.88 minutes walk time (average walking distance identified from consultation)
Children and young people	0.24 ha/1000 population	1.14 km (10.72 minutes walk time) for LEAPs and 1.6km (15 minutes walk time) for NEAPs.
Natural/semi-natural greenspace	37.40 ha/1000 population (based on the average level of provision)	1.27km (based on the average walking distance identified from consultation).

3.2.2.35 Standards for the provision of bowling greens and tennis courts were expressed as follows:

- **Bowling Greens:** The minimum standard of 1 bowling green for 6,941 people should be adopted for bowling green provision. However, this needs to be revised on an annual basis depending on the future demand for outdoor bowls.
- **Tennis Courts:** The minimum Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) standard (2% of the population participate in tennis = 2,082 in Tunbridge Wells Borough) should be

<sup>7</sup> Based on the household survey undertaken as part of the 2006 Study, where a door to door survey of 500 randomly selected households was undertaken across the borough to establish their views and aspirations.

adopted; therefore, need to provide 1 court per 45 people = 46 courts and one floodlit court per 65 people = 32 courts on basis of current population.

3.2.2.36 It was also stated that for bowling greens and tennis courts:

- These standards should be maintained on a borough wide basis.
- The standards should be applied to increases in population, including those relating to housing developments, as a preliminary measure of the need for additional outdoor facility provision

3.2.2.37 The 2006 standards and findings will be reviewed, and new standards proposed in the current Study. The new standards will then be applied across the borough.

**A Needs Assessment relating to the Provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with Low Levels of Physical Activity (Kent Nature Partnership, Health and Nature Subgroup, May 2016)**

***Aims***

3.2.2.38 This Study set out to establish the proximity, accessibility and naturalness of greenspace in areas of Kent where the population is characterised by low levels of physical activity. Subsequently, this assessment was used to prioritise areas for future action and investment, based on levels of population deprivation, size and need.

***Conclusions and Recommendations***

3.2.2.39 Physical activity is known to be beneficial for a range of key health and wellbeing outcomes. There is growing evidence that the provision of, and access to, natural greenspace can support physical activity, health and wellbeing. Where accessibility to greenspace is lacking, improving access and/or creation of additional greenspace is recommended.

3.2.2.40 The analysis suggests that in the Kent population physical inactivity is not consistently linked to accessible greenspace provision. It is therefore also recommended that initiatives to promote use of greenspace for physical activity would bring health benefits to people who are not active enough. Exploring the barriers to using existing greenspace is also necessary as there may be reasons (e.g. safety, quality of greenspace) why people do not currently use local sites for physical activity.

***Prioritisation of areas for action***

3.2.2.41 Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) populations were grouped and prioritised according to the proportion that is physically inactive as in the table below:

**Table 3** Priority groupings used in the May 2016 Needs Assessment relating to the provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with low levels of physical activity

Priority	Population grouping
Physically inactive priority 1	>80% population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 2	>60% to 80% of the population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 3	>40% to 60% of the population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 4	>20% to 40% of the population physically inactive
Physically inactive priority 5	0% to 20% of the population physically inactive

3.2.2.42 Measures were then proposed for increasing opportunities for physical activity in greenspace across Kent, associated with each priority. In addition, the results from the analyses and evidence from the literature point to some general actions which could be taken in Kent to improve provision/access to greenspace and encourage physical activity in greenspace.

3.2.2.43 The report notes that research evidence has shown that people are more likely to visit natural greenspace in close proximity to where they live. The report therefore proposed that priority should be given to increasing accessible greenspace in LSOAs where less than 50% of the population was found to meet Natural England's ANGSt for greenspace of at least 2 ha within 300 m of home.

3.2.2.44 The full details of this analysis can be found in the main report for the Needs Assessment relating to the Provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with Low Levels of Physical Activity.

### **Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2014-2017)**

3.2.2.45 The Health and Wellbeing Board<sup>8</sup> has developed this strategy to achieve the following vision:

*To improve health and wellbeing outcomes, deliver better coordinated quality care, improve the public's experience of integrated health and social care services, and ensure that the individual is involved and at the heart of everything we do.*

3.2.2.46 To deliver the vision the following outcomes are sought, as informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):

- Every child has the best start in life
- Effective prevention of ill health by people taking greater responsibility for their health and wellbeing

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<sup>8</sup> Launched in April 2013, bringing together GPs, County and District Councillors, senior officers from the NHS Area Team, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Social Care and Public Health, as well as representation from Local Healthwatch.

- The quality of life for people with long term conditions is enhanced and they have access to good quality care and support
- People with mental health issues are supported to 'live well'
- People with dementia are assessed and treated earlier, and are supported to live well

3.2.2.47 This Open Space Study is particularly relevant to outcome 2 of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Effective prevention of ill health by people taking greater responsibility to their health and wellbeing, with green spaces providing opportunities for improving physical activity and mental health and wellbeing, helping people feel connected with the environment that they live in.

### 3.3 Health and Deprivation Context

#### Introduction

3.3.1 Public Health England have published the 2017 Health Profile for Tunbridge Wells<sup>9</sup>. The health of people in Tunbridge Wells is generally better than the England average. Tunbridge Wells is one of the 20% least deprived boroughs/unitary authorities in England, however about 11% (2,300) of children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average.

3.3.2 The respondents of the 2011 Census were asked to rate their health. The table below shows that the percentage of residents in Royal Tunbridge Wells rating their health as 'very good' is more than the national average. Also, the percentage of residents in Royal Tunbridge Wells rating their health as 'very bad' is less than the national average, suggesting that the health of the residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells is generally better than the average person in England.

Table 4 Health ratings (% of residents) from 2011 Census

Health	Tunbridge Wells	Kent	England
Very Good	51.42%	46.68%	47.17%
Good	33.60%	34.87%	34.22%
Fair	11.12%	13.32%	13.12%
Bad	3.09%	4.00%	4.25%
Very Bad	0.78%	1.14%	1.25%

#### Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Analysis

3.3.3 The Indices of Deprivation 2015 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation:

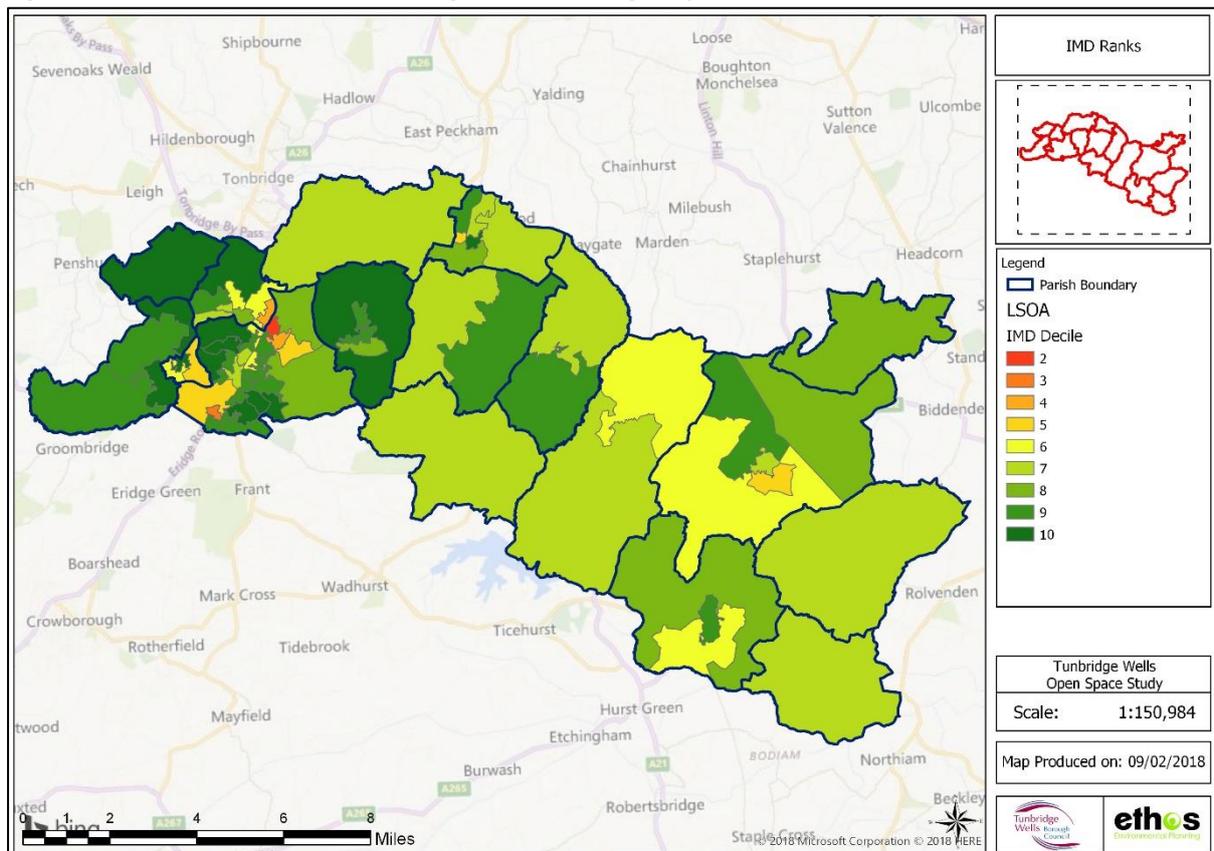
<sup>9</sup> <http://fingertipsreports.phe.org.uk/health-profiles/2017/e07000116.pdf>

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation

3.3.4 Each of these domains is based on a basket of indicators. As far as is possible, each indicator is based on data from the most recent time point available; in practice, most indicators in the Indices of Deprivation 2015 relate to the tax year 2012/13. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.

3.3.5 Figure 5 below shows the IMD rank for each LSOA within the borough, where 1 is most deprived and 10 is least deprived.

Figure 5 *IMD ranks in Tunbridge Wells borough (by LSOA)*



3.3.6 As can be seen from figure 5, levels of deprivation are generally very low within the borough, with the exception of small pockets in the Royal Tunbridge Wells unparished area and the parish of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst.

## 4.0 LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (STEP 1)

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (2017) examines local need for a wide range of different types of recreational open space. It draws upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of consultation findings from relevant studies, questionnaire surveys and one to one stakeholder interviews. The work was undertaken from June to October 2017.

4.1.2 Questionnaire surveys were undertaken looking at the adequacy of current provision in terms of the quantity, quality and access, in relation to the various typologies of open space. The surveys were:

- A general household survey (postal and online, with 811 surveys completed)
- A survey of parish Councils
- Local groups and organisations' survey

4.1.3 In addition to the above a series of one to one stakeholder interviews/surveys were undertaken.

4.1.4 The results of this consultation and other analyses has helped amongst other things to inform the local standards (section 6 of this Open Space Study). Crucially it has also helped the Study to understand local people's appreciation of open space, sport and recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces and facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which open space, sport and recreation facilities are considered as part of plan-making, as well as in dealing with planning applications.

4.1.5 The key findings from the Community and Stakeholder Consultation (2017) are summarised below under 4 sections:

- General community consultation;
  - Neighbouring local authorities and town/parish Councils/forums;
  - Parks, green spaces, countryside, and Rights of Way; and
  - Play and youth facilities.
-

## 4.2 General Community Consultation – Key Findings

### Quantity

4.2.1 The key findings in relation to quantity of open space are as follows:

- There are only two open space typologies that a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more - facilities for teenagers including Multi-Use Games Area (MUGAs).
- A large majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (77%) and an additional 7% said that we don't need as many.
- Smaller but substantial majorities think that in general there are enough allotments (71%); water recreation facilities (63%); and parks and recreation grounds (62%).

### Quality

4.2.2 The key findings in relation to quality of open space are as follows:

- For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality (though the most common rating tended to be only "average"). However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality as noted below.
  - 59% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
  - The quality of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts was rated as poor or worse by at least 33% of respondents.
- In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); play areas (55% similarly); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

### Access

4.2.3 In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit most kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies.

4.2.4 For example, 59% of households are prepared to travel 16 minutes or more to visit water recreation facilities and 50% of households are prepared to travel that long to visit woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves.

4.2.5 In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, play areas, parks and recreation grounds, and informal open space areas - for ball games, picnics, hobbies, dog walking etc):

- 62% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 22% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 50% of users would expect local parks/recreation grounds to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 13% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 51% of users would expect informal open spaces to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 19% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

4.2.6 For most typologies walking is the norm, most notably for facilities such as play areas (78%); recreation grounds and parks (72%); and informal open spaces (69%).

4.2.7 However, a majority of respondent households would normally drive rather than walk to water recreation facilities (61%). In addition, more households would normally drive (47%) rather than walk (46%) to access woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves. A significant number would also drive to outdoor bowling greens (43%) and tennis/netball courts (40%).

### ***Importance of footpath/cycle access***

4.2.8 76% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved. 77% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

### **Priorities**

4.2.9 The following priorities for improvement were identified:

- The category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was better footpaths, bridleway and cyclepath provision (52%), followed by parks and local recreation grounds (46%).
- Other high priorities for improvement noted by significant numbers were woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (43%) and informal open spaces (41%).
- Children’s play areas and facilities for teenagers also score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 66% of households).

### **Public Health and other issues**

4.2.10 The key public health and other key issues noted from the consultation are:

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council fully recognises the value and importance of access to open space, outdoor recreation facilities and indoor leisure facilities, in relation to improving health and wellbeing and in relation to residents' quality of life.
- Health and wellbeing is a corporate priority in the borough Council 5 Year Plan (2017 – 2022). One specific element of the Plan is aimed at ensuring “A Well Borough”. This involves aiming to ensure that “every resident is supported to live a healthy lifestyle”. The Plan specifically aims to work towards a reduction in adult and childhood obesity. The importance of providing access to open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is a key element of pursuing this objective.

- Examples of borough Council health projects include: Weight For It; Exercise Referral at TWBC sports centres; Family Weight Management courses; and Change 4 Life.
- Kent County Council Public Health highlight the general importance of open space, sport and recreation in relation to supporting a number of objectives of the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas and those in the more deprived wards of the Study area.

### **4.3 Neighbouring Local Authorities and Town/Parish Councils/Forums – Key Findings**

#### **Neighbouring Local Authorities – Cross Boundary Issues**

4.3.1 Section 3.1 of the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report briefly reviewed feedback from neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to the status of their open space strategies/associated studies and any cross border issues of significance. The variety of documents and strategies in place (and their relevance to current planning policy) is considerable, embracing green infrastructure studies, open space strategies, and sport, recreation and play strategies. The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived.

4.3.2 Authorities specifically highlighting some cross-border issues are:

- Hastings Borough Council – related to Green Infrastructure and playing pitches.
- Maidstone Borough Council – related to Green Infrastructure.
- Rother District Council – related to Green Infrastructure and sub-regional recreational facilities close to the District boundary such as Bewl Water.
- Tonbridge & Malling District Council - related to Green Infrastructure,
- Wealden District Council - related to Green Infrastructure; Open Space/PPG17 Study; and the athletics track at the Goldsmiths recreation ground at Crowborough.

4.3.3 It is notable that many authorities are currently involved with commissioning new open space related studies or updating previous strategies that are out of date.

#### **Town/Parish Councils/Forums**

4.3.4 Section 3.2 of the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report provided findings from the town/parish Councils' survey undertaken for the Study. 12 of the 16 local town and parish Councils responded.

#### **General Overview**

4.3.5 All twelve of the town/parish Councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and outdoor recreational facilities. Only five managed indoor halls.

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4.3.6 Ten of the local Councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play, sport and recreation facilities within their town or parish.

4.3.7 The sectors of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were children, young people/teenagers and various sports teams/clubs.

#### ***Common areas of concern***

4.3.8 The needs and aspirations that individual parishes identified were very varied. The more frequently highlighted typologies are:

- Indoor facilities – varied needs including village hall improvements, additional storage space, desire for the provision of sports halls and swimming pools.
- Parks and recreation grounds – mainly highlighting a need for additional space for such provision in relation to population/housing growth.
- Play areas, youth facilities and MUGAs – a mix of new provision and refurbishments and improvement to existing facilities.
- Footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths in relation to access to facilities and as leisure facilities.

#### ***Quality factors - open space provision***

4.3.9 The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community; and internally they should be easy to get around.
- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained - they should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- Spaces need to be designed and managed so that noise and antisocial behaviour is minimised.

4.3.10 Other factors highlighted were the need for design to minimise maintenance costs; and to consider the need for secure cycle parking and disabled parking rather than simply parking in general.

#### ***Detailed responses on open space typologies***

4.3.11 The parish Councils provided detailed responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements of open spaces surveyed.

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## 4.4 Parks, Natural Green Space and Rights of Way - Key Findings

### Overview

4.4.1 The borough Council's *Five Year Plan* and *Minding the Gap* strategy highlight the role that open spaces can have in relation to improving health and wellbeing; and provide plans as to how the Council and its partners can maximise that benefit for local people.

4.4.2 The borough Council's Cycling Strategy has specific relevance to this Study in relation to the development of cycle routes that make use of public open space and rights of way.

4.4.3 The borough Council manages a range of open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities in Royal Tunbridge Wells including parks and recreation grounds; play areas and youth facilities; tennis courts and MUGAs; bowling greens; allotments and woodlands. Elsewhere in the borough open spaces are managed by parish Councils and other agencies.

4.4.4 The importance of partnership working, both with strategic organisations and through parish Councils etc. is highlighted.

4.4.5 Natural England suggests that the ANGst standard should be a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space. Variations from this standard should be justified.

4.4.6 The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard (WAS - endorsed by Natural England) provides guidance on access to Woodland, which should also be taken into consideration.

4.4.7 Many stakeholders highlight the importance of biodiversity and having multi-functional open spaces that take biodiversity into account in relation to design and maintenance. A number of stakeholders also note the need to balance access and outdoor recreation with conservation in environmentally sensitive areas.

4.4.8 The importance of the health and wellbeing benefits associated with access to good quality open space and outdoor recreation facilities were key issues highlighted throughout the consultation.

### Quantity

4.4.9 The borough Council Parks and Sports Team Leader notes that overall Royal Tunbridge Wells is well provided for in relation to the quantity of parks, recreation grounds and play areas.

4.4.10 Parish Council views on the sufficiency of open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities in individual parishes vary quite considerably.

4.4.11 Results from the Household Survey revealed the following in relation to quantity:

- There are only two open space typologies that a majority of respondents suggest there is a general need for more - facilities for teenagers (70%); and MUGAs (55%).
- A large majority thought that overall there are enough outdoor bowling greens (77%) and an additional 7% said that we don't need as many. Smaller but substantial majorities think that in general there are enough allotments (71%); water recreation facilities (63%); and parks and recreation grounds (62%).

## Quality

4.4.12 The borough Council Parks and Sports Team Leader notes that the quality of open spaces is generally good in Royal Tunbridge Wells. As budgets have reduced over recent years maintenance of existing provision has been and continues to be a major challenge. This is a particular issue for smaller play areas in residential areas as they tend not to benefit from S106 legal obligations for funding.

4.4.13 Views on the quality of open space facilities in the parishes are very variable.

4.4.14 The household survey revealed that for all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality (though the most common rating tended to be only "average"). However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality as noted below:

- 59% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- The quality of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts was rated as poor or worse by at least 33% of respondents.

4.4.15 In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); play areas (55% similarly); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

4.4.16 Results from the community group survey revealed the following:

- The quality of all kinds of open spaces and outdoor spaces is rated as at least adequate by a clear majority of local organisations.
- 77% of the groups think that the quality of parks and recreation grounds is either good or very good; and 65% rated allotments similarly.
- Wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands are also rated quite highly by most groups with 50% rating them as good or very good compared to 20% rating them as poor or very poor. Similarly, for informal/amenity open spaces.
- Opinion on the general quality of other kinds of open spaces/outdoor facilities is more split with nearly equal proportions rating them as good/very good or poor/very poor – with the greatest proportion rating them as adequate.

## Access

4.4.17 In relation to accessibility, the household survey indicated the following:

- In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit most kinds of open spaces and outdoor facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies.
- The detailed findings relating to acceptable access times to the various typologies will be considered in detail to help determine the access elements of relevant standards for different kinds of open space.
- 76% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved. 77% said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

## Other points raised

4.4.18 Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas and those in the more deprived areas of the borough.

## 4.5 Children and Young People - Key Findings

4.5.1 The borough Council manages most play space sites across Royal Tunbridge Wells (other than Greggs Wood Road and Ramslye Road play areas which are managed by Town & Country Housing Association). Play provision elsewhere in the borough is managed by parish Councils.

### Quantity

4.5.2 The borough Council Parks and Sports Team leader noted that in terms of quantity there is currently sufficient play provision in Royal Tunbridge Wells though facilities for young people are more limited.

4.5.3 A small number of parish Councils suggest that there is not enough play provision in their parish but a higher proportion highlight a lack of youth facilities.

4.5.4 The Kent County Youth Hub Delivery Manager noted that young people from their projects reported that overall there are not enough youth facilities but there are enough open space areas for informal and natural play. There are also not enough MUGAs.

4.5.5 The household survey identified the following in relation to quantity:

- A clear majority of respondents (70%) to the resident's survey believe that overall across Tunbridge Wells borough there is insufficient provision of youth facilities. A smaller majority (55%) also suggest that there are not enough MUGAs.
  - By contrast a majority (56%) say that overall there are enough play areas.
-

## Quality

### 4.5.6 The Parks and Sports Team leader noted that:

- The quality of play areas in the main parks in Royal Tunbridge Wells is generally good but at the smaller sites quality is quite variable. The play areas at Showfields and Allandale Recreation Ground are in need of refurbishment.
- Grosvenor Recreation Ground is a good example of a high quality play space. It is well equipped for both younger and older children; and it contains a ball games area and a small cycle track. Toilet facilities and a café are located next to the playground. Calverly Grounds is a good example of a well-designed and popular natural play space.
- In relation to design of play spaces and youth facilities the borough Council follows good practice and guidance ensuring the design is tailored to make the most of the specific site as regards play value and to ensure it is appropriate to the wider open space in which it sits.

### 4.5.7 A significant number of parish Councils highlight a need for improvements to local play areas and youth facilities.

### 4.5.8 The KCC Youth Hub officer noted that:

- Children and young people suggest that the quality of equipped play areas and grass kickabout areas is adequate; but that youth facilities such as youth shelters, MUGAs, areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers and wheeled sports provision are generally poor.
- Young people frequently request improvements to outdoor facilities - improved skate park, outdoor gyms, shelters and access to toilets.

### 4.5.9 The household survey indicated the following in relation to quality:

- The quality of youth facilities is not rated highly - 81% of respondent households say that they are at best adequate with 49% of those rating them as poor or very poor.
- In general residents have less concern with the quality of equipped play areas across the borough (55% rated them as being good or very good in contrast to 13% rating them as poor or very poor).

## Access

### 4.5.10 The residents survey identified the following in relation to access:

- 62% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 22% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
  - A majority of respondents (57%) would be prepared to travel 15 minutes to make use of Multi-use Games Areas (of which 24% would travel up to 20 minutes).
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## Priorities for improvement

4.5.11 Stakeholders indicated that the kinds of facilities that were most frequently rated as being a high priority for improvement were play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers; skateboard, BMX or other wheeled sports facilities; and youth shelters/outdoor meeting areas with seats.

## Other Issues / General Observations

4.5.12 Other key issues and observations noted from the consultation are as follows:

- The Parks and Sports Team Leader noted that as budgets have reduced over recent years, maintenance of existing provision has been and continues to be a major challenge. This is a particular issue for smaller play areas in residential areas as they tend not to benefit from S106 legal obligation funding.
- The Parks and Sports Team Leader also noted that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain precisely what kind of provision is most needed by local children and young people. Care must also be taken not to raise expectations beyond what can be provided within limited budgets.
- The value of play in relation to improvements to children and young people's health and wellbeing was highlighted by a number of stakeholders.
- Stakeholders noted the need for well-designed play and youth facilities, the value of consultation with young people and the wider community in that process, and the potential for natural landscaped play areas in which play equipment may not be necessary or simply be a small element of the overall design.
- Play England provide useful guidance on play and spatial planning; play space design; and managing risk in play. Some of these could be adopted as guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

## 4.6 Concluding remarks

4.6.1 The survey work, stakeholder consultation, and desk-based research have highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study.

4.6.2 Response levels to the residents' survey, town/parish Councils survey, and community organisation survey have been high. This has ensured that a wide and diverse range of views from local residents and groups with an interest in open space, recreation and sport have influenced the findings of the Study. All strategic stakeholders have responded and key issues have been identified to be further considered in the main Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study reports.

4.6.3 There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local and strategic need/aspirations, from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable. This provides a strong evidence base to be combined with the detailed facilities audit and analysis.

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4.6.4 The information and findings from the consultation report are further considered and analysed in both the Open Space Study and the Built Facilities reports in relation to the various typologies of open space, sport and recreation being analysed. In particular they provide evidence to support the recommended spatial planning standards recommended for the different categories of open space and sport/recreation facilities.

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## 5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

### 5.1 General approach

5.1.1 This section sets out and describes the typologies which have standards developed or have been included within the quantitative or access analysis. The typologies of open space have drawn on guidance provided within PPG17, and through discussions with the project Steering Group. The agreed list of typologies are seen to be locally derived and appropriate for the type and range of open spaces that exist within the borough.

5.1.2 Although sites have been categorised into different typologies, the multifunctionality of different types of open space is important to recognise e.g. amenity green space, natural green space, parks and recreation grounds and allotments may all provide numerous functions such as providing space for recreation, habitat for wildlife conservation, flood alleviation, improving air quality, and providing food growing opportunities. Linked to this are the intrinsic benefits of open space, such as providing an attractive landscape or improving health and wellbeing.

5.1.3 The following typologies have been set:

Table 5 Tunbridge Wells Borough Typologies

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards <sup>10</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allotments</li> <li>• Amenity Green Space (&gt;0.15 ha)</li> <li>• Natural/Semi-Natural Green Space</li> <li>• Park and Recreation Grounds:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Parks and Recreation Grounds</i></li> <li>- <i>Outdoor Sports Space (Fixed)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Play Space (Children)<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Play Space (Youth)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education sites</li> <li>• Churchyards and Cemeteries</li> <li>• Outdoor Sports Space (Private)</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections

<sup>11</sup> The difference between Play Space (Children) and Play Space (Youth) is set out in section 5.2.4

## 5.2 Open space typologies with standards

### 5.2.1 Allotments



5.2.1.1 Allotments provide areas for people to grow their own produce and plants. It is important to be clear about what is meant by the term ‘allotment’. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 obliged local authorities to provide sufficient allotments and to let them to persons living in their areas where they considered there was a demand. The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term ‘allotment garden’ as:

*“an allotment not exceeding 40 poles<sup>12</sup> in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family”*

5.2.1.2 The Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called Statutory Allotment Sites, by the requirement for the need for the approval of Secretary of State in event of sale or disposal. Some allotment sites may not specifically have been acquired for this purpose. Such allotment sites are known as “temporary” (even if they have been in use for decades) and are not protected by the 1925 legislation.

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<sup>12</sup> 40 Poles equals 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres. A Pole can also be known as a Rod or Perch.

## 5.2.2 Amenity Green Space



5.2.2.1 Amenity green space is considered to include those spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function such as a park, public playing field or recreation ground; nor managed as a natural or semi-natural habitat. These areas of open space will be of varied size, but are likely to share the following characteristics:

- Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.
- Predominantly laid down to (mown) grass.
- Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points (unlike parks).
- They may have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
- They may occasionally have other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as play equipment or ball courts).

5.2.2.2 Examples might include both small and larger informal grassed areas in housing estates and general recreation spaces. They can serve a variety of functions dependent on their size, shape, location and topography. Some may be used for informal recreation activities, whilst others by themselves, or else collectively, contribute to the overall visual amenity of an area.

5.2.2.3 It should be noted that amenity green spaces smaller than 0.15 ha were not included within the analysis for this typology, as it is considered that these sites will have limited recreation function and therefore should not count towards open space provision.

### 5.2.3 Park and Recreation Grounds



5.2.3.1 This typology brings together the function of Parks and Recreation Grounds and Outdoor Sports Space as identified in the former PPG17 typology. The distinction between the two typologies in the Study area is blurred, with very few formal gardens and many parks and/or outdoor sports space having multi-functions used for both informal and formal recreation. The consultation undertaken as part of this Study indicated that people refer to their local park or rec, and communities do not make a distinction between outdoor sports space and parks and recreation grounds. Therefore, for the Study an overarching typology for Park and Recreation Grounds has been used.

5.2.3.2 For the purpose of this Study, a Park and Recreation Ground is defined as an open space that:

- Has at least two facilities e.g. a children's play area and tennis courts, or;
- Has provision for formal sport e.g. football or cricket pitch (informal football would be excluded);
- Includes private sports grounds where there is open public access i.e. although it is private (e.g. managed by a football club), access is allowed for informal recreation.

5.2.3.2 Those outdoor sports grounds which have no public access at all have been mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private), as set out in section 5.3.3.

5.2.3.3 This typology comprises the general open space surrounding play areas, sports facilities etc. used for general recreation and includes those areas laid out as pitches which are accessible i.e. they can be walked over/used informally. Pitches which have no access e.g. they are fenced off/private managed have been mapped as outdoor sport private and are not included within the quantity analysis for parks and recreation grounds.

5.2.3.4 The quantity analysis for Parks and Recreation Grounds also includes fixed outdoor sports space (comprising all other non-pitch based provision including tennis courts, outdoor gyms and bowling greens) which are publicly accessible/available to book. Those facilities that are managed by a club and are not freely accessible are mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private) and are not included within the quantity analysis (see section 5.3.3).

5.2.3.5 The quantity figure for Parks and Recreation Grounds excludes the provision of children and youth play spaces which have a separate typology (see section 5.2.4).

5.2.3.6 Parks and Recreation Grounds take on many forms, and may embrace a wide range of functions including:

- Play space of many kinds (see section 5.2.4);
- Provision for a range of formal pitch and fixed sports;
- Informal recreation and sport;
- Providing attractive walks and cycle routes to work;
- Offering landscape and amenity features;
- Areas of formal planting;
- Providing areas for group and public events e.g. bootcamps or Park Run;
- Providing habitats for wildlife;
- Dog walking.

5.2.3.7 When mapping this type of provision, a multi-functional approach to mapping has been adopted as shown in figure 1, where play spaces, youth spaces and fixed outdoor sports facilities (e.g. tennis courts, bowling greens) are separately mapped. Individual playing pitches (e.g. football, rugby) are not separately mapped as the assessment of these facilities is included within the separate playing pitch Study.

5.2.3.8 The recommended standards for this typology are intended to provide sufficient space. The Playing Pitch Strategy deals with some of the detail i.e. supply of pitches and how they will be laid out.

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## 5.2.4 Play Space (Children and Youth)



5.2.4.1 It is important to establish the scope of the Study in terms of this type of open space. Children and young people will play/'hang out' in almost all publicly accessible "space" ranging from the street, town centres and squares, parks, playing fields, "amenity" grassed areas, natural play areas (utilising natural features/materials such as tree trunks and boulders) etc. as well as the more recognisable play and youth facility areas such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks, Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) etc. Clearly many of the other types of open space covered by this Study will therefore provide informal play opportunities.

5.2.4.2 To a child, the whole world is a potential playground: where an adult sees a low wall, a railing, kerb or street bench, a child might see a mini adventure playground or a challenging skateboard obstacle. Play should not be restricted to designated 'reservations' and planning and urban design principles should reflect these considerations.

5.2.4.3 However, there are a number of recognised types of play area including Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs), Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs), school playgrounds, informal ball courts, and 'hang out' areas.

5.2.4.4 The Study has recorded the following:

- Play Space
- Teenage Facilities

5.2.4.5 The former comprises equipped areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to and around 12 years of age. The latter comprises informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 16/17 age group, and which might include facilities like skateboard parks, basketball courts and 'free access' MUGAs. In practice, there will always be some blurring around the edges in terms of younger children using equipment aimed for youths and vice versa.

### ***Play space (Children)***

5.2.4.6 Play Areas are an essential way of creating safe but adventurous places for children of varying ages to play and learn. The emphasis in play area management is shifting away from straightforward and formal equipment such as slides and swings towards creating areas where imagination and natural learning can flourish through the use of landscaping and natural building materials and the creation of areas that need exploring.

### ***Play Space (Youth)***

5.2.4.7 This category includes skate parks/BMX tracks and MUGAs for ease, as most of these are predominantly used by young people and have been installed with this key age group in mind.

5.2.4.8 Teenagers should not be ignored, it is important to create areas for ‘hanging out’ such as shelters and providing them with things to do such as bike ramps. Currently recognisable provision for teenagers is few and far between.

## **5.2.5 Natural/Semi-natural Green Space**



5.2.5.1 For the purpose of this Study, natural and semi-natural green space covers a variety of spaces including meadows, woodland, copses, river valleys and lakes all of which share a trait of having natural characteristics and biodiversity value and are also partly or wholly accessible for informal recreation.

5.2.5.2 The nature of the geography of Tunbridge Wells means there are large tracts of open countryside, much of it is private land used for farming, however, there is significant access to the countryside provided through the rights of way network. It was not the intention of

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this audit to survey and map all these areas, but to focus on sites where there are definitive boundaries or areas of natural green space which have clear public access.

5.2.5.3 Access to these spaces may be provided via statutory rights of access or permissive codes allowing the public to wander freely, or via defined Rights of Way or permissive routes running through them. In some cases, access may not be fully clear, however, there was evidence of some level of informal use and access.

5.2.5.4 Some sites may provide access in different ways, for example, rivers or lakes are often used for water recreation (e.g. canoeing, fishing, sailing). Whilst access may not be available fully across all areas of these sites (e.g. the middle of a lake or dense scrub in a woodland), the whole site has been included within the assessment.

5.2.5.5 Some natural spaces were found to have no access at all, and whilst they cannot be formally used by the general community, they can be appreciated from a distance, and contribute to visual amenity, green infrastructure and biodiversity. Whilst every effort was made to exclude these spaces from the assessment, as already mentioned above, access was not always clear.

5.2.5.6 The local consultation and research elsewhere (Natural England<sup>13</sup>) have identified the value attached to natural spaces for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of ‘closeness to nature’ with its attendant benefits for people is something that is all too easily lost in built up areas. Natural green spaces can make important contributions towards local biodiversity and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.

5.2.5.7 A combined standard for amenity green space and natural/semi-natural green space is recommended for assessing the requirements for new provision (see section 6.3 and 6.6). Existing provision of natural/semi-natural green space is analysed using the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space (ANGSt) Standard (see section 6.6), which only considers sites above 20ha. The importance of smaller (<20ha) natural green spaces for informal recreation and wildlife/habitat conservation is recognised, however the supply of these smaller sites has not been analysed as part of this Study. Tables 6, 7 and 8 provide quantitative figures for accessible natural/semi-natural green space.

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<sup>13</sup> Natural England have published a variety of health and the natural environment publications at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/127020>

## 5.3 Open space typologies with no standards

### 5.3.1 Education

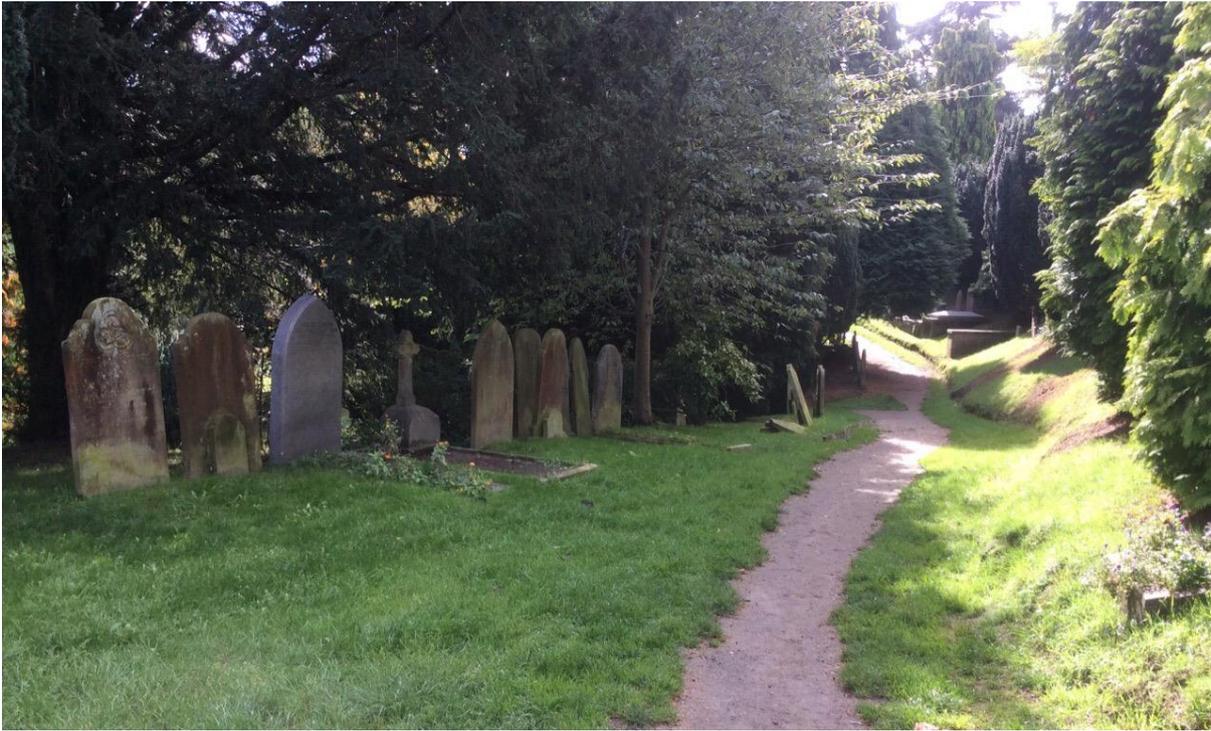


5.3.1.1 Many schools and colleges have open space and sports facilities within their grounds. This may range from a small playground to large playing fields with several sports pitches. Public access to these spaces is often restricted and in many cases forbidden. Nevertheless, many of the sports facilities are used by local people on both an informal and formal basis.

5.3.1.2 Sports clubs may have local informal arrangements with a school to use their pitches, and in some cases more formal 'dual-use' agreements may be in place. School grounds can also contribute towards the green infrastructure and biodiversity of an area.

5.3.1.3 Quantity and access standards have not been proposed for education sites. This is because they are not openly accessible to the public and whilst important to the local community, there is less opportunity for the Council to influence their provision and management. Furthermore, community access to education sites is assessed within the separate Playing Pitch Strategy for Tunbridge Wells.

### 5.3.2 Churchyards and Cemeteries



5.3.2.1 The borough has numerous churches and cemeteries, and these provide significant aesthetic value and space for informal recreation such as walking and relaxing. Many are also important in terms of biodiversity. Their importance for informal recreation, aesthetic value and contribution towards biodiversity must be acknowledged, and as such, investment in their upkeep, maintenance and quality is an important factor.

5.3.2.2 Churchyards and Cemeteries have been identified and mapped where known, however, no quantity or access standard for provision have been set, as it is outside the scope of this Study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision.

### 5.3.3 Outdoor Sport (Private)



5.3.3.1 Outdoor sports space with no public access (e.g. private sports grounds), have also been recorded and mapped where known. Private sport space makes up an important part of outdoor sports provision across the borough and forms an important part of the community facilities. The private sports spaces have been mapped separately to publicly accessible sites, to determine exact provision of the different types of outdoor sports provision.

5.3.3.2 This typology includes golf courses, where more often than not, public access is restricted. Nevertheless, these facilities are used by local people and they form part of the Green Infrastructure network.

5.3.3.3 This typology also includes fixed outdoor sports space (including tennis courts and bowling greens) which are privately managed, and not accessible.

5.3.3.4 No quantity or access standards for provision have been set, as it is outside the scope of this Study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision.

## 5.4 Existing provision of open space

### 5.4.1 Provision across the borough

5.4.1.1 The following table shows the average existing provision of open space in hectares and ha/1000 population across the borough. The figures for 'Park and Recreation Grounds (Combined)' include a combination of the following typologies:

- Park and Recreation Grounds; and
- Outdoor Sport (Fixed).

Table 6 Summary of existing provision of open space across the borough

Typology	Existing (ha)	Existing (ha/1000)
Allotments	35.76	0.31
Amenity Greenspace (>0.15ha)	31.04	0.27
<i>Parks and Recreation Grounds</i>	126.51	1.10
<i>Outdoor Sport (Fixed)</i>	4.55	0.04
Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	131.06	1.14
Play (Child)	4.99	0.04
Play (Youth)	1	0.01
Accessible Natural Greenspace	2029.32	17.64
Cemeteries and Churchyards	52.53	0.46
Education	311.81	2.71
Outdoor Sport (Private)	66.32	0.58

### 5.4.2 Provision in parishes

#### Quantity Statistics

5.4.2.1 The following tables shows the average existing provision of open space in hectares (table 7) and ha/1000 population (table 8) for each of the parishes in the borough.

Table 7 Existing provision of open space (hectares) in parishes

Parish	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Cemeteries and Churchyards	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Benenden	0	1.23	2.52	2.31	0.21	0.05	0	168.68	1.88	13.88	0
Bidborough	0.27	0	1.6	1.44	0.16	0.06	0.04	0	0.4	0.65	0
Brenchley	0.75	3.77	2.72	2.42	0.3	0.02	0	46.88	1.76	1.16	2.43
Capel	2.89	0	4.11	4.09	0.02	0.05	0	50.58	2.13	59.28	0
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst	1.46	0.36	5.42	5.18	0.24	0.19	0.04	433.66	3.81	40.65	19.35
Frittenden	0	0	0.94	0.89	0.05	0.08	0.01	31.05	0.96	0.19	1.69
Goudhurst	0.24	1.84	0	0	0	0.27	0	403.09	2.07	14.07	4.82
Hawkhurst	2.08	1.07	3.21	3.2	0.01	0.25	0.1	313.52	2.23	24.07	2.86
Horsmonden	0	0.7	3.51	3.51	0	0.02	0.01	45.44	1.02	1.03	1.21
Lamberhurst	0.32	0.95	3.96	3.96	0	0.08	0	4.25	0.69	0.64	0.24
Paddock Wood	2.73	4.92	12.85	12.51	0.34	0.45	0.07	12.8	2.83	15.75	1.88
Pembury	2	3.7	2.48	2.1	0.38	0.06	0.05	146	2.29	24.53	1
Royal Tunbridge Wells	13.85	8.49	63.96	61.61	2.35	2.4	0.55	150.71	21.82	79.78	18.16
Rusthall	2.34	0.42	0.23	0.23	0	0.13	0.04	25.8	0.07	0.97	3.99
Sandhurst	0.42	0.29	3.26	3.26	0	0.13	0	0	0.88	1.1	0.22
Southborough	3.35	1.9	10.35	9.97	0.38	0.32	0	41.78	4.59	14.1	1.16
Speldhurst	3.07	1.39	9.9	9.8	0.1	0.43	0.08	0.05	3.06	19.15	2.08

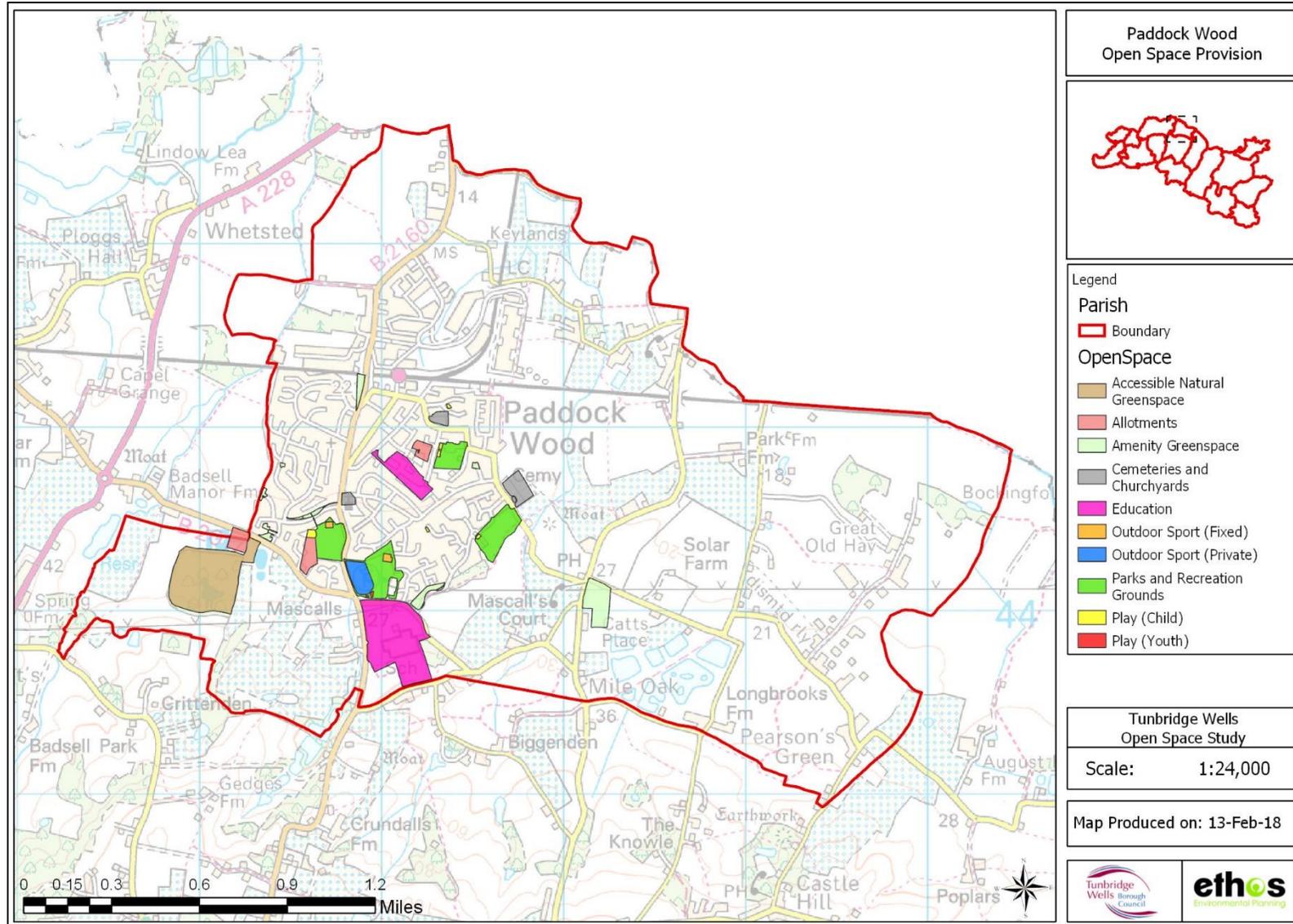
Table 8 Existing provision of open space (ha/1000 population) in parishes

Parish	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds (combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Greenspace	Cemeteries and Churchyards	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Benenden	0	0.52	1.06	0.97	0.09	0.02	0	71.05	0.79	5.85	0
Bidborough	0.23	0	1.38	1.24	0.14	0.05	0.03	0	0.34	0.56	0
Brenchley	0.26	1.32	0.95	0.85	0.1	0.01	0	16.37	0.61	0.41	0.85
Capel	1.17	0	1.67	1.66	0.01	0.02	0	20.5	0.86	24.03	0
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst	0.22	0.05	0.81	0.77	0.04	0.03	0.01	64.56	0.57	6.05	2.88
Frittenden	0	0	1.06	1	0.06	0.09	0.01	34.97	1.08	0.21	1.9
Goudhurst	0.07	0.55	0	0	0	0.08	0	121.16	0.62	4.23	1.45
Hawkhurst	0.42	0.22	0.65	0.65	0	0.05	0.02	63.84	0.45	4.9	0.58
Horsmonden	0	0.29	1.44	1.44	0	0.01	0	18.66	0.42	0.42	0.5
Lamberhurst	0.19	0.56	2.32	2.32	0	0.05	0	2.49	0.4	0.38	0.14
Paddock Wood	0.33	0.6	1.56	1.52	0.04	0.05	0.01	1.55	0.34	1.91	0.23
Pembury	0.33	0.6	0.4	0.34	0.06	0.01	0.01	23.83	0.37	4	0.16
Royal Tunbridge Wells	0.29	0.18	1.32	1.27	0.05	0.05	0.01	3.12	0.45	1.65	0.38
Rusthall	0.47	0.08	0.05	0.05	0	0.03	0.01	5.18	0.01	0.19	0.8
Sandhurst	0.28	0.2	2.21	2.21	0	0.09	0	0	0.6	0.74	0.15
Southborough	0.28	0.16	0.86	0.83	0.03	0.03	0	3.46	0.38	1.17	0.1
Speldhurst	0.62	0.28	1.99	1.97	0.02	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.61	3.85	0.42

### Maps showing provision by parish

5.4.2.2 Appendix 1 provides a map for each of the parishes within the borough showing the provision of open space. An example map is shown in figure 6 below.

Figure 6 Example map showing existing provision of open space by parish (appendix 1)



## 6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Following the completion of the assessment of local needs (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report) and the audit of provision (the first two steps of this Study), new standards of provision for open space are proposed below. This section explains how the standards for Tunbridge Wells have been developed and provides specific information and justification for each of the typologies where standards have been proposed.

6.1.2 The justification for the standards draws on consultation from the recent resident and stakeholder surveys, and where relevant makes comparisons with evidence from the Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006). This comparison is particularly useful in assessing if there has been any significant change in opinions and perceptions of open space in Tunbridge Wells, which in turn informs the need for revised standards.

6.1.3 The standards for open space have been developed in-line with the NPPF. Standards comprise the following components:

- **Quantity standards:** These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity, consideration of existing local and national standards and benchmarks and evidence gathered from the local needs assessment. It is important that quantity standards are locally derived and are realistic and achievable. The recommended standards need to be robust, evidence based and deliverable through new development and future mechanisms for securing contributions through on site provision, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 contributions.
- **Accessibility standards:** These reflect the needs of potential users. Spaces likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and to have safe access. Other facilities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent, for example country parks, can be further away. Consideration is also given to existing local or national standards and benchmarks.
- **Quality standards:** The standards for each typology are derived from the quality audit, existing good practice and from the views of the community and those that use the spaces. Again, quality standards should be achievable and reflect the priorities that emerge through consultation.

6.1.4 The standards that have been proposed are for minimum guidance levels of provision. So, just because geographical areas may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards does not mean there is a surplus, as all such provision may be well used. Equally, there may be instances where shortfalls against the minimum standards are not necessarily a problem e.g. due to the location and access to the countryside or other facilities such as private sports space or community use of education facilities

## 6.2 Allotments

### *Summary of quantity and access standard*

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.30 ha/1000 population	720m (15 minutes straight-line walk time)

### *Existing national or local standards*

6.2.1 National standards for allotments and other such open spaces are difficult to find. The closest thing appears to be those set out by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG). These are as follows:

- Standard plot size = 250sqm (330 sq yards)
- Paths = 1.4m wide for disabled access
- Haulage ways = 3m wide
- Plot holders shed = 12sqm
- Greenhouse = 15sqm
- Polytunnel = 30sqm

6.2.2 The Local Government Association good practice guide Growing in the Community (2001) identifies issues which should be considered when assessing allotment needs. The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acre) per 1,000 / population.

6.2.3 The previous open space Study (Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)) recommended the following local standards for allotments:

- Quantity: 0.2 ha/1000 population (this is between the existing level of provision (0.32ha/1000 population), and what was considered as the nationally recommended standard of 0.12ha/1000 population)
- Access: 1.48km (average walking distance from consultation).

### *Quantity standard for allotments*

6.2.4 The following sets out the justification for the quantity standard for allotments:

- The household survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2017) identified that 83% of all respondents from the household survey 'never' use allotments (this was the second least used type of open space facility);
- The existing average level of provision across the Study area is 0.31 ha/1000. Only three parishes have no provision; of those that have allotments, the level of provision varies significantly;
- The household survey identified that 29% of people felt there should be more allotments, however, 61% felt there are enough;

- Consultation with parish Councils did not identify a need for increased provision/unmet demand (with the exception of Cranbrook & Sissinghurst);
- It is therefore recommended that a standard is set in line with existing levels of provision. A minimum standard of 0.30 ha/1000 is recommended for analysing existing provision and for new provision, which is considered to be deliverable and achievable from new development.

### ***Access standard for allotments***

6.2.5 The following sets out the justification for the access standard for allotments:

- Responses received in relation to acceptable travel times to allotments from the recent resident's survey identified a mix in responses, with 27% wanting allotments within 5 minutes, 26% within 10 minutes, 37% within 15 minutes and 6% up to 20 minutes; of this, the highest percentage of people (61%) walk to allotments;
- It is considered that the availability of allotments is more important than having them very close to home, nevertheless there is some demand for facilities relatively nearby. Therefore, a standard of no more than 15 minutes straight-line walk time (720 metres) is justified.

### ***Quality standards for allotments***

6.2.6 The residents survey identified that respectively 9% and 36% of people felt allotments were very good or good, however, 36% also felt they were average.

6.2.7 Compared to other typologies of open space, fewer comments were received in relation to the quality of allotments, furthermore the information gathered in relation to allotments is more difficult to assess in comparison to other types of open space. The reason for this is twofold: firstly, the number of people who actually use allotments is very low compared to the numbers who use other types of open space and, therefore specific comments relating to the quality of allotments are less frequent; secondly, the majority of allotment sites are locked, and the quality audit only allows for assessment against key criteria such as the level of cultivation and general maintenance, which is less comprehensive than the assessments of other open space.

6.2.8 For allotments, a number of general recommendations are made in relation to quality, which should include the following:

- Well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard;
  - A sunny, open aspect preferably on a south facing slope;
  - Limited overhang from trees and buildings either adjacent or within the site;
  - Adequate lockable storage facilities, and a good water supply within easy walking distance of individual plots;
  - Provision of composting facilities;
  - Secure boundary fencing;
  - Good access within the site for both pedestrians and vehicles;
  - Good vehicular access into the site and adequate parking and maneuvering space;
-

- Disabled access;
- Toilets; and
- Notice boards.

### 6.3 Amenity Green Space

#### *Summary of quantity and access standard*

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.4 ha/1000 population for analysing existing provision	600 metres (12-13 minutes straight line walk time)
0.8 ha/1000 population for analysing the requirements from new development	

#### *Existing national or local standards*

6.3.1 The Fields in Trust (FIT) (Previously known as the National Play Fields Association) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.6ha/1000 population of amenity green space, and a walking distance guideline of 480m. FIT recommend that the quantity guidelines are adjusted to take account of local circumstances.

6.3.2 The previous open space Study (Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)) recommended the following local standards for informal open space, which includes visual amenity greenspace:

- Quantity: 0.21 ha/1000 population (based on existing provision)
- Access: 0.80km (average walking distance from consultation)

#### *Quantity standard for amenity green space*

6.3.3 The following sets out the justification for the quantity standard for amenity green space:

- Existing average level of provision in the Study area is 0.27 ha/1000 population (for sites greater than 0.15 ha in size);
- The household survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2017) identified that 45% of people felt there was a need for more informal open space areas, whilst 53% felt there were enough;
- Provision varies significantly across parishes, with some with no provision and some exceeding the average level of provision;
- It is therefore considered that a standard (slightly above the existing level of provision, and closer to the FIT recommendation) of 0.4 ha/1000 population would provide a reasonable baseline to assess current levels of provision;

- It is recommended that a combined standard with natural green space of 0.8 ha/1000 is used for assessing the requirements for new provision (also see section 6.6), this is to provide new spaces that maximize opportunities for wildlife and are biodiverse, in accordance with the NPPF (paragraph 109);
- The minimum size of a space that will be considered acceptable and count towards open space provision is recommended to be 0.15 ha in size (about the size of a mini football pitch). This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. Any spaces below this size will be acceptable in terms of their visual amenity, SUDs function etc but would not count towards the required level of provision for recreational use.

### ***Access standard for amenity green space***

6.3.4 The following sets out the justification for the access standard for amenity green space:

- The recent household survey identified that people want spaces relatively close to home (19% less than 5 minutes, 32% less than 10 minutes, 22% less than 15 minutes), and that they access these spaces by foot (69%);
- Therefore, a standard of 600 metres (12-13 minutes straight line walk time) is proposed.

### ***Quality standards for amenity green space***

6.3.5 The household survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2017) identified that 9% of people felt this type of provision was very good, 36% good, 42% average and 14% stated poor or very poor.

6.3.6 The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the importance attached by local people to open space close to home. The value of 'amenity green space' must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise and visual amenity that are almost immediately accessible. On the other hand, open space can be expensive to maintain, and it is important to strike the correct balance between having sufficient space to meet the needs of the community for accessible and attractive space and having too much which would be impossible to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that amenity green space should be capable of use for at least some forms of public recreation activity.

6.3.7 It is therefore recommended that in addition to the minimum size threshold identified above, that all amenity green space should be subject to landscape design, ensuring the following quality principles:

- Capable of supporting informal recreation such as a kickabout, space for dog walking or space to sit and relax;
  - Include planting of high quality trees and/or shrubs to create landscape structure and biodiversity value;
-

- Include paths along main desire lines<sup>14</sup> (lit where appropriate);
- Be designed to ensure easy maintenance.

## 6.4 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.1 ha/1000 population for publicly accessible space	600 metres (12-13 minutes straight line walk time)

### *Existing national and local policies*

6.4.1 The Fields in Trust (FIT) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens, with a walking distance guideline of 710m. In addition to this they also recommend the following standards:

- Playing pitches: 1.20ha/1000 population with a walking distance of 1,200m
- All outdoor sports: 1.6ha/1000 population with a walking distance of 1,200m
- Equipped/designated play areas: 0.25ha/1000 population, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks): 0.30ha/1000 population and a walking distance of 700m.

6.4.2 FIT also accepts the importance of developing locally researched standards.

6.4.3 The previous open space Study (Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)) recommended the following local standards for Parks:

- Quantity: 1.32 ha/1000 population (based on existing provision)
- Access: 1.06 km/ 9.88 minutes walk time (average walking distance from consultation)

### *Quantity of parks and recreation grounds*

6.4.4 The following sets out the justification for the quantity standard for parks and recreation grounds:

- Existing average level of provision in the borough is 1.14 ha/1000;
- There is an additional 0.58 ha/1000 of private sports space which includes a variety of uses (excluding golf clubs);
- Only 1 parish (Goudhurst) has no provision, whilst provision in the other parishes varies;

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<sup>14</sup> Routes that are clearly well used

- The recent household survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2017) identified that 37% felt there is a need for more local recreation grounds/parks whilst 62% felt there are enough;
- Considering the above factors, there is no justified need to seek an increase in provision and it is recommended that a standard is set in line with the existing average level of provision. It is therefore considered that a standard of 1.1 ha/1000 would provide a reasonable baseline to assess current levels of provision and to inform the requirements from new development;
- Whilst no standards are proposed for privately managed facilities, the value of this provision for community use is recognised, it is therefore recommended that appropriate policy is adopted to afford protection to these spaces within the Local Plan.

### ***Access standard for parks and recreation grounds***

6.4.5 The following sets out the justification for the access standard for parks and recreation grounds:

- The recent resident's survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2017) identified that 72% of people walk to local parks and recreation grounds, and that 13% travel for up to 5 minutes, 37% up to 10 minutes and 27% up to 15 minutes;
- The findings indicate that people do want local parks close to home and it is therefore recommended that a standard of 600 metres (12-13 minutes straight line walk time) is adopted.

### ***Quality standards for parks and recreation grounds***

6.4.6 For local parks and recreation grounds, the household survey identified that 15% of people felt this type of provision was very good, 47% good and 29% average, the rest (9%) stated facilities were poor or very poor.

6.4.7 Local parks and recreation grounds were identified as the second highest priority for improvement (with 46% stating they are a high priority for improvement) within the borough.

6.4.8 National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the 'Green Flag' quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces. For outdoor sports space, Sport England has produced a wealth of useful documents outlining the quality standards for facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, MUGAs and tennis courts plus associated ancillary facilities. The Rugby Football Union has provided guidance on the quality and standard of provision of facilities for rugby, and the England and Wales Cricket Board has provided guidance for cricket facilities. It is recommended that the guidance provided in these documents is adopted by the Council, and that all new and improved provision seeks to meet these guidelines.

## 6.5 Play Space (children and youth)

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Children's Play Space	0.04 ha/1000 population	480m (10 minutes straight line walk time)
Youth Play Space	0.04 ha/1000 population	720m (15 minutes straight line walk time)

### **Existing National and Local Policies**

6.5.1 The FIT guidance 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' recommends provision of 0.25ha/1000 population of equipped/designated play areas, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). The guidance does not specifically cover the needs of most teenagers.

6.5.2 The previous FIT guidance (The Six Acre Standard) recommended provision of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people for children's play of which around 0.3 hectares should be equipped provision. These standards had been criticised because they are often seen as undeliverable, and can result in a proliferation of play areas that can be difficult to maintain, as well as setting unrealistic aspirations in urban areas where insufficient land is available to provide facilities, especially higher density development on brownfield sites. The level recommended within the new guidance (0.25 ha/1000 population), although lower than previously, is still considered to be high.

6.5.3 The previous open space Study (Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)) recommended the following local standards for children and young people:

- Quantity: 0.24 ha/1000 population (a combined standard for both children and young people)
- Access: 1.14 km (10.72 minutes walk time) for LEAPs and 1.6km (15 minutes walk time) for NEAPs.

### **Quantity standards for play**

6.5.4 The following sets out the justification for the quantity standards for children's play space and youth play space:

- Current average levels of provision of children's play space is 0.04 ha/1000 population, for youth space it is 0.01 ha/1000 population;
- The household survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, October 2017) identified that 43% of people felt there is a need for more children's play space, and 56% felt there is enough. Whilst 70% of people felt there was a need for more youth facilities, with 28% of people identifying there was sufficient;

- All parishes have provision of children’s play space. For youth space, this differs considerably with 10 (out of 17) parishes having provision;
- The Parish survey identified a need for both new children’s and youth play spaces, as well as improvements to existing facilities.
- Considering the above, there is a clear need to increase the provision of youth space, therefore a standard of 0.04 ha/1000 is recommended. For children’s space, there is less identified need for additional facilities, therefore a standard in line with current levels of provision of 0.04 ha/1000 is recommended.

### ***Access standards for play***

6.5.5 The following sets out the justification for the access standards for children’s play space and youth play space:

- The household survey identified that for children’s play space 78% of people walk to facilities, and 22% want facilities within 5 minutes, 40% within 10 minutes, and 25% within 15 minutes;
- For teenage facilities, 58% walk and 14% want facilities within 5 minutes, 29% within 10 minutes, and 33% within 15 minutes, indicating users are willing to travel further to teenage facilities than children’s facilities. In light of these findings, the following access standards are recommended:
  - Children’s provision – 480m (10 minutes straight line walk time).
  - Youth Provision – 720m (15 minutes straight line walk time).

### ***Quality standards for play***

6.5.6 The residents survey identified that 11% of people identified children’s play space as very good, and 44% as good and 32% as average and 13% as poor or very poor. For youth facilities, 4% was very good, 15% good, 32% average and 49% poor or very poor. This indicates there is less satisfaction with the quality of youth facilities compared to children’s facilities.

6.5.7 In terms of adopting quality standards for children’s and teenage facilities, Play England are keen to see a range of play spaces in built up environments:

- Door-step spaces close to home
- Local play spaces – larger areas within easy walking distance
- Neighbourhood spaces for play – larger spaces within walking distance
- Destination/family sites – accessible by bicycle, public transport and with car parking.

6.5.8 Moving forward, Play England would like their new Design Guide; ‘*Design for Play*’ to be referenced and added as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in standard configuration. Play England have also developed a ‘*Quality Assessment Tool*’ which can be used to judge the quality of individual play spaces. It has been recommended that the Council consider adopting this as a means of assessing the quality of play spaces in the borough. Play England also highlight a potential need for standards for smaller settlements and rural areas

where the doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination hierarchy is unlikely to be appropriate.

6.5.9 Disability access is also an important issue for Play England and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS<sup>15</sup> publication; *'Inclusion by Design'* as an SPD. Their most recent guidance document, *'Better Places to Play through Planning'* gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space and is considered as a background context for the standards suggested in this Study.

## 6.6 Accessible Natural/Semi-Natural Green Space

6.6.1 For Natural Green Space, there are a number of national standards recommended by Natural England, which are summarised below:

### ***Natural England Accessible Natural Green space Standards (ANGSt)***

- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two Kilometres of home;
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five Kilometres of home; and
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten Kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home.

### ***Local standards***

6.6.2 The previous open space Study (Tunbridge Wells PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006)) recommended the following local standards for natural/semi-natural greenspace:

- Quantity: 37.40 ha/1000 population (based on the average level of provision).
- Access: 1.27km (based on the average walking distance from consultation).

### ***Proposed standards***

6.6.3 Current provision comprises numerous large tracts of natural greenspace, which often cross the boundaries of a number of parishes. This results in some parishes having large amounts of natural green space (with only 2 having no provision). It is therefore considered that a local quantity standard would not provide any meaningful analysis of existing provision. Furthermore, a standard based on average levels of provision (i.e. 17.64 ha/1000) to inform the requirements for new provision is also considered undeliverable.

6.6.4 It is therefore recommended that the analysis should adopt the Natural England ANGSt standards to identify current levels of provision and gaps.

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<sup>15</sup> KIDS, is a charity which in its 40 years, has pioneered a number of approaches and programmes for disabled children and young people. KIDS was established in 1970 and in 2003, KIDS merged with KIDSACTIVE, previously known as the Handicapped Adventure Play Association.

6.6.5 It is also recommended that local standards for providing new levels of provision through new development are considered in tandem with provision of amenity green space in new development. The aim would be to provide guidance for development to provide amenity/natural green spaces which have both a recreational value and biodiversity value through native planting. There should be a move away from providing numerous small amenity grass areas, to providing fewer, larger amenity/natural spaces in new development. This is reflected in the natural green spaces standards below:

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)		Access standard
	For assessing current provision	Requirement from new development	
Natural/Semi-natural Green Space	ANGSt	0.8ha per 1000 population to include natural and amenity green space	ANGSt

#### *Quality of natural and semi-natural green space*

6.6.6 The residents survey (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, October 2017) identified 8% of people felt the quality of this provision was very good, 45% good, 36% average and the remaining poor/very poor. Consultation results highlight the value attached to certain attributes of open space, in particular:

- Good maintenance and cleanliness
- Ease of access
- Safety and security
- Lack of antisocial behaviour, noise etc.

6.6.7 This suggests that the provision of new or improved open space cannot be considered in isolation from the means of maintaining such space, perceptions of antisocial behaviour, and ease of access from within the surrounding environment.

6.6.8 The shape and size of space provided should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. Provision might be expected to include (as appropriate) elements of woodland, wetland, heathland and meadow, and could also be made for informal public access through recreation corridors. For larger areas, where car borne visits might be anticipated, some parking provision will be required. The larger the area the more valuable sites will tend to be in terms of their potential for enhancing local conservation interest and biodiversity. Wherever possible these sites should be linked to help improve wildlife value as part of a network.

6.6.9 In areas where it may be impossible or inappropriate to provide additional natural green space consistent with the standard, other approaches should be pursued which could include (for example):

- Changing the management of marginal space on playing fields and parks to enhance biodiversity.

- Encouraging living green roofs as part of new development/ redevelopment.
- Encouraging the creation of mixed species hedgerows.
- Additional use of long grass management regimes.
- Improvements to watercourses and water bodies.
- Innovative use of new drainage schemes / Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- Use of native trees and plants with biodiversity value in high quality soft landscaping of new developments.

6.6.10 The above should in any event be principles to be pursued and encouraged at all times. Further guidance in this regard may be included in appropriate Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

## 6.7 Summary of open space standards

6.7.1 The table below summarises the quantity and access standards for each typology, as detailed in sections 6.2 to 6.6 above.

Table 9 Summary of open space standards

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population) for analysing existing provision	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population) requirements from new development	Access standard
Allotments	0.3	0.3	720 metres or 15 minutes straight line walk time
Amenity Green Space (above 0.15ha in size)	0.4	See standard for Natural Green Space	600 metres or 12-13 minutes straight line walk time
Parks and Recreation Grounds (Publicly accessible only)	1.1	1.1	600 metres or 12-13 minutes straight line walk time
Play Space (Children)	0.04	0.04	480 metres or 10 minutes straight line walk time
Play Space (Youth)	0.04	0.04	720 metres or 15 minutes straight line walk time
Natural Green Space	ANGSt	0.8 to include natural and amenity green space for new provision	ANGSt
<b>Total for new provision</b>		<b>2.28 ha/1000</b>	

## 7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This part of the report uses the set standards to analyse existing open space provision. This section provides an overview of provision across the borough and also by individual parishes, with more detailed maps provided in appendix 2 and 3. This section includes:

#### ***Quantity analysis***

7.1.2 The quantity of provision is assessed using the recommended quantity standards for each of the typologies where a quantity standard has been developed. Recommended standards are expressed as hectares of open space per 1000 people.

7.1.3 The quantity assessment looks at the existing levels of provision, then uses the recommended standard and the population (Census 2011) within each parish to assess the required level of provision. From this a calculation is made of the supply, which will either be sufficient or insufficient. Within this section, levels of provision are provided by parish. Open space provision maps by parish are provided in appendix 1.

7.1.4 Churchyards and cemeteries, education sites, accessible natural/semi-natural green space, and outdoor sport (private) do not have quantity standards set for analysing existing provision (with the exception of natural green space over 20ha in size which is assessed against the ANGSt access standards) or for new provision (with the exception of natural green space which is to be provided in tandem with amenity green space), and therefore the existing supply of these typologies has not been analysed, although quantitative figures (in hectares and hectares per 1000 people) have been provided.

#### ***Access analysis***

7.1.5 This section of the report provides analysis of the recommended access standards for each typology across the Study area. The maps and analysis in this section are intended to be indicative, providing an overall picture of provision and highlighting any key issues across the borough.

7.1.6 However, the key to access analysis, is understanding the picture at a more localised level, therefore, maps showing local access provision by parish are included in appendix 2.

7.1.7 Churchyards and cemeteries, education sites, accessible natural/semi-natural green space smaller than 20ha (sites above 20ha in size are analysed against the ANGSt access standards) and outdoor sport (private) have not had access standards set.

#### ***Quality analysis***

7.1.8 This section of the report makes analysis of each typology across the Study area – it highlights any common themes or issues that have arisen from the quality audit. The quality audit results are presented in maps by parish in appendix 3.

---

## 7.2 Application of quantity standards

### 7.2.1 Current supply against the Tunbridge Wells standards

7.2.1.1 Table 10 shows the existing supply (in hectares) of open space for each typology for each of the parishes. The supply is calculated using the population figures for each parish, and the quantity of open space compared to what the requirements for open space are against the standards set.

7.2.1.2 The figures of 'Park and Recreation Grounds (Combined)' includes a combination of the following typologies:

- Park and Recreation Ground; and
- Outdoor Sport (Fixed<sup>16</sup>).

Table 10 Existing supply by parish (hectares) against the proposed Tunbridge Wells quantity standards

Parish	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds (combined)	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)
Benenden	-0.71	0.28	-0.09	-0.04	-0.09
Bidborough	-0.08	-0.47	0.32	0.01	-0.01
Brenchley	-0.11	2.62	-0.43	-0.09	-0.11
Capel	2.15	-0.99	1.4	-0.05	-0.1
Cranbrook & Sissinghurst	-0.56	-2.33	-1.97	-0.08	-0.23
Frittenden	-0.27	-0.36	-0.04	0.04	-0.03
Goudhurst	-0.76	0.51	-3.66	0.14	-0.13
Hawkhurst	0.61	-0.89	-2.19	0.05	-0.1
Horsmonden	-0.73	-0.27	0.83	-0.08	-0.09
Lamberhurst	-0.19	0.27	2.08	0.01	-0.07
Paddock Wood	0.25	1.62	3.77	0.12	-0.26
Pembury	0.16	1.25	-4.26	-0.19	-0.2
Royal Tunbridge Wells	-0.65	-10.84	10.8	0.47	-1.38
Rusthall	0.85	-1.57	-5.24	-0.07	-0.16
Sandhurst	-0.02	-0.3	1.63	0.07	-0.06
Southborough	-0.27	-2.92	-2.92	-0.16	-0.48
Speldhurst	1.58	-0.6	4.42	0.23	-0.12

7.2.1.3 Table 14 shows that provision varies across parishes and typologies, with some meeting the standards and some falling below. This will be an important consideration when

<sup>16</sup> As explained under section 5.2.3, Outdoor Sport (fixed) includes non-pitch based provision such as tennis courts, bowling greens and outdoor gyms.

determining the need for on-site open space in sites allocated for housing in the new Local Plan.

7.2.1.4 Provision and access to accessible natural green space (against the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards) is considered under section 7.3.2. The quantity (in hectares) of accessible natural green space by parish is shown in table 7 above.

## 7.2.2 Future supply and need for open space

7.2.2.1 The Government's Standard Methodology figure is 13,840 or 692 dwellings per annum (see section 1.4), within the plan period (2013-2033). The Council has recorded 1,215 dwellings completed between 2013-2016/17, and an additional 2,635 either under construction or not yet started. Taking the above in to account – approximately 5,912 dwellings are either completed or in the pipeline (i.e. completions, extant consents either under construction or not yet started, current allocations and a modest windfall allowance) and so this figure can be taken off the 13,840. The Council is therefore looking to allocate sites within the new Local Plan to meet this need of approximately 7,928 dwellings, which are estimated to accommodate 17,809 people.

7.2.2.2 The Issues and Options Stage of the new Local Plan published five potential options for accommodating (individually or as a hybrid solution) this required growth. These growth options are summarised in section 1.4 of this report.

7.2.2.3 This section of the report considers the overall implications at the borough level for open space provision from the predicted population growth. However, the standards within this Study can be applied to any housing allocation/growth option (once determined) to determine the specific requirements for new open space, alongside consideration of the existing access to and supply of open space within the parish that a development falls.

### **Requirements from projected population increase across Tunbridge Wells borough**

Table 11 Borough wide open space requirements from new development (up to 2033)

Typology	Required standard for new provision (Ha/1000)	Requirement for 17,809 people (Ha)
Allotments	0.30	5.34
Amenity Green Space/Natural Green Space	0.8	14.25
Park and Recreation Ground (Combined)	1.1	19.59
Play Space (Children)	0.04	0.71
Play Space (Youth)	0.04	0.71
<b>Total</b>		<b>40.60</b>

### **Impact of population growth on existing open space provision**

7.2.2.4 Table 12 shows the impact on the current supply of open space at the borough level, if no new open space were provided on site as part of new housing developments. This has been calculated using the requirements for open space in Table 11.

*Table 12 Supply of open space following new housing development if no open space provided on-site*

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Existing Supply (Ha)</b>	<b>Resulting Supply (Ha) following a population increase of 17,809 people</b>
Allotments	1.25	-4.09
Amenity Green Space	-14.98	-29.23
Park and Recreation Ground (Combined)	16.01	-3.58
Play Space (Children)	0.39	-0.32
Play Space (Youth)	-3.60	-4.31

7.2.2.5 As can be seen from table 12, the existing shortfalls in amenity green space and youth play space would be exacerbated, and allotments, parks and recreation grounds and children's play space would also be in shortfall. Therefore, the on-site provision of these types of open space as part of new development is a priority (although this also needs to be considered at the parish level).

## **7.3 Application of access standards**

7.3.1 This section provides an overview of access to different types of open space typologies across the borough, using the access standards summarised in table 13. The maps are intended to provide an overview and are for illustrative purposes only. More detailed maps by parish are provided for each typology within appendix 2 (see example at figure 7).

7.3.2 It also considers access via the public rights of way network, which is an important element of access to open space and the countryside.

7.3.3 The access maps for play space (both children and youth) have used a walk time analysis which is based on the road and path network, using a walking speed of 3mph<sup>17</sup>. This analysis is more accurate than the basic buffer analysis which is based on distance only, as it takes account of the road network/barriers to access. The walk time analysis works well for play spaces, as they are generally relatively small spaces, with only one access point.

7.3.4 The more basic straight line buffer access analysis approach has been used for the remaining typologies, derived from table 13 below. The straight line walking distances do not take into account roads or barriers to access and so the actual route walked (the pedestrian route) is generally further i.e. straight line distances are around 60% of actual distances.

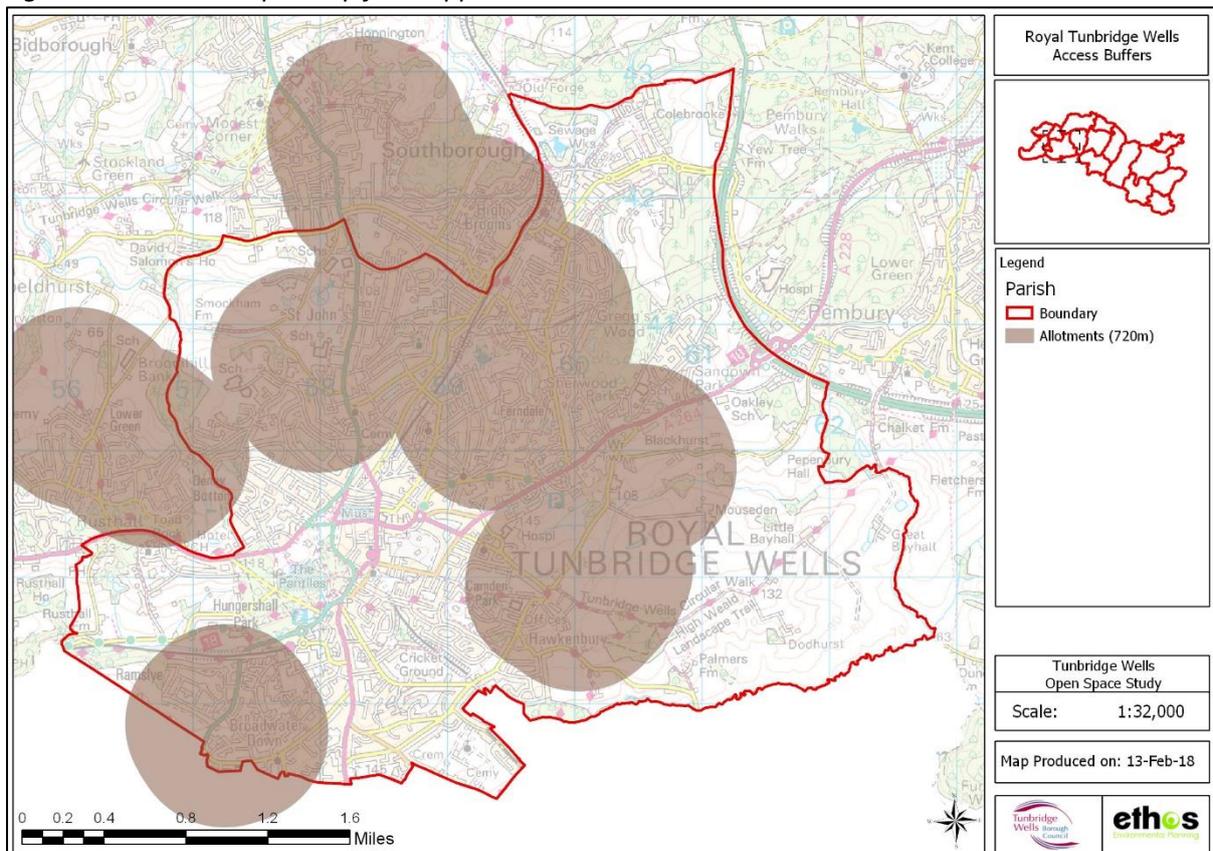
<sup>17</sup> This is the average walking speed stated on the British Heart Foundation website:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/get-involved/events/training-zone/walking-training-zone/walking-faqs>

Table 13 Standard walk times and distances

walk time (minutes)	Pedestrian Route (metres)	Straight line (metres)
1	100	60
2	160	96
3	240	144
4	320	192
5	400	240
6	480	288
7	560	336
8	640	384
9	720	432
10	800	480
11	880	528
12	960	576
13	1040	624
14	1120	672
15	1200	720
16	1280	768
17	1360	816
18	1440	864
19	1520	912
20	1600	960

Figure 7 Example map from appendix 2: access to allotments



Access to open space across the borough

Figure 8 Access to allotments (720 metres)

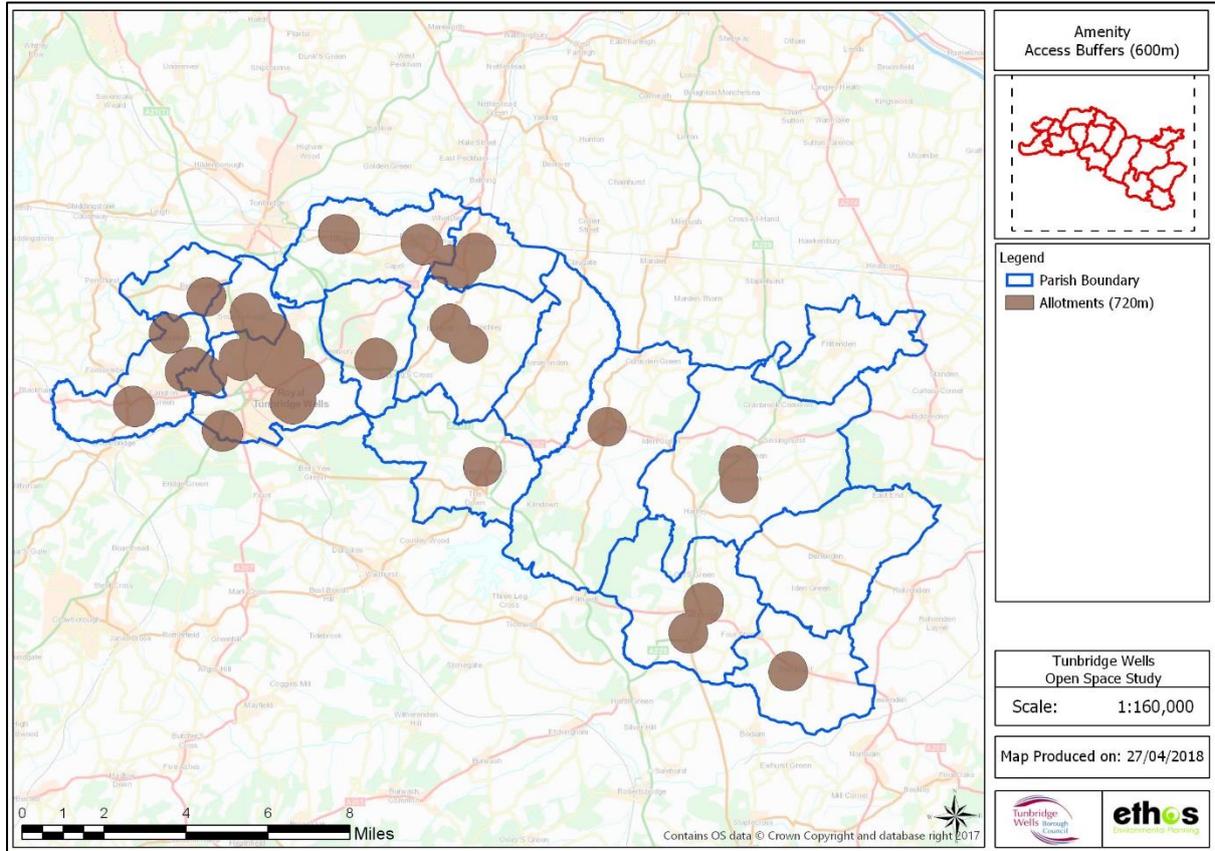


Figure 9 Access to amenity green space (600 metres)

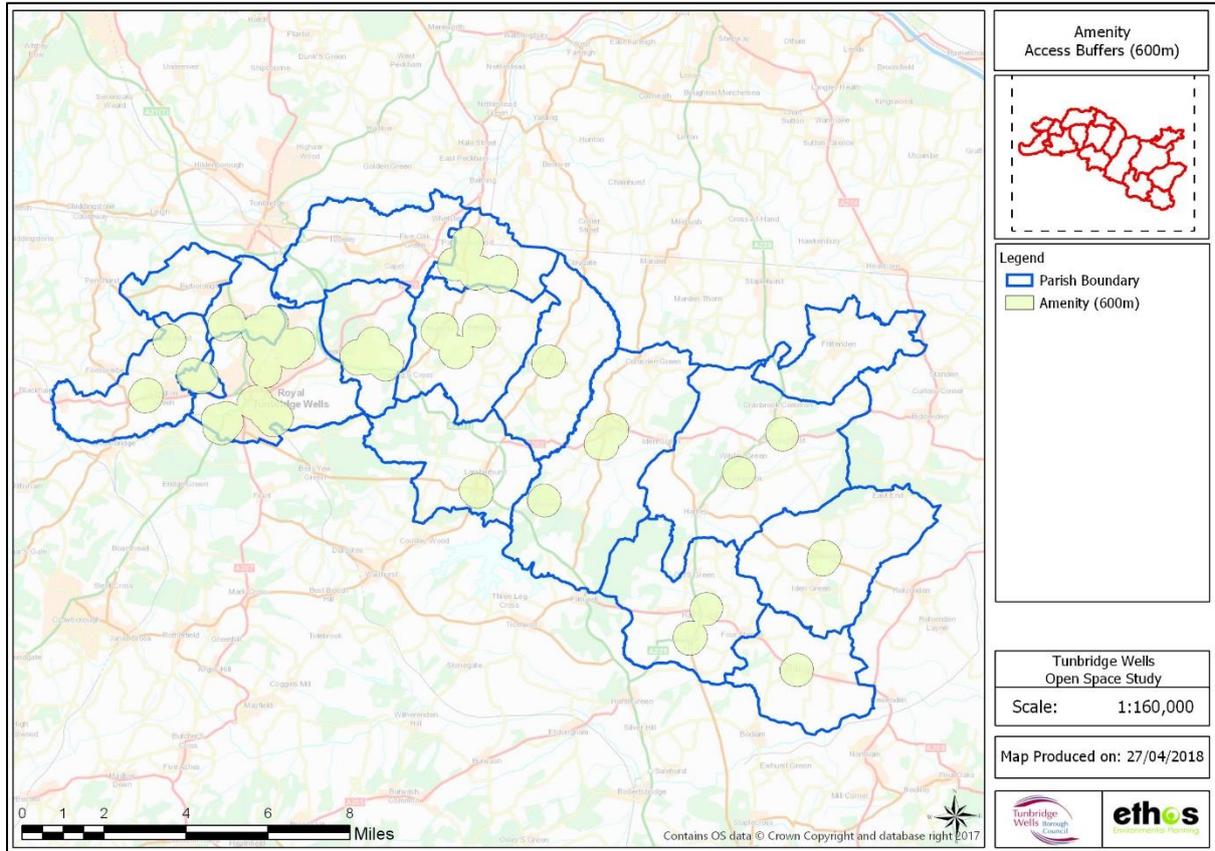


Figure 10 Access to parks and recreation grounds (600 metres)

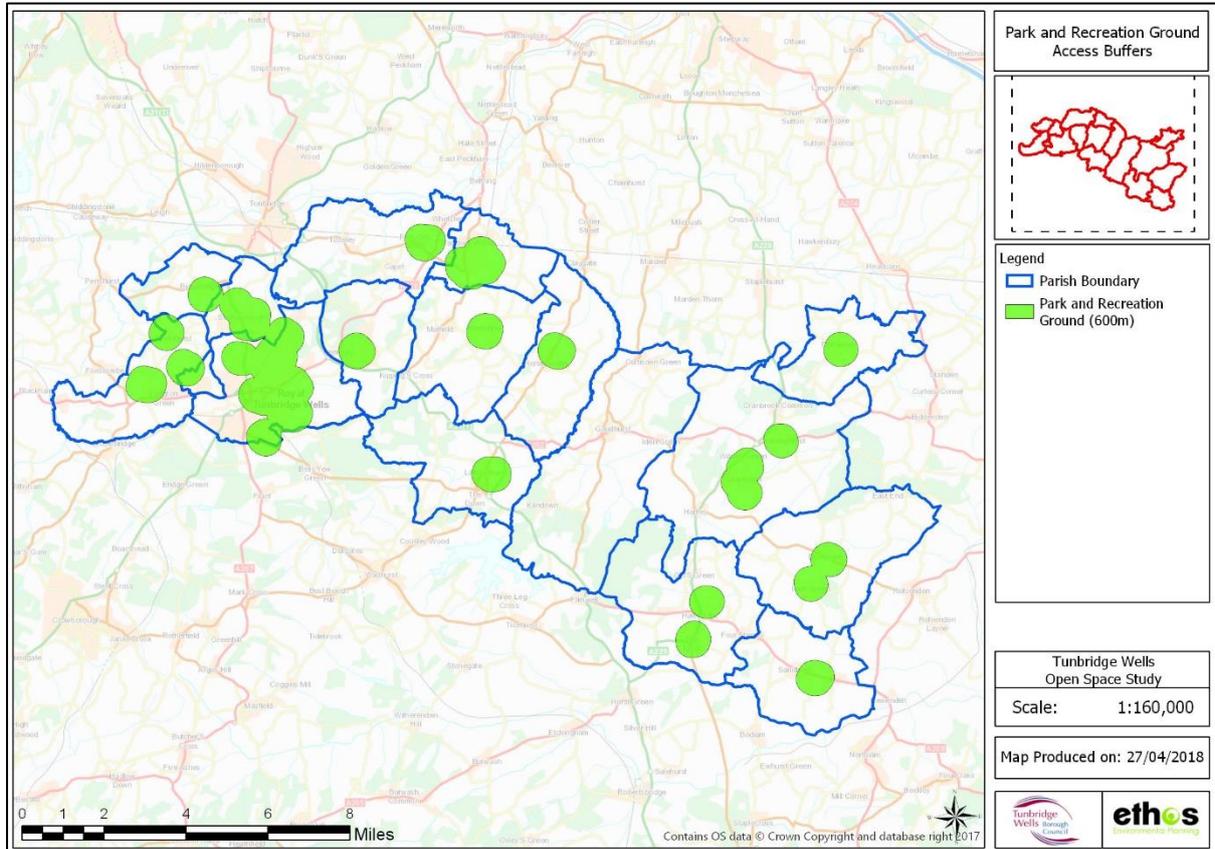


Figure 11 Access to children’s play space (10 minutes walk time)

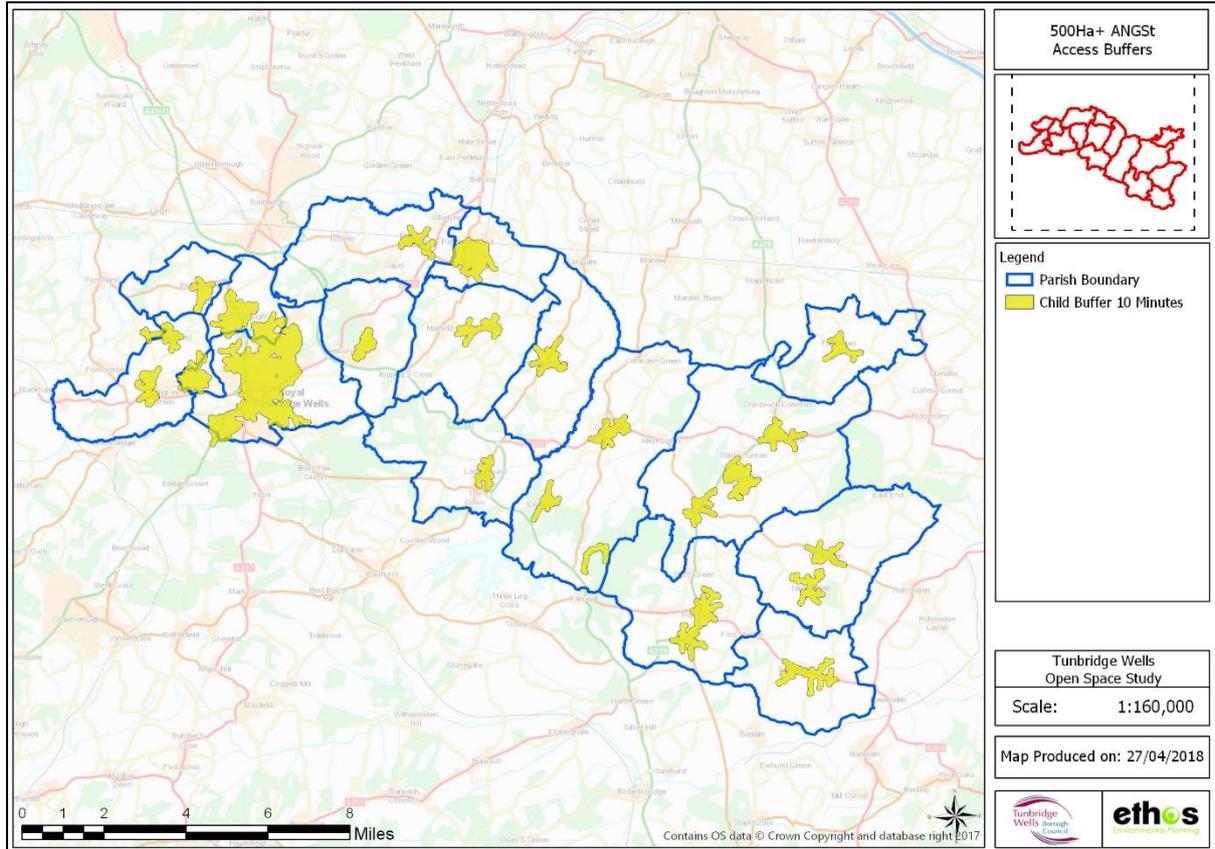
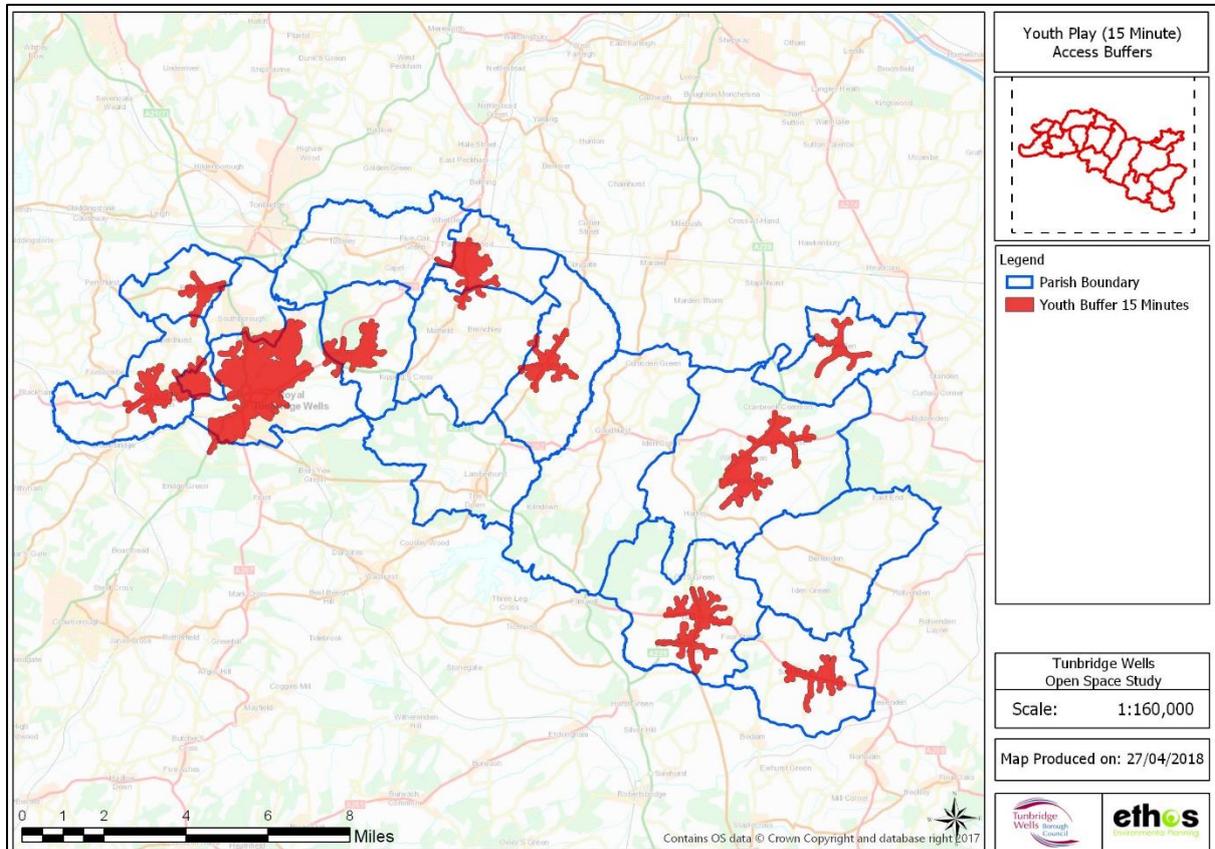


Figure 12 Access to youth play space (15 minutes walk time)

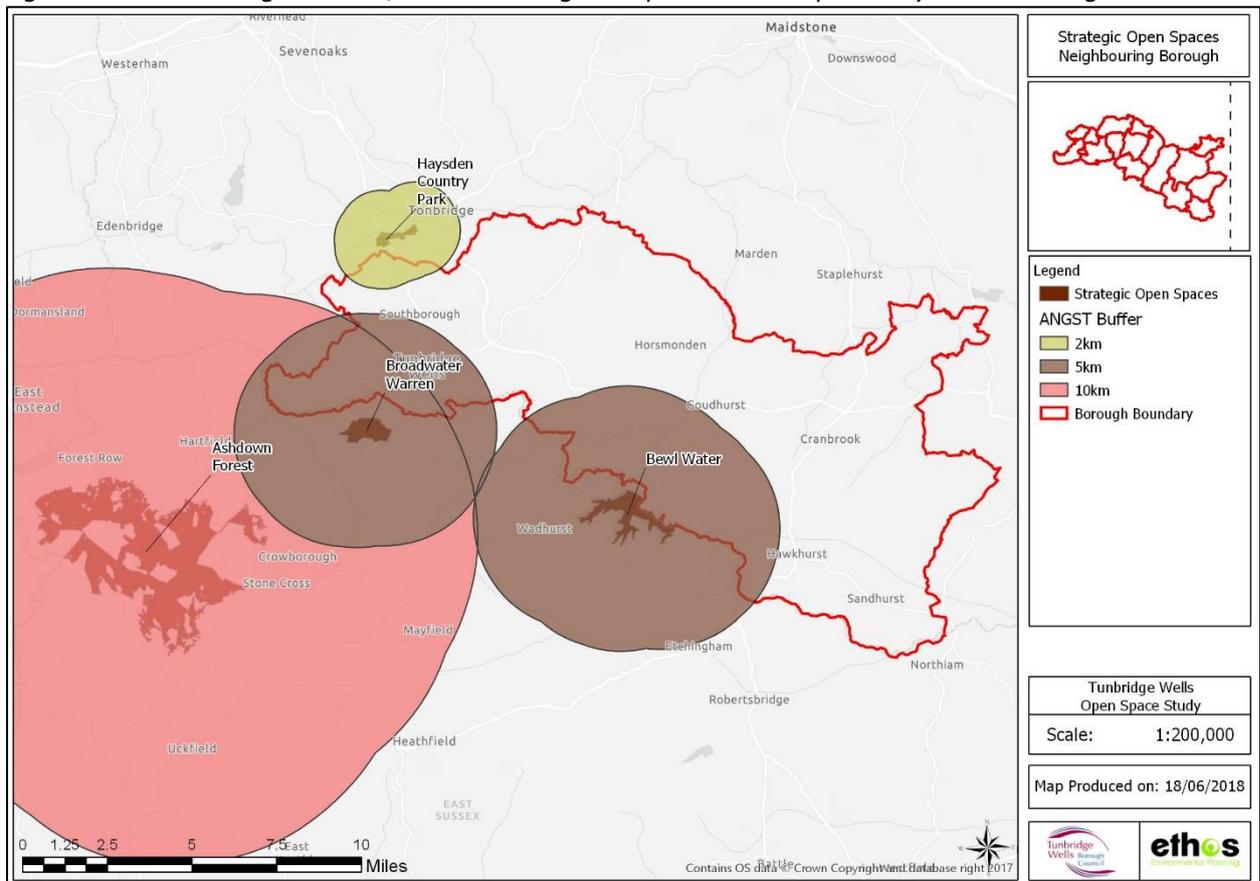


## Application of natural green space standards

7.3.5 This section looks at access to natural/semi-natural green space through the application of ANGSt standards for natural green space.

7.3.6 It is important to note that only natural/semi-natural green spaces within the borough have been mapped and considered within the access maps below, however there are a number of large natural/semi-natural green spaces that fall just outside of the borough which provide access for residents e.g. Bewl Water, as shown in the figure below<sup>18</sup>.

Figure 13 Strategic natural/semi-natural green spaces in close proximity to the borough



## Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGST)

7.3.7 The ANGST are:

- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two Kilometres of home;
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five Kilometres of home; and
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten Kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home;

<sup>18</sup> Cross border issues have been considered in the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (2017).

Figure 14 Access to 20 ha site within 2km

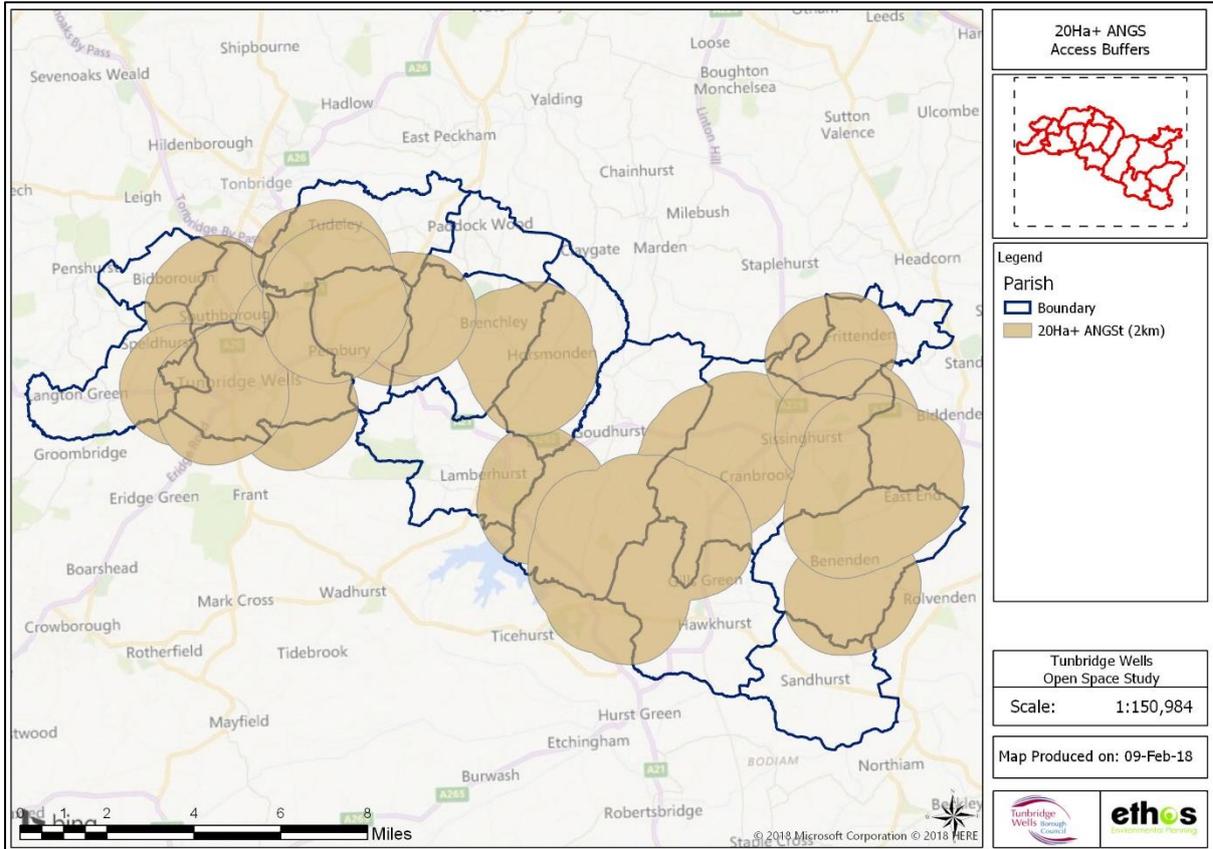


Figure 15 Access to 100 ha site within 5 km

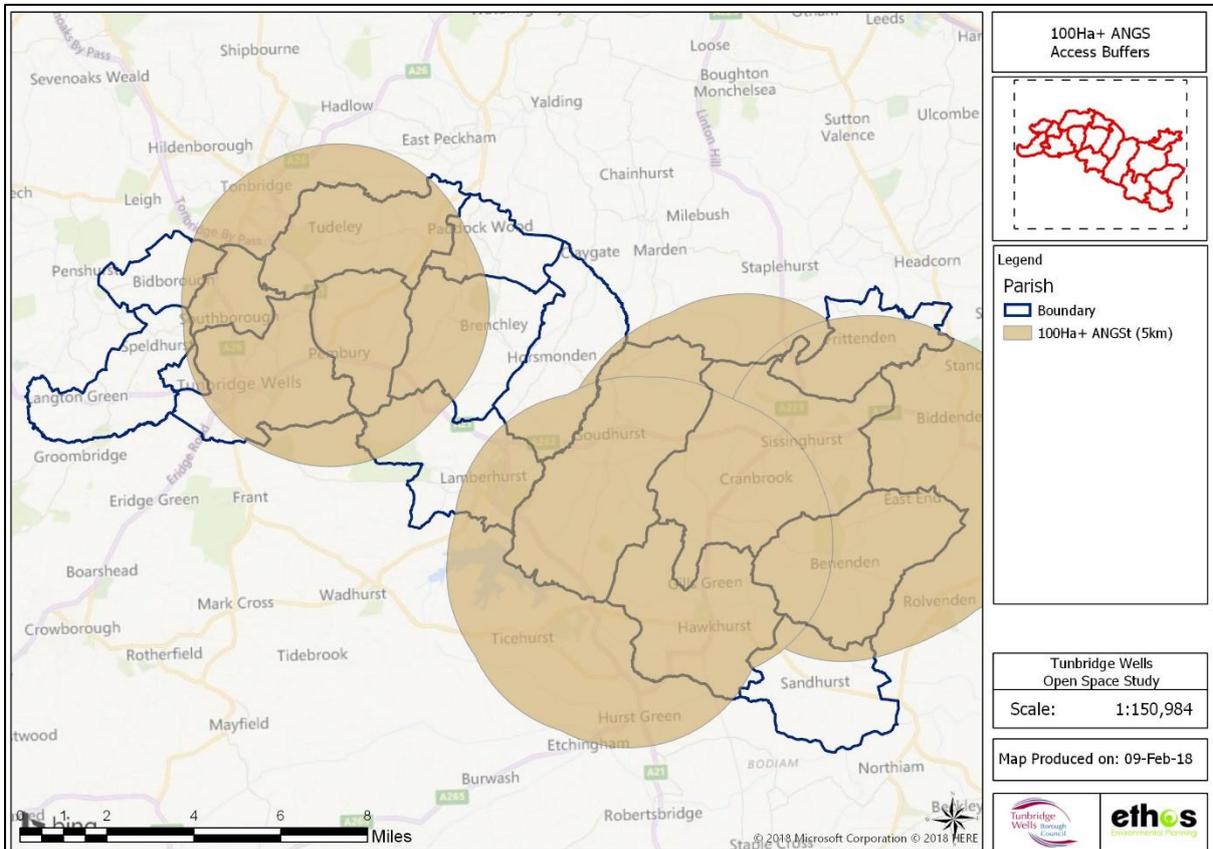


Figure 16 Access to 500 ha site within 10km

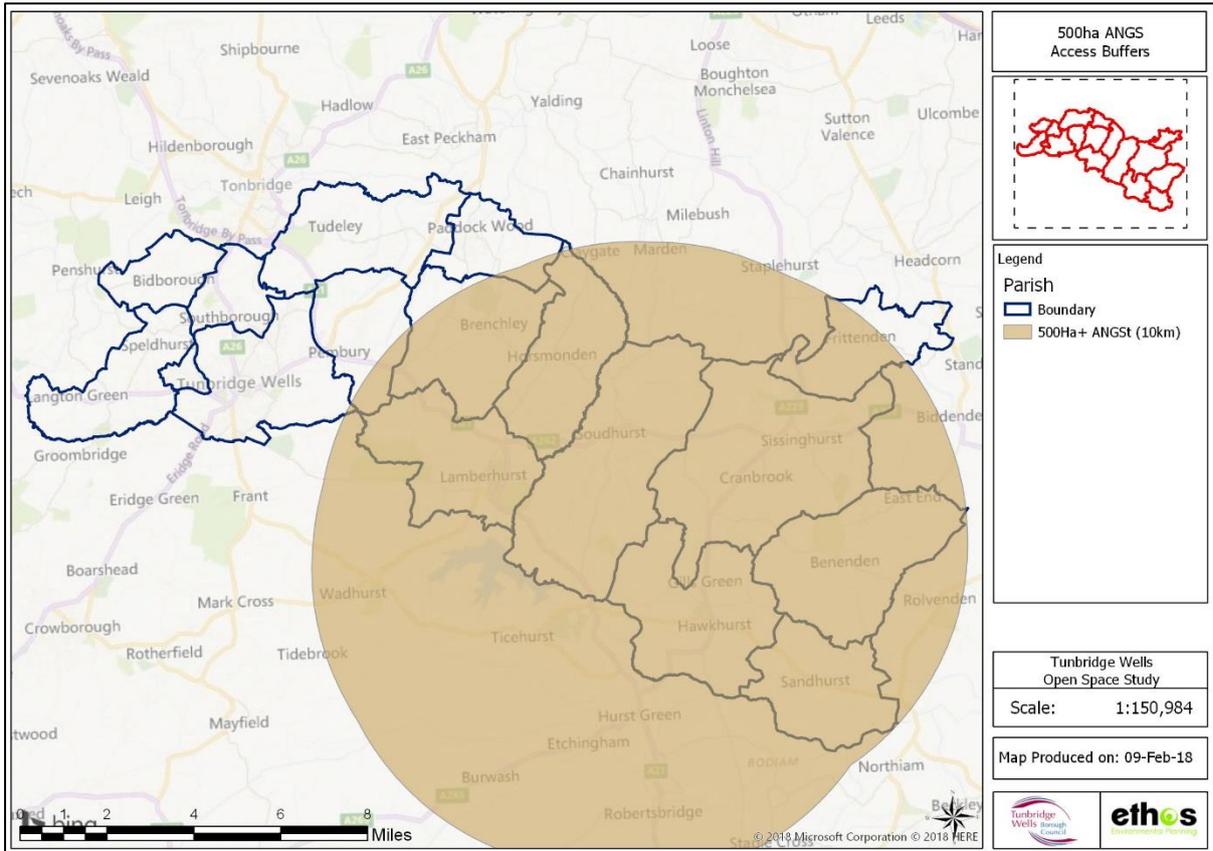


Figure 17 Local Nature Reserves

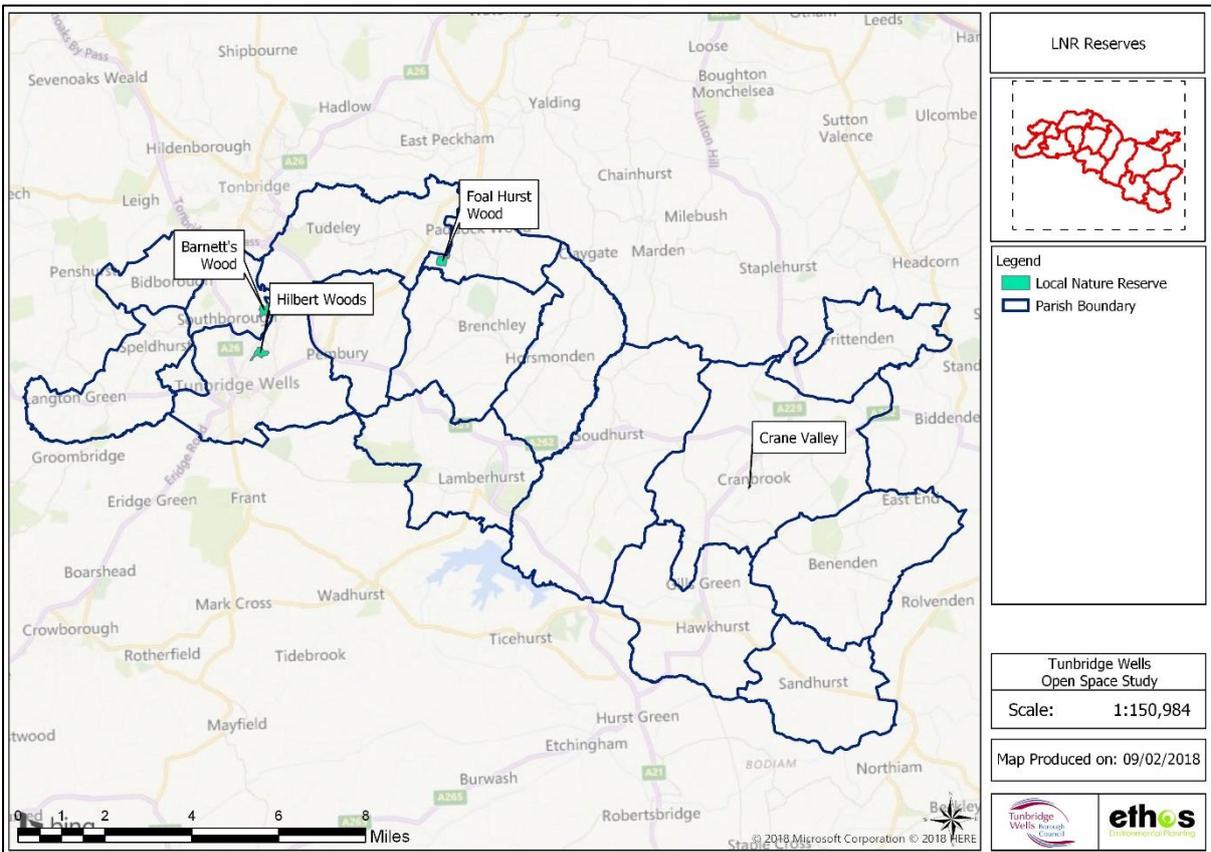


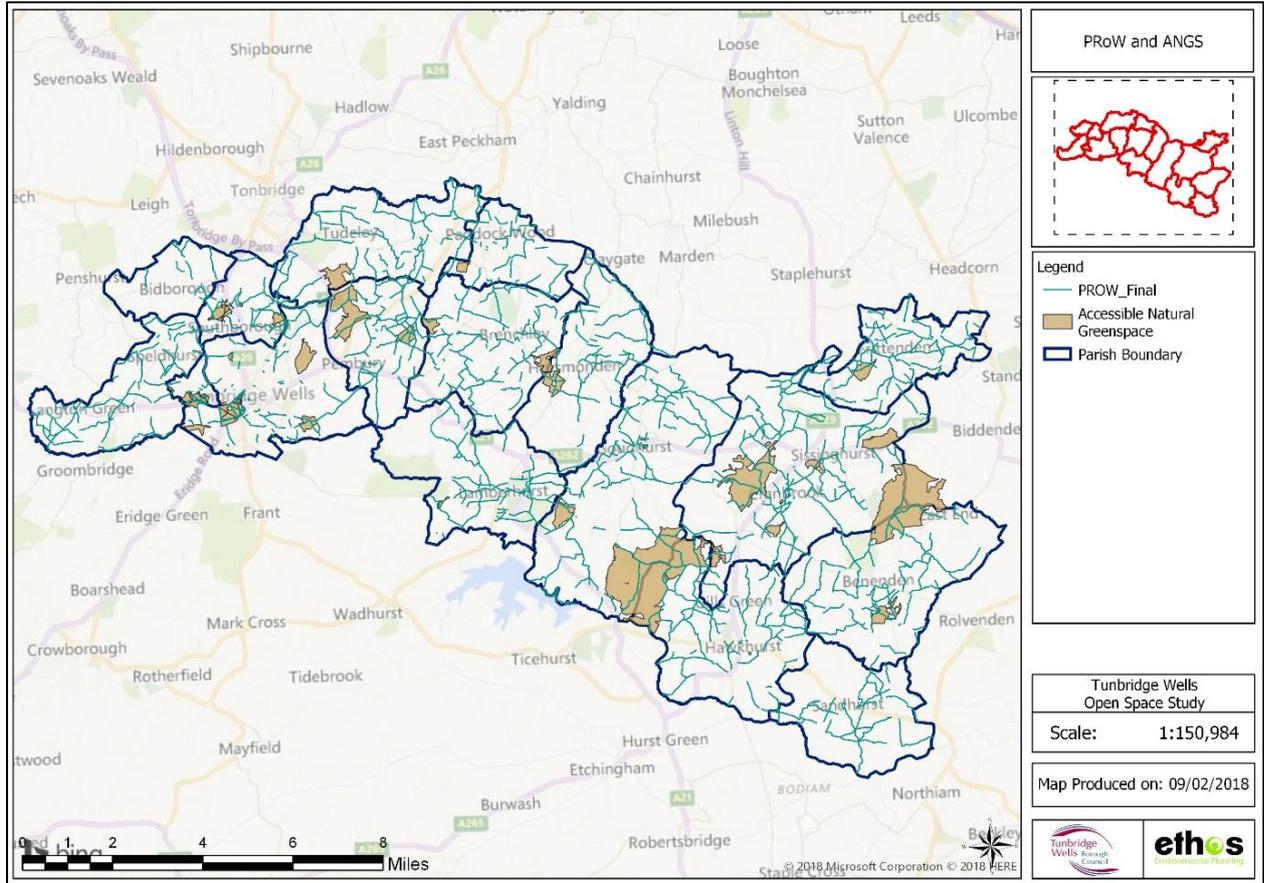
Table 14 Summary of access issues for natural green space

ANGST Standard	Key access Issues
at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home	Generally good access across the majority of parishes, although Sandhurst and Paddock Wood have very poor access.
one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home	Generally good access across the majority of the borough with gaps in Sandhurst, Lamberhurst, Horsmonden, Brenchley, Paddock Wood, Bidborough and Speldhurst.
one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home	There is one 500ha site within the borough (Bedgebury Forest), providing access across the central and eastern part of the borough. Gaps in access against the standard across the western area of the borough.
a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home	There are only four Local Nature Reserves within Tunbridge Wells borough.

### Access via the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network

7.3.8 Figure 18 below shows the PROW network across the borough. The PROW network provides access between open spaces and provides an important element of access to/within the countryside. As can be seen, there is generally good provision of PROW, although there are areas where the network is fragmented.

Figure 18 Access to Natural Green Space via the Public Rights of Way Network

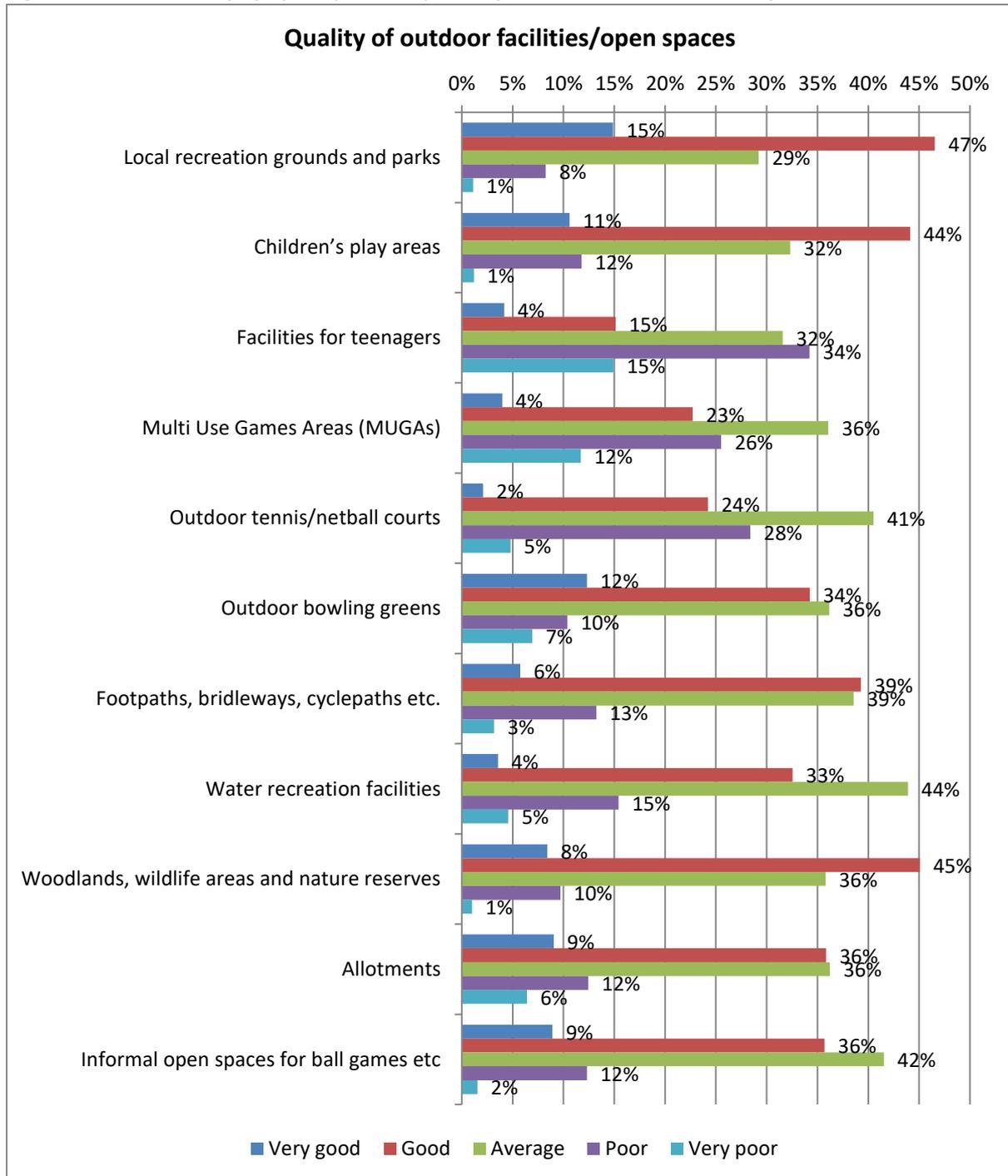


## 7.5 Application of quality standards

### Quality of open space – consultation key findings (Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2017)

7.5.1 Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the borough in terms of quality. The responses of those expressing an opinion on specific categories of facility are illustrated in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19 Quality of open space (responses from 2017 household survey)



7.5.2 For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality (though the most common rating tended to be only "average"). However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality as noted below.

7.5.3 59% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor. The quality of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts was rated as poor or worse by at least 33% of respondents.

7.5.4 In contrast some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly in terms of quality. These include: parks and recreation grounds (62% rate quality in general as being good or very good); play areas (55% similarly); and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (53%).

### **Quality of open space – audit methodology**

7.5.5 The quality audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach. However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snap-shot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a sites' existing and potential quality rather than a full asset audit.

7.5.6 It was not possible to quality audit all sites due to access restrictions, namely private sports grounds/open space and education sites. Other sites were also excluded due to limitations of resources, these included small amenity green spaces (<0.15 ha in size, which have little or no recreational value), churchyards and cemeteries. Allotments were not subject to a full quality audit but were visited and a description for each site was given where the site was visible (there were a small number of allotments that were not visible/accessible).

7.5.7 Sites were visited, and a photographic record made of key features, along with a description of the site and recommendations for improvements. An assessment of the quality of the open space was undertaken using the following criteria:

1. Welcoming
2. Good and Safe Access
3. Community Involvement
4. Safe Equipment & Facilities
5. Appropriate Provision of Facilities
6. Quality/Management of Facilities and Infrastructure
7. Personal Security on Site
8. Dog Fouling
9. Litter and Waste Management
10. Grounds/Habitat Management

7.5.8 Children's play spaces and youth play spaces were also quality audited separately using the above criteria.

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7.5.9 For each of the criteria a score of 1 -10 is given, where 1 is very poor and 10 is very good. The scores for each site are added together and the mean calculated based on how many criteria were scored (e.g. If ‘Community involvement’ is given N/A for a site, the total will be divided by 9). This mean is then multiplied by 7 to produce the final score from which sites are grouped into 3 categories - good, average or poor.

**Quality of open space – audit findings**

7.5.10 The quality audit was undertaken at 140 open spaces and 85 children and youth play spaces across the borough. For each of the parishes within the borough, a map showing the quality audit results has been produced (see appendix 3). Each map is based on the quality audit results which are contained within the GIS database provided to the Council. Sites have been categorized into three groups – good quality, average quality and poor quality.

7.5.11 Figures 20 and 21 provides an overview of the quality results for the play spaces and open spaces that were quality audited. The maps are intended to be used for indicative purposes – detailed maps by parish are included in appendix 3, and a GIS database of sites have been provided as an electronic geo database to the Council.

Figure 20 Overview of open space quality audit results

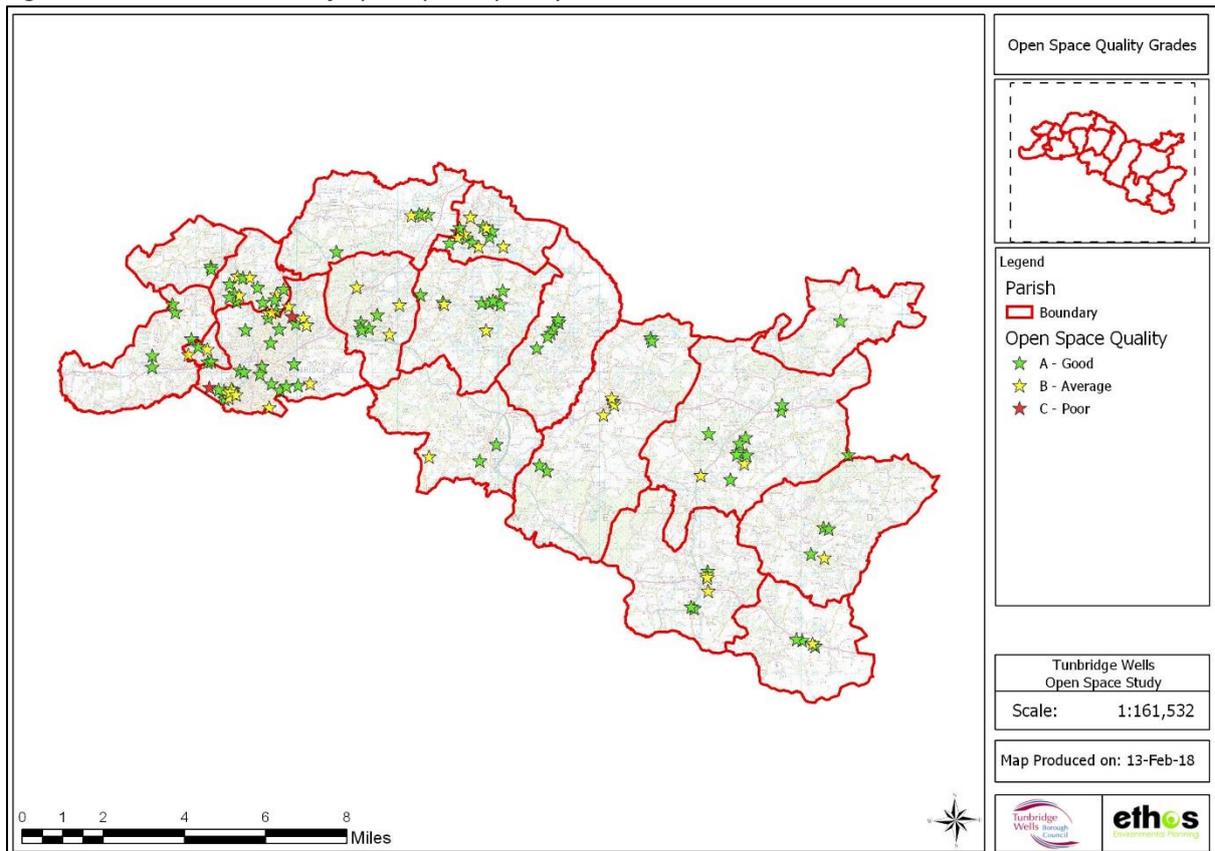
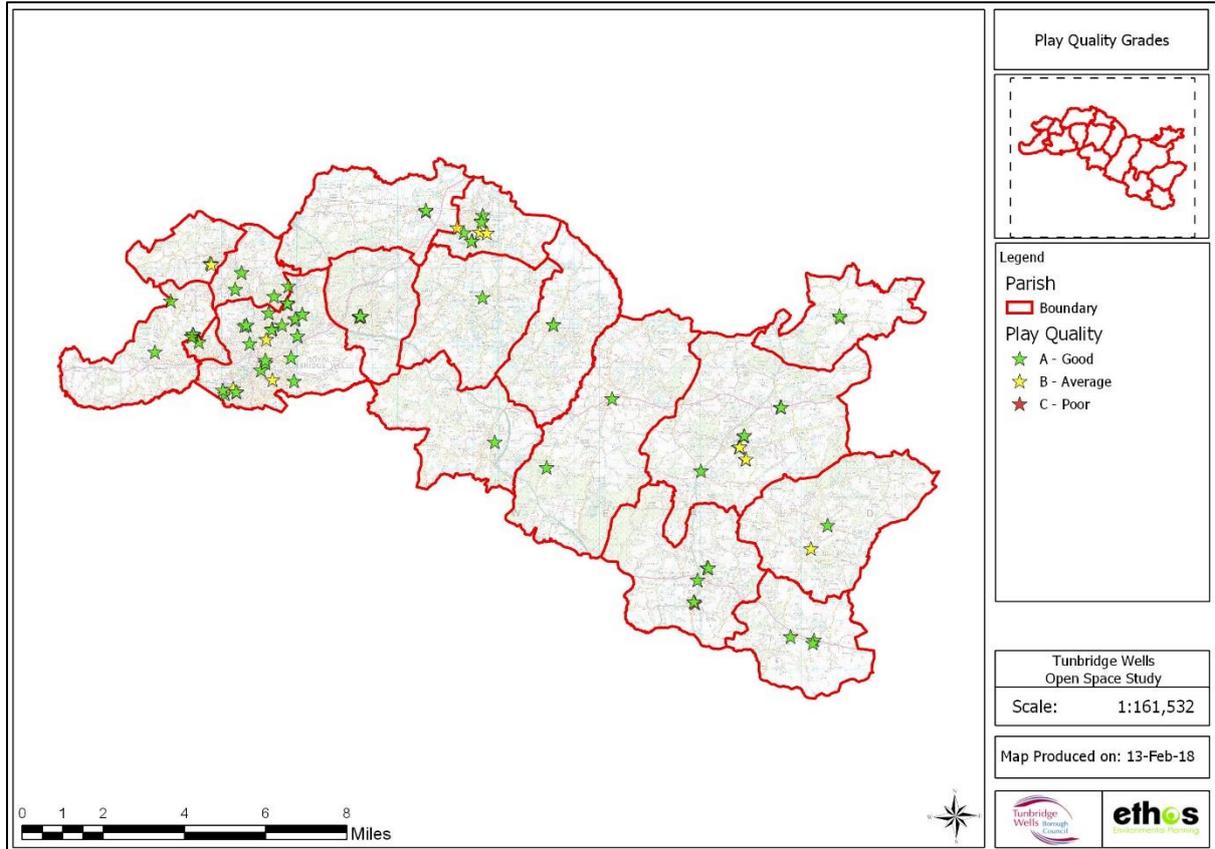


Figure 21 Overview of play space<sup>19</sup> (children’s and youth) quality audit results



<sup>19</sup> As explained in section 5.2.4, this includes equipped provision for children, and youth provision such as MUGAs, skate parks and BMX tracks – it does not cover ‘playable space’.

## **8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.0.1 This section sets out strategic options and policy recommendations for open space within Tunbridge Wells. It draws on all the previous steps of the Study to bring together informed recommendations and addresses a number of specific requirements of the Study brief.

### **8.1 Strategic Options**

#### **Introduction**

8.1.1 The strategic options address four key areas:

- 1) Existing provision to be protected;
- 2) Existing provision to be enhanced;
- 3) Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space;
- 4) Identification of areas for new provision;
- 5) Facilities that may be surplus to requirement.

#### **Delivering Strategic Options**

8.1.2 Since the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012, the planning environment is still in a state of change and flux.

8.1.3 The abolition of regional spatial strategies, and the move towards localism, puts more focus on local authorities to work with local communities to make decisions and deliver services, rather than relying on national or regional guidance. This will clearly impact how some of the recommendations in this Study will be delivered.

8.1.4 Whilst the Local Authority will have an important role in delivering open space, sport and recreation facilities, their role may move from that of ‘deliverer’ to ‘facilitator’. The aim will be to work with community organisations to make local decisions about how facilities and services will be provided. Organisations such as residents’ groups, voluntary organisations, sports clubs and societies will all have a key role in this.

8.1.5 One of the priorities from localism is for there to be much more local decision making with regards to planning, and for local communities to develop neighbourhood plans. Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities within neighbourhood plans, the information provided within this Study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision of open space.

8.1.6 The following sections, consider the key issues for open space in the borough, and the recommendations that emerge need to be taken in context with the Localism Act and consider how they can fit into local decision making. The following sections serve to highlight issues, but do not necessarily resolve how they may be delivered.

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8.1.7 The information provided within this Study will also form the basis for potential future strategies. In addition, the recommended policies within this Study will form the basis of any open space policies adopted by the Council.

## 8.2 Existing provision to be protected

8.2.1 The starting point of any policy adopted by the Council should be that all open space should be afforded protection unless it can be proved it is not required.

8.2.2 Existing open space or sport and recreation facilities which should be given the highest level of protection by the planning system are those which are either:

- Critically important in avoiding deficiencies in accessibility, quality or quantity and scored highly in the value assessment; **or**
- Of particular nature conservation, historical or cultural value.

8.2.3 The quantity analysis, summarised in table 10 (section 7.2) shows that in every parish, there is a deficiency in at least one typology of open space. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

### ***Open Space Policy Direction (protecting open space):***

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>OS1</b> | The distribution of open space varies across the borough, however, there are identified shortages of at least 1 typology of open space in all parishes. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there is an existing shortfall of supply. |
| <b>OS2</b> | Sites which are critical to avoiding deficiencies, or making existing deficiencies worse, in quality, quantity or access should be protected unless suitable alternative provision can be provided which would compensate for any deficiencies caused.                                      |
| <b>OS3</b> | Sites which have significant nature conservation, historical or cultural value should be afforded protection, even if there is an identified surplus in quality, quantity or access in that local area.   |

8.2.4 The importance of privately managed spaces (e.g. sports grounds) as a community facility has been highlighted in this Study, although these spaces are not afforded protection through policy recommended as part of this Study, as they are not covered by standards. The Playing Pitch Strategy (prepared as a separate Study for the Council) however, covers these spaces.

## 8.3 Existing provision to be enhanced

8.3.1 In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision but no accessibility issues then increasing the capacity of existing provision may be considered. Alternatively, in areas

where facilities or spaces do not meet the relevant quality standards, qualitative enhancements will be required.

8.3.2 This includes those spaces or facilities which:

- Are critically important in avoiding deficiencies in diversity, accessibility or quantity, **but**
- Scored poorly in the quality or value assessment.

8.3.3 Those sites which require enhancement are identified within the quality audit that was undertaken as part of this Study. Some of the key observations which relate to site enhancement include:

1. The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as Parks and Recreation Grounds and Play Space.
2. The need for additional and improved facilities for young people.
3. The role of private sports spaces to some local communities and the need to provide opportunity for investment.
4. The need to ensure high quality open spaces are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
5. The importance of rights of way and natural green space within the Study area, and the need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity.
6. The role of open space in contributing to wider initiatives and strategies, such as health and wellbeing.
7. Extending and enhancing the network of green infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

8.3.4 Appendix 3 provides maps by parish showing the quality audit results, with sites grouped into three categories – good, average and poor (as identified within the quality audit, provided to the Council as a Geo database). An overview of the open space quality audit rank scores is provided in section 7.5 above. The following recommendations are made in relation to the quality of open space:

***Open Space Policy Direction (enhancing open space):***

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>OS5</b> | Where new housing development is proposed, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the parish the development is located. Priority should be given to those sites identified as being of poor or average quality, as detailed in the quality audit (appendix 4). |
| <b>OS6</b> | The Study makes recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the borough. However, a long-term strategy for achieving improvements would assist which could be delivered through a green space/GI strategy, play strategy, neighbourhood plans or additional design guidance. |
| <b>OS7</b> | Priorities for improvement (identified in the household survey) are parks and recreation grounds, followed by outdoor tennis/netball courts, bowling greens and footpaths/bridleways/cycleways.   |

**OS8** Management plans should be developed for the main parks and recreation grounds. These priorities could be considered in neighbourhood plans and by the local community.

## 8.4 Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space

8.4.1 In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or sport and recreation facility, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users or use of land which is not suitable for another purpose. This needs to be determined at a local level, considering the quality, quantity and access to facilities at neighbourhood level and in some cases across the borough.

8.4.2 Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities within neighbourhood plans, the information provided within this Study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision or replacement of open space, sport and recreation facilities. Some settlements may seek a consolidation of facilities on a single site, such as a new sports hub.

8.4.3 These decisions could include the spatial and investment plans for open space and set the foundations for open space provision (e.g. for the next 20 years). They should outline where different types of facilities and space - such as children's playgrounds, sports pitches, young people's facilities etc. are to be located. It will also identify if any open space is no longer needed and its disposal or re use can be used to fund improvements to other spaces.

8.4.4 Each plan should apply the standards and policies set out in this Study and ensure that the significant investment anticipated for open spaces is prioritised with the help of stakeholders and communities. The standards agreed in this Study can determine a minimum level of quality and quantity of open space provision and the maximum distance people should have to travel to access different types of open space.

8.4.5 This Study provides information on the existing supply of different types of open space, an analysis of access and identifies local issues related to quality. It will act as a good starting point for feeding into strategies for future decision making in consultation with the local community.

8.4.6 In determining opportunities for re-location or re-designation of open space, the quantity and access provision have been considered at parish level, and some general observations made for each parish in Table 15 below. These are purely examples/recommendations for consideration by the Council.

Table 15 Opportunities for 're-designating open space' by Parish

Parish	Current Provision	Opportunities
Benenden	Sufficient supply of amenity green space, shortfalls across all other typologies.  Although there are shortfalls in provision of parks and	There may be potential for the amenity green space and/or either of the two parks and recreation grounds to accommodate allotments and youth provision.

Parish	Current Provision	Opportunities
	recreation grounds and children's play space, there is good access across the key populated areas. There is no provision/access to youth play space and allotments.	
Bidborough	<p>Sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds and children's play space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>Although there are shortfalls in the provision of amenity green space (there is actually an amenity green space present (this is mapped), but it's area is smaller than 0.15ha so it has not been included in the quantity analysis), allotments and youth play space, there is good access to all typologies across the majority of the key populated area.</p>	There may be potential to expand the existing allotments and youth play space to reduce the shortfalls in supply.
Brenchley	<p>Sufficient supply of amenity green space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>Generally good access to either parks and recreation grounds or amenity green space. There are gaps in access to allotments and children's play space, and no provision/access to youth play space.</p>	There may be potential for amenity green spaces to accommodate allotments/food growing areas, and also children's play space. There may also be potential for the park and recreation ground to accommodate youth provision.
Capel	<p>Sufficient supply of allotments and park and recreation grounds, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>Good access to parks and recreation grounds, allotments and children's play space across key populated area. There is no provision/access to youth play spaces. There are a number of small amenity green spaces (smaller than 0.15ha) which have not been included in the quantity analysis.</p>	Existing children's play areas could be extended to reduce the shortfall in provision. There may be potential for the park and recreation ground to accommodate youth provision to reduce the shortfall in provision and access.

Parish	Current Provision	Opportunities
Cranbrook and Sissinghurst	<p>Shortfalls across all typologies.</p> <p>There is generally good access to all typologies across the key populated areas.</p>	<p>Opportunities to extend existing provision in order to reduce shortfalls in supply could be investigated. There may be potential for natural green space to accommodate low impact uses such as food growing areas/natural play equipment in order to reduce shortfalls in provision and access. Community use of school facilities may also be an option.</p>
Frittenden	<p>Sufficient supply of children's play space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>Generally good access to parks and recreation grounds, children's play space and youth play space. There is no provision of/access to amenity green space or allotments.</p>	<p>There may be potential for the park and recreation ground to accommodate allotments or a food growing area. The existing youth provision could be improved/extended.</p>
Goudhurst	<p>Sufficient supply of amenity green space and children's play space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>There is no provision of/no access to parks and recreation grounds and youth play space within the parish. There is generally good access to amenity green space and children's play space. There is a single allotment site, but this is completely overgrown and appears redundant.</p>	<p>Little opportunity. The existing allotment site should be improved/re-instated. There may be potential for amenity green space to accommodate youth provision.</p>
Hawkhurst	<p>Sufficient supply of allotments and children's play space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>Generally good access to allotments, amenity green space and youth play space, there are gaps in access to children's play space and parks</p>	<p>Little opportunity to reduce shortfalls in supply other than through extending existing sites. The area around Hawkhurst Nature Pond may have potential to accommodate natural play to reduce the gap in access in this area.</p>

Parish	Current Provision	Opportunities
	and recreation grounds in the south of Hawkhurst town.	
Horsmonden	<p>Sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>There is good access to parks and recreation grounds, amenity green space, children's play space and youth play space across the key populated area. There is no provision of/access to allotments within the parish.</p>	<p>Youth provision at Locket Green could be extended/upgraded to reduce the shortfall in supply. There may be potential for amenity green space or Horsmonden Sports Ground to accommodate children's play and allotments/food growing areas to reduce shortfalls in supply/access to these typologies.</p>
Lamberhurst	<p>Sufficient supply of amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and children's play space. Shortfalls of allotments and youth play space.</p> <p>There is no provision of/access to youth provision within the parish. There is generally good access to either parks and recreation grounds or amenity green space, with gaps in access to allotments and children's play space.</p>	<p>Spray Hill Park and recreation ground may have potential to accommodate youth provision and allotments/food growing area. Amenity green space in Lamberhurst may also have potential to accommodate low impact uses such as natural play or a food growing area, to reduce shortfalls in access/supply.</p>
Paddock Wood	<p>Sufficient supply of all typologies except for youth play space.</p> <p>Gaps in access to children's play space in the north west of Paddock Wood, otherwise generally good access to all typologies with the exception of parks and recreation grounds where there is also a gap in access in the north west (highlighting the importance of the amenity green spaces in this area).</p>	<p>Open space and youth provision at Fuggles Close could be improved/upgraded, as there would otherwise be a gap in access to youth provision in this area. There may be potential for Maidstone Road or Cogate Road amenity green space to accommodate children's play space to reduce the gap in access in this area. There is also potential for additional youth facilities (or expanding existing ones) within parks and recreation grounds.</p>
Pembury	<p>Sufficient supply of allotments and amenity green space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>Gap in access to all typologies in the north of Pembury.</p>	<p>Little opportunity. Existing facilities could be extended to reduce shortfalls in supply. Community use of facilities at Pembury School could be an option for reducing the shortfalls in access in this area.</p>

Parish	Current Provision	Opportunities
Royal Tunbridge Wells	<p>Sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds and children's play space. Shortfalls in allotments, amenity green space and youth play space.</p> <p>Although there are shortfalls in amenity green space, there is good provision of and access to parks and recreation grounds and natural green space within this area. There is also good access to allotments, children's play space and youth play space.</p>	<p>Potential for parks and recreation grounds to accommodate new youth provision and allotments to reduce the shortfall in supply. There may also be potential for natural green space to accommodate low impact uses such as food growing areas.</p>
Rusthall	<p>Sufficient supply of allotments, shortfalls in all other typologies.</p> <p>Although there are shortfalls in amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and play space (both children and youth), there is good provision of natural green space within the parish, and a large park which falls just outside the parish boundary (in Speldhurst) which also provides access to children's play space and youth play space for residents in the northern part of the parish.</p>	<p>There may be potential for natural green space such as Rusthall Common to accommodate natural play space, or Allan Close amenity green space to accommodate children's play space, to reduce the gap in access to this typology.</p>
Sandhurst	<p>Sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds and children's play space, shortfalls across all other typologies.</p> <p>There is no provision of/access to youth play space within the parish. Generally good access to either a park or amenity green space and children's play space across the key populated area. Gap in access to allotments.</p>	<p>Little opportunity. Potential for Sandhurst Playing Fields to accommodate youth provision and a food growing area/allotments to reduce shortfalls in supply and access.</p>
Southborough	<p>Shortfalls across all typologies of open space.</p> <p>There is no provision of/access to youth play space within the parish. Although there are shortfalls in amenity green</p>	<p>There may be potential to expand existing facilities to reduce shortfalls. Potential for Tunbridge Wells Youth Football Club (park and recreation ground) to accommodate youth provision, and also children's</p>

Parish	Current Provision	Opportunities
	<p>space and parks and recreation grounds, there is good access to these spaces, in combination with good provision of and access to natural green spaces such as Barnett's Wood Nature Reserve and Southborough Common. There are small gaps in access to allotments and children's play space.</p>	<p>play space to reduce the gap in access in this area. May be potential for natural green space or amenity green space to accommodate food growing areas/allotments to reduce shortfall/gaps in access to this typology.</p>
Speldhurst	<p>Sufficient supply of allotments, parks and recreation grounds and children's play space. Shortfalls in amenity green space and youth play space.</p> <p>Although there is a shortfall in the provision of amenity green space, there is generally good access across the key populated area to either parks, amenity green space or natural green space, with the exception of the area to the east of Langton Green. There are gaps in access to children's play space and allotments in the Langton Green area, and gaps in access to youth provision across the majority of the key populated areas.</p>	<p>Little opportunity to reduce gaps in access in the area to the east of Langton Green. Potential for parks to accommodate youth provision and allotments to reduce shortfalls in provision and access.</p>

## **8.5 Identification of areas for new provision**

8.5.1 New provision will be required where there is a new development and a planned increase in population, and/or an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists. Section 7 outlines the existing situation with regards to supply and access to open space. As discussed, neighbourhood plans would form a good mechanism to determine exactly where new provision is required, however, this Study can be used as the basis for decision making, as follows:

### **Quantity**

8.5.2 Within the Study report, for each typology, there is an identified ‘sufficient supply’ or ‘under supply’ for each of the parishes. If an area has an existing under supply of any typology, there may be need for additional provision. This could be delivered through developing a new site (for example as part of a housing development), acquiring land to extend the site or changing the typology of an existing space (which may be in over supply).

8.5.3 The supply statistics should be used as part of the decision-making process in development management to determine if a new development should provide facilities on-site or enhance existing provision through developer contributions.

8.5.4 The use of the quantity statistics should not be in isolation and considered alongside the access standards.

### **Access**

8.5.5 This Study considers how access to different types of open space varies across parishes against the proposed standards. The maps in section 7 (and Appendix 2) show where there are deficiencies and potential over supply of facilities. This information can be used alongside the quantity statistics to determine if new provision or improved accessibility is required in an area. For example, if a new development is proposed, the maps should be consulted to determine if there is an existing gap in provision of a particular typology which could be met by the development.

8.5.6 Therefore, even though the quantity statistics may identify a sufficient supply of a particular typology, there may be gaps in access, and thus a new facility may still be required.

### **Delivering new provision**

8.5.7 There are a number of opportunities for delivering new facilities through new development – developer contributions and to a lesser extent through capital and grant funding.

### ***New development, CIL and developer contributions***

8.5.8 The Council currently has not implemented CIL and continues to negotiate and seek developer contributions for site specific and strategic infrastructure through S106. Some

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further work will be needed to determine whether the introduction of CIL would be advantageous for the borough and as part of this it is important to consider the financial benefits of CIL versus S106 legal agreements. The Council have commissioned consultants to carry out a “Whole Plan” viability approach to determine the appropriateness of CIL or S106 during the lifetime of the new Local Plan.

8.5.9 New development will be required to provide on-site open space in line with the standards outlined in this Study. Whilst not all developments will be of a size that will generate the requirement for on-site open space (see table 19), when considering future housing numbers for Tunbridge Wells, there will be many that will. This Study should be used to make local decisions about where and when new on-site provision will be required.

8.5.10 Figure 22 shows an example flow chart/decision making process to help developers/Council officers determine the need for on-site provision of open space, or where S106 contributions would be required to improve existing open space provision. This is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case by case basis using the standards and assessment within this Study. This should be determined through pre-application discussions with the Council.

### ***Capital and grant funding***

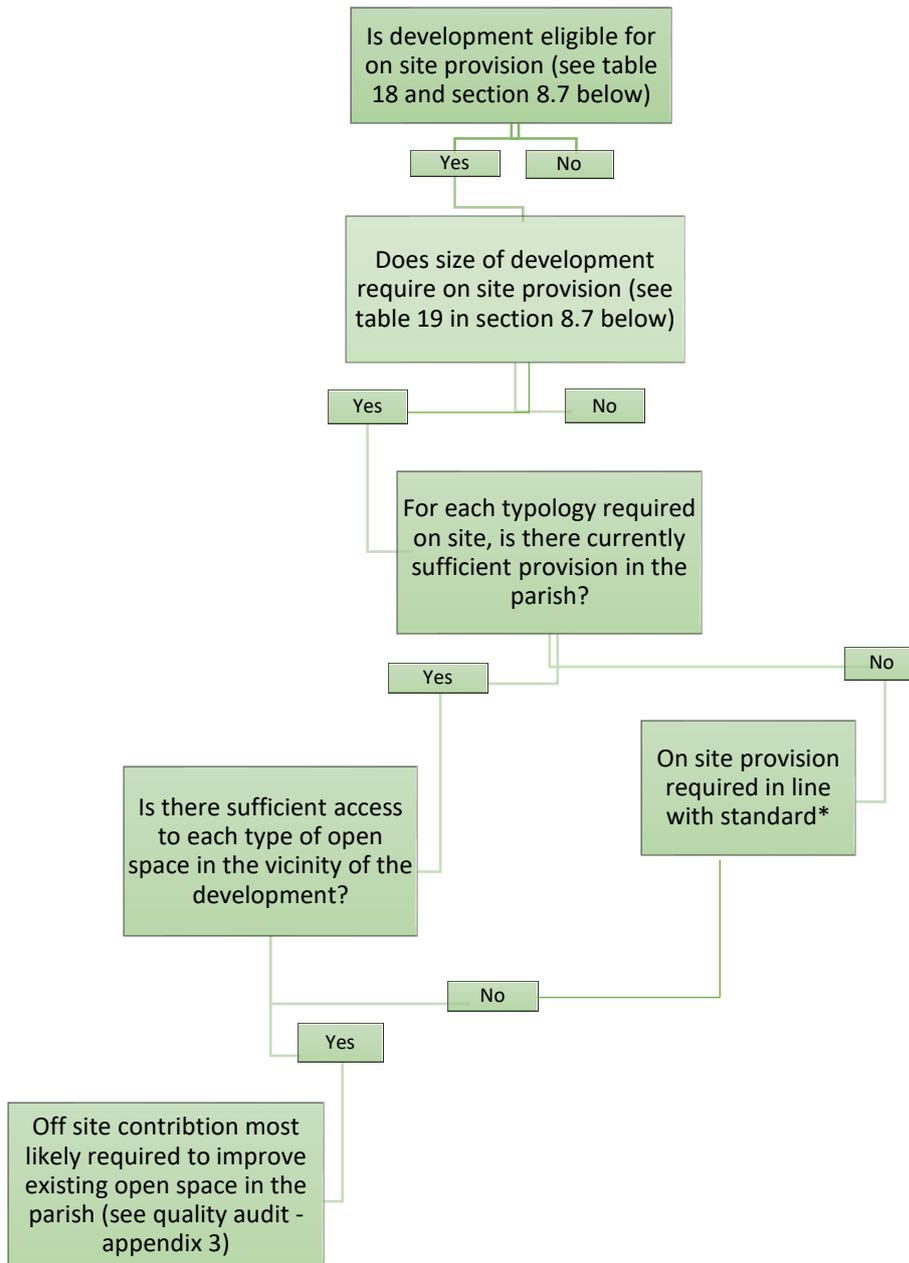
8.5.11 Although the availability of capital and grant funding has diminished in recent years, nevertheless funding does become available for providing facilities for open space, sport and recreation. National and governing bodies for individual sports should be consulted where new infrastructure is required, such as changing rooms and sports pitches. Environmental grants and stewardship schemes are available for managing natural green space. As neighbourhood plans are developed and open space priorities are established within these, funding requirements will be identified and delivery through grant funding can be considered.

### ***Requirements for open space from new housing***

8.5.12 Section 7.2. outlines the variation in supply of different typologies of open space across parishes. As identified, every parish has a shortfall in at least one typology of open space, therefore, the starting point for new housing is to assume that some form of on-site open space provision would be required.

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Figure 22 Decision making process for on-site provision of open space, or off-site contributions to enhance existing open space



\*If it is not feasible to deliver open space on site due to exceptional circumstances e.g. viability or land availability, then potential to provide off site contributions will be considered on a case by case basis.

**Open Space Policy Direction (new provision of open space):****OS10**

New provision of open space will be required as part of new development where housing is allocated in the local plan where there are existing deficiencies in quantity or access to open space and/or where the new development will result in deficiencies.

The priorities for additional facilities (identified within the household survey) are for facilities for teenagers, including MUGAs.

Where on-site provision is required, it should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards.

Where on-site provision is deemed impractical, or not required e.g. for small sites, consideration will be given to opportunities for off-site provision and/or improvements, including through pooling (to no more than five obligations in accordance with the CIL Regulations) of S106 contributions.

Improvements to existing open space will be considered first in the parish within which the development is located, then in open spaces in neighbouring parishes. Priority sites requiring improvements will be identified from the quality audit (those sites assessed as being of poor or average quality being the highest priority for improvement) and also from site management plans and the Council's own knowledge of their sites.

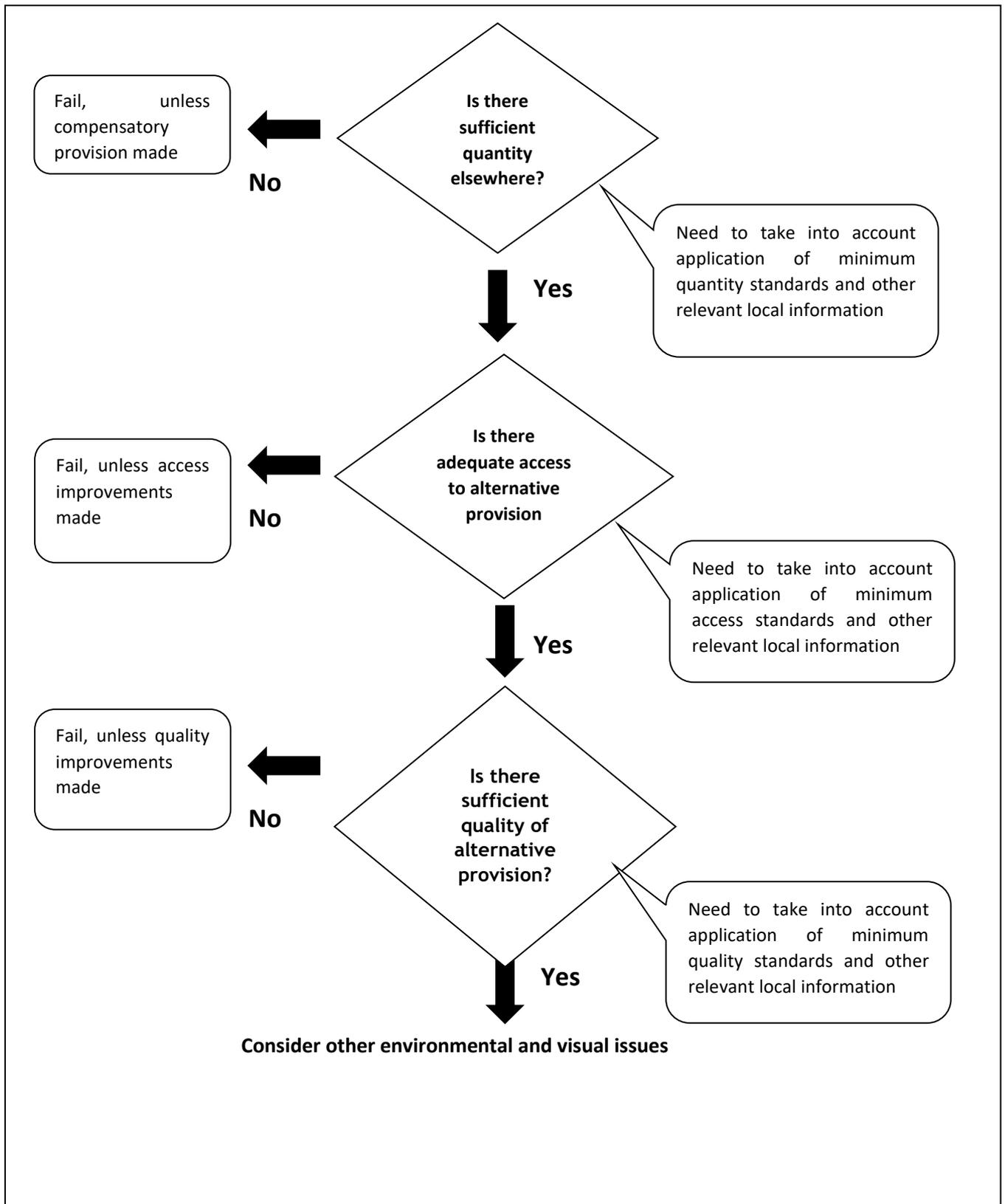
## 8.6 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

8.6.1 In addition to the strategic options outlined above, consideration should also be given to facilities that are surplus to requirement. There are important issues to resolve in terms of getting the correct balance of open space across the borough before any disposal can be contemplated. Whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in several areas, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that the proposed standards are for **minimum** levels of provision. Factors to be taken into account before any decision to release open space for alternative uses can be taken include:

- The local value and use of a given open space - as it may be a locally popular resource.
- Whether future local development/population growth might generate additional demands for open space.
- Whether there is a demonstrable need for some other type of open space within the locality that a given space (subject to a change of management regime) would be well placed to meet (see Table 15 in section 8.4 above).
- Other non-recreational reasons that suggest a space should be retained (which might include ecological and visual reasons).

8.6.2 Figure 23 and the associated paragraphs below provide an example and suggest an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development/alternative use of an open space can be seriously contemplated.

Figure 23 Outline decision making process in relation to sanctioning (re)development of open space



**Q. Is there sufficient quantity?**

8.6.3 **A.** If the minimum quantitative standard for amenity green space is exceeded in a defined geographical area, the relative provision of other forms of open space must then be considered. (Amenity green space can in principle be converted into other forms of open space where the need arises). If a) provision meets the minimum quantitative standard; b) there is no significant local information suggesting a need to retain the site; and, c) there is not a perceived lack of other forms of open space. The next question can be addressed.

**Q. Is there adequate access to alternative provision?**

8.6.4 **A.** Within the defined geographical area there may be good overall provision of amenity green space relative to the quantity standard, but is it in the right place and can it be easily reached? Applying the accessibility component of the minimum standards will help to answer this question. If other similar open space cannot be easily reached, the site's disposal for other uses may be unacceptable.

**Q. Are other accessible and similar opportunities elsewhere of sufficient quality?**

8.6.5 **A.** If it can be demonstrated that alternative opportunities are sufficient both in quantity and accessibility, there may still be issues that exist with the quality of these alternative provisions. The quality component of the proposed standards may indicate that certain improvements to alternative opportunities must be made which should be funded and secured before development is sanctioned.

8.6.6 The quality audit provided as part of this Study provides a useful framework for identifying and prioritising open spaces that require improvements. Those open spaces which have been assessed as being of poor or average quality have the highest potential for improvement. If existing open spaces in the vicinity of new development are of poor/average quality, then funding for their improvement (e.g. access improvements, signage, improvements to facilities and/or habitats – as recommended in the quality audit included within the GIS database provided to the Council) would need to be secured before any 'surplus' in a particular open space typology could be considered.

8.6.7 Even if these three tests are passed there may be other reasons for the site to remain as open space. For example, it may have value as a natural habitat or be visually important. Such considerations are important, but beyond the scope of this report.

## 8.7 Developer Contributions

8.7.1 This section draws on the policy recommendations in the previous section and outlines a process for calculating developer contributions for on and off-site provision and recommendations for management and maintenance procedures and costs.

### Developer contributions and Section 106 legal obligations

8.7.2 This section sets out higher level strategic recommendations and recommends an approach to developer contributions which can be used to inform policy for on-site contributions and to inform the feasibility for any off-site investment proposed (through local planning obligations pooling<sup>20</sup>).

#### 1) Capital cost of providing open space (on and off site)

8.7.3 In order to calculate developer contributions for facilities, a methodology has been adopted which calculates how much it would cost the Local Authority to provide them. These costs have been calculated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's<sup>21</sup>. A summary of the costs is outlined in table 16 below.

8.7.4 Contributions towards the provision or improvement of open space are calculated using the capital cost of provision. The same charges apply to both provision of new facilities and the upgrading/improvement of existing facilities, which more often than not includes new provision. Contribution per person is therefore taken to be a reasonable measure of that impact, irrespective of whether new provision or improvement of existing facilities is required. The calculated costs have drawn on the standards of provision summarised in table 9.

Table 16 Costs for providing open space

Typology	Standard (m <sup>2</sup> ) per person	Cost of provision	
		Cost / m <sup>2</sup>	Contribution per person
Allotments	3	£22.34	£67.02
Parks and Recreation grounds	11	£92.94	£1022.34
Play Space (Children)	0.4	£168.76	£67.50
Play Space (Youth <sup>22</sup> )	0.4	£168.76	£67.50
Amenity/Natural green space	8	£20.24	£161.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.08</b>		<b>£1386.28</b>

<sup>20</sup> The CIL Regulations in general restrict the pooling of Section 106 contributions to no more than five obligations towards the provision of new infrastructure.

<sup>21</sup> Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2017

<sup>22</sup> As explained in section 5.2.4, this typology includes MUGAs

8.7.5 This shows that it costs £1386.28 per person to provide new open space to meet the Tunbridge Wells standards for open space. These calculations are to be used to calculate developer contributions for on-site provision and where feasible any off-site projects. An inflation rate based on the Bank of England inflation rate should be applied.

## 2) Maintenance Contributions for on-site provision

8.7.6 If a development is required to provide open space on-site, the developer would be expected to maintain the open space for a minimum period of one year. Developers will then be asked to maintain the new provision through a management company. It is expected that a management plan for the open space would be submitted and approved by the Council as a planning condition.

8.7.7 In the event that the open space would be adopted by the Council, they may be willing to accept a commuted sum and make arrangements for management of the open space through the Council or a third party. The amount payable for the commuted sum will be calculated using the figures in table 17 below.

Table 17 Maintenance sums payable for open space

Typology	Cost/m <sup>2</sup> per annum
Play Space (Children's and Youth Provision)	£4.59
Parks, Sport & Recreation Grounds	£4.59
Amenity and Natural Green Space	£0.62
Allotments	£0.13

8.7.8 The figures in table 16 show how much it costs to maintain open space per metre squared. The costs have been provided from maintenance costs estimated by Ethos Environmental Planning. An inflation rate based on the Bank of England inflation rate should be applied.

## 3) Eligible types of development for on-site provision

8.7.9 Table 18 below outlines the type of housing that will be considered eligible for making contributions towards open space to meet the needs of future occupants.

Table 18 Eligible types of residential development

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Affordable Housing*	Housing for the active elderly	Permanent mobile homes
Play Space	✓	✓	×	✓
Outdoor Sports Space	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parks and Gardens	✓	✓	✓	✓
Amenity Open Space	✓	✓	✓	✓

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Affordable Housing*	Housing for the active elderly	Permanent mobile homes
Natural Green Space	✓	✓	✓	✓
Allotments	✓	✓	✓	✓

[\* Should recognise that affordable housing generates a need for new green infrastructure, but it is a policy decision as to whether GI contributions should be provided]. Includes agricultural workers' dwellings. Excludes extensions (for administrative reasons). Excludes replacement dwellings and nursing houses types.]

#### 4) **Thresholds for provision**

8.7.10 The required open space, sport and recreation facilities can be provided by on-site or off-site provision, or through CIL (if adopted by the Council). Where facilities are to be provided on-site, the Council will expect the developer to provide the land for the facility and either:

- Design and build the provision to the satisfaction of the Council; or
- Make a financial contribution to the Council so that it may arrange for the construction and development of the required facility.

8.7.11 The decision on whether facility provision is to be on-site, off-site or both depends on the following considerations:

- The scale of the proposed development and site area;
- The suitability of a site reflecting, for example, its topography or flood risk;
- The existing provision of facilities within the neighbourhood and/or the sub area;
- Other sites in the neighbourhood where additional provision is proposed; and
- Existing access to facilities within the neighbourhood and/or sub area.

8.7.12 Table 19 below provides a guide to assess which scales of housing generate a need for facilities in the categories listed to be provided on-site. The minimum size of amenity/natural green space considered acceptable as part of new development is 0.15ha i.e. for developments that require on site provision, but which would result in less than 0.15ha of amenity/natural green space against the standard, the minimum size of amenity/natural green space is 0.15ha.

Table 19 Requirement for open space, sport and recreation facilities

Type of Provision	1-19 dwellings	20-49 dwellings <sup>23</sup>	50-99 dwellings	100+ dwellings
Allotments	X	X	X	✓
Amenity/Natural Green Space	X	✓	✓	✓
Parks and Recreation Grounds	X	X	X	✓
Play Space (children)	X	X	✓	✓
Play Space (Youth)	X	X	X	✓

KEY: ✓ on-site provision normally sought

X improvements to existing (off-site) provision normally required

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 This Study provides a solid snapshot of the status of open space within Tunbridge Wells borough in 2017. It includes a suite of policies and methodology for interpreting and informing the needs for these assets over the coming years, up to 2033. It should be read in conjunction with the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report.

9.2 The role and value of open space in helping deliver national, regional and local priorities and targets is clear from this assessment. It is important that the policies and recommendations included within this assessment are enshrined in the Local Plan, and acknowledged in relevant strategies, as and when they are reviewed. Council Officers and Members play a pivotal role in adopting and promoting the recommendations within the assessment, and ensuring that key stakeholders such as parish Council's, developers and community groups are engaged in open space provision in the future.

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<sup>23</sup> Where developments between 20-49 dwellings are unable to deliver open space on site (for example as a result of high density), then an offsite contribution to open space will be sought.