HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OPEN SPACE STUDY

A

FINAL REPORT

BY

PMP

FEBRUARY 2005
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Executive Summary

What is the aim of this open space study?
The study aims to provide a clear picture of existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation in Halton and the current ability to meet those needs in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility.

The main focus of the study was to:

- calculate the quality and accessibility of Council open space and recreational facilities
- set local standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of different types of open space and recreational facilities taking into account local needs and priorities in accordance with PPG17
- identify any deficiencies or surpluses in the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and provide recommendations for resolving them
- inform the Local Development Framework process
- provide information to inform decisions and help determine future development proposals in the area and feed into the Local Development Frameworks, (LDF) (in line with recent Central Government guidance contained in the draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS12))

Scope and Methodology

The study includes all open space and recreation types identified within the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002). These include parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural areas, green corridors, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people, outdoor sports facilities, allotments and cemeteries and churchyards.

Methodology of the assessment

The methodology and development of the study has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17. The PPG 17 Companion Guide sets out a 5 step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space and recreation. This process was used in developing this study using our own appropriate mechanisms that meet the requirements of the council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of open space within the Borough.

Research, consultations, and analysis including quantity, quality, accessibility, usage and value have culminated in the production of this study, report and recommendations. The report is based on the quantitative audit compiled by the Council. This audit can be updated and standards can be reapplied.

Provision Standards

The methodology for setting local standards has been followed in accordance with PPG17 and using both qualitative and quantitative information sources both from the audit and consultation. Justification for the standards is provided through the analysis of each typology of open space (Sections 6-13) and in more detail in Appendices E and F:

- Quantity Standards (Appendix E)
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Quality Standards (Appendix F)
- Accessibility Standards (Appendix F)

Where are we now?

Consultation:

- the main issues emerging are the lack of provision for children and young people, with the need to cater for young people in order to prevent the continued vandalism of children’s play areas
- the quality of the sites is important to all that use them. The recurring themes of dog fouling, vandalism and litter are considered to be a particular problem within the Borough. Some open spaces are also run down and in need of upgrading in the near future
- there is a need for any new provision to have a good and effective design that attracts people to use. Involvement of the local community in the design provides a sense of ownership and limits any potential problems.

A detailed summary of consultation findings is found in section five.

Open Space Needs:

- **Parks & Gardens**: the overall quality of parks is good, however there is a potential need for a small park within area forums five and seven
- **Natural and Semi-Natural**: Halton is well provided for in terms of natural and semi natural open spaces and is fortunate to have a number of regionally significant sites within its boundaries. It may be appropriate to investigate the protection of existing good quality sites and increase accessibility to sites. Natural and semi natural sites offer an excellent opportunity to develop contaminated land
- **Amenity Greenspace**: there is a small overall deficiency of amenity greenspace and there are a number of areas outside appropriate catchment areas. Area forums three and one were identified as priorities.
- **Provision for Children and Young People**: the quality of young people’s areas is variable across the Borough and the report highlights some of the higher and lower quality sites. There is also high demand for additional provision borough wide, particularly in Farnworth
- **Outdoor Sports Facilities**: the playing pitch strategy highlights a shortage of junior sports pitches, other types of outdoor sports facilities are very accessible within the borough
- **Allotments**: consultation highlighted that allotments are a valuable recreation and are currently 100% full. Although there is limited additional demand at present for further provision, some residents are outside the defined catchment area, particularly in Area Forum 7
- **Green Corridors & Linkages**: there are many opportunities and much potential to develop and provide an enhanced network of green corridors (cycleways and walkways) to complement the existing linear green spaces and link the major open spaces together around the borough.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning Guidance

To date, the Government has not provided any statutory procedures for the preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance. This will change with the introduction of new planning legislation and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Through the analysis of existing open space guidance, it can be concluded that:

- all new housing developments (even single dwelling developments) should contribute towards open space provision;
- local standards should be set for different open space typologies;
- consideration should be given to providing formulas and worked examples within SPD to show the scale of off-site financial contributions.

The data provided with this report can be updated and standards reapplied. A worked example of the methodology for this is provided in section 15 of the main report.

Summary

It is clear that Halton has predominantly good quality and accessible open spaces although there are specific areas of priority that need resourcing. These are detailed in the report.

Overall, there is a need for this over-arching strategy for open spaces and the production of management and action plans and specific investigations into each typology to help the Council move forward towards a more pro-active approach. The challenge is to do this against a backdrop of declining resources and increasing public demands.

Report

The first four sections of the report (Sections 1-3) set out the general context of the study including the background and methodology. Section 4 details the findings from the consultation and then sections 6-12 go into detail for each specific typology of open space in terms of setting quantity, quality and accessibility standards and what this means for the borough in terms of priorities. Section 14 covers resourcing opportunities and Section 15 provides a more detailed summary of our findings and links from a planning perspective.

The whole report is supported by a set of appendices that supports the content of the report and in particular the setting of standards.
SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND
Introduction and background

Scope

1.1 In April 2004 Halton Borough Council appointed PMP to produce an open space strategy and a playing pitch strategy. The objectives of the green space strategy were to:

- calculate the quality and accessibility of Council open space and recreational facilities
- set local standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of different types of open space and recreational facilities taking into account local needs and priorities in accordance with PPG17
- identify any deficiencies or surpluses in the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and provide recommendations for resolving them
- inform the Local Development Framework process
- provide information to inform decisions and help determine future development proposals in the area and feed into the Local Development Frameworks, (LDF) (in line with recent Central Government guidance contained in the draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS12))
- support corporate and departmental strategies including the community strategy, cultural strategy, leisure plan, parks strategy and regeneration strategies.

1.2 This strategy has been developed to provide an overall framework that will guide the Council in the future management and designation of open spaces.

1.3 It builds upon government guidance for local authorities to take a broad integrative view of the whole urban green space resource with the aim of

“providing a clear picture of the borough’s existing and future needs for open space and its current ability to meet those needs in terms of its function, quality, quantity and accessibility in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002)”

1.4 This will enable the Council to ensure the most effective and efficient use of open spaces and to plan and respond appropriately to any pressures of both immediate and future developments.

1.5 Assessing open spaces both in terms of quantity and quality allows local authorities to identify the potential for increased use of existing open space through better design, management and maintenance.

1.6 The methodology and process used for this work is outlined in detail in section 4.
1.7 The theme of public open space fits shared priorities of national and local government – crime, health and social inclusion. It impacts on the social environment, physical environment and economic environment as shown in Figure 1.1 below:

**Figure 1.1**

1.8 The Government recognises through its publication of ‘Our Towns and Cities: The Future Delivering an Urban Renaissance’ (November 2002) that there is overwhelming need to develop a vision for the future of parks and open spaces and that there is a need to improve information on quality and quantity of parks and open spaces and the way they are used and maintained. This strategy provides a comprehensive start to moving towards this overall goal.

1.9 Open Space provision is important for various reasons and there are a number of specific important issues to understand:

i) **Function of Open Space**

Open spaces can play provide a number of functions within the urban fabric of cities, towns and villages. For example, the provision for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between the built environment and/or a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity. Each type of open space has various benefits depending on the type such as allotments for the growing own produce, play areas for children’s play and playing pitches for formal sports events.

ii) **Balance of Provision**

There is a required need to provide a balance between different types of open space in order to meet local needs. For example, not all open space should be in the form of playing pitches or allotments. Some local needs will demand ‘green corridor’ sites such as nature walks or bridleways and others will require small informal recreation areas such as ‘amenity greenspace’.

In accordance with PPG17, this balance of provision should be based on local needs and the requirements of ensuring the provision of an attractive environment for people to live, work and play. Changing social and economic circumstances have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to
serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers including sport and leisure. There are however new opportunities to develop the role of open spaces.

1.10 The profile of green space and countryside provision is rising significantly and much research on the subject has been undertaken. The significance of green spaces for local authorities is highlighted below:

- in 1988 the Audit Commission estimated that local authorities in England and Wales maintained approximately 120,000 hectares of parks and open spaces - an area approximately the size of Berkshire
- in 2000, the Heritage Lottery Fund estimated that there were approximately 30,000 urban green spaces in the UK, of which 5,000 are urban parks
- in 1992 the Audit Commission suggested that there were 34,533 parks and open spaces in the UK
- Local Government Finance Statistics indicate that over a 12 month period in the 1990's, £538 million was spent on parks and green spaces
- recent national MORI research indicates that 60% of people believe that the provision of open spaces is key to an ideal community.

1.11 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality ‘public realm’ facilities such as parks and open spaces can assist in making an area an attractive place to live and work, and can result in a number of benefits in terms of economic development and regeneration.

1.12 The provision of open space and use of this open space can make significant contributions towards the achievement of targets relating to increased health and physical activity, by providing accessible means of achieving these objectives.

1.13 CABE Space has recently reported in depth on the benefits of open space. These can be found in Appendix A.

1.14 Although public open space can exert an influence on many people's lives, it can also be a source of local concern due to a variety of factors:

- issues like anti-social behaviour, litter and dog fouling, graffiti and conditions of parks and play areas impact greatly on the quality of people’s daily lives
- design, management and maintenance of open spaces impact directly on perceptions of safety and actual public usage
- local publicly accessible open space is often of poorer quality in areas where people already suffering from other forms of deprivation.

1.15 The engagement and involvement of local people and partnership working is crucial if the right solutions are to be reached and it is therefore important to develop a strategic approach to green space.

**Desirable outcomes of a local assessment**

1.16 A local assessment of green space will enable the Council to plan effectively and achieve some desirable key outcomes required by PPG17. These are:
• provision of networks of accessible, high quality green space for sport and recreation that meet the needs of residents and visitors
• provision of green spaces that are economically and environmentally sustainable
• to provide an appropriate balance between new provision and enhancement of existing provision
• setting locally derived provision standards
• provision of clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and land owners
• provision of green spaces that are ‘fit for purpose’ – the right type in the right place and of the right size.

1.17 This study develops pathways for achieving these desirable outcomes, in terms of providing an analysis of existing provision enabling strategic and efficient planning to meet local needs. The development and improvement of green space can play a key role in the regeneration of Halton.

Unitary Development Plan / Local Development Framework

1.18 Green space has a direct impact on the review of the Unitary Development plan and the new planning system, the Local Development framework and related documents. Any policy approach to green space within this plan will need to take into account the planning guidance for green space (PPG17). This strategy had been undertaken in accordance with this policy guidance and its companion guide.

1.19 In relation to drafting policy the Companion Guide suggests that policy should:
• protect or enhance existing open spaces or sport and recreational facilities of value (or potential value) to the local community
• re-locate poorly situated but necessary open spaces or sport and recreation facilities
• address circumstances in which the planning authority may allow the redevelopment of an existing open space or sport and recreation facility
• require new provision to fill identified gaps in existing provision, and
• address additional on-site or off-site provision as a consequence of new developments, together with how the authority will assess any related commuted maintenance or establishment sums.

1.20 The planning system should be able to ensure there is enough green space in the right places but also ensure that green spaces are:
• high quality
• attractive to users
• well managed and maintained.
1.21 However it should also be recognised that the provision of good quality and effective green spaces relies heavily on creative design, landscape management and maintenance.

Summary

1.22 Green space has a direct impact on the quality of people’s lives so it is important to maximise the benefits it can bring.

1.23 The strategy will provide an overall framework to guide the management of green spaces in the Borough, as well as setting targets for improvement and future use.
SECTION 2
THE NATIONAL CONTEXT
 SECTION TWO – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

National strategic context

2.1 There is a range of national strategic documents that contain policies, which have a direct or possibly indirect influence and/or impact upon the provision of green space within Halton.

2.2 In this section, PMP will present each strategic policy document and outline how the policies impact upon the existing and future provision of green spaces in Halton. The local context for Halton is discussed in the next section.

2.3 Within the legislative framework of various National Government Planning Acts there are a number of policy guidance notes (PPGs) which help achieve wider Government policy aims and objectives, particularly where the land use planning system may play a key part.

2.4 PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation provides the most recent and up to date guidance on the consideration of open space, sport and recreation matters in relation to the land use planning system. The previous version of the guidance issued in 1991 placed great emphasis upon the quality of provision and relating the provision to a nationally agreed standard, “the six acre standard” (i.e. six acres per 1000 population). The replacement of this guidance places increased emphasis now on quality as well as quantity of open spaces.

Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener - ODPM (October 2002)

2.5 The Government stated that parks and green spaces need more visible champions and clearer structures for co-ordinating policy and action more successfully at all levels.

2.6 Several existing national bodies have responsibilities or programmes with impact on various aspects of urban green spaces – including English Heritage, Sport England, Groundwork, English Nature, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the Countryside Agency, and the Forestry Commission.

2.7 Instead of setting up a new body the Government will take action on three levels to improve co-ordination of policy and action for urban parks and green spaces. It will:

- provide a clearer national policy framework
- invite CABE to set up a new unit for urban spaces (CABE Space)
- encourage a strategic partnership to support the work of the new unit and inform national policy and local delivery.

2.8 CABE Space and its publications now provides this advice on policy frameworks and local delivery.

CABE Space

2.9 CABE Space is part of the Commission for the Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and is publicly funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). CABE Space aims:
“to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in towns and cities.”

2.10 Through their work, they encourage people to think holistically about green space, and what it means for the health and well being of communities, routes to school and work, and recreation through play and sport. Their ultimate goal is to ensure that people in England have easy access to well designed and well looked after public space.

2.11 Lessons learnt for some of CABE Space’s case studies include:

- strategic vision is essential
- political commitment is essential
- think long-term
- start by making the case for high quality green spaces in-house (persuading other departments is key – high priority)
- a need to market parks and green spaces
- a need to manage resources more efficiently
- work with others - projects are partnerships
- keep good records: monitor investments and outcomes
- consult widely and get public support for your work.

**Green Space Strategies — a good practice guide**
CABE Space (May 2004)

2.12 The guidance draws on the principles of the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 and will help contribute to national objectives for better public spaces, focusing on three broad stages in producing a green space strategy.

- **Stage 1: Preliminary activities**
  - provides the foundation of a successful strategy

- **Stage 2: Information gathering and analysis**
  - provides the objective and subjective data necessary to make informed judgements

- **Stage 3: Strategy production**
  - preparing consultation draft and final strategy drawing on consultation responses.

2.13 The document demonstrates why a green space strategy is important and the potential opportunity and benefits that it can provide, including:
SECTION TWO – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- reinforcing local identity and enhancing the physical character of an area, so shaping existing and future development
- maintaining the visual amenity and increasing the attractiveness of a locality to create a sense of civic pride
- securing external funding and focusing capital and revenue expenditure cost-effectively
- improving physical and social inclusion including accessibility, particularly for young, disabled and older people
- protecting and enhancing levels of biodiversity and ecological habitats.

What this means for the Council?

2.14 It is important that the Council recognise the benefits that open space can bring and learn from the lessons highlighted, ensuring that all open space related projects for Halton follow the good practice guidance. This should include:

- a long term strategic vision is essential
- political commitment
- marketing parks and green spaces
- work with others - projects are partnerships
- monitor investments and outcomes
- consult widely and get public support for your work.

Is the grass greener…? Learning from the international innovations in urban green space management, CABE Space (July 2004)

2.15 This is an international perspective using examples of good and bad practice that demonstrate the many issues common to English local authorities that international cities also face and providing practical solutions that have combat the problems overseas.

2.16 The guide focuses in particular on aspects of management and maintenance practice, providing a series of challenging and inspiring solutions to common issues that are not dissimilar to current English practice.

The problem in England!

2.17 The document describes the problems faced by green space and how English towns and cities are often criticised for:

- being poorly maintained – uncoordinated development and maintenance activities
- being insecure – the hostile nature of many green spaces
SECTION TWO – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- lacking a coherent approach to their management – conflicting interventions by a multitude of agencies, without clear overall responsibility
- offering little to their users – lacking in facilities and amenities and being a haven for anti-social behaviour
- being poorly designed – unwelcoming to people, created with poor quality materials.

Manifesto for better public spaces, CABE Space (2003)

2.18 There is huge national demand for better quality parks and public spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood. CABE Space ‘manifesto for better public spaces’ explains the 10 things we must do to achieve this:

1) ensure that creating and caring for well-designed parks, streets and other public spaces is a national and local political priority
2) encourage people of all ages – including children, young people and retired people – to play and active role in deciding what our parks and public spaces should be like and how they should be looked after
3) ensure that everyone understands the importance of good design to the vitality of our cities, towns and suburbs and that designers, planners and managers all have the right skills to create high quality public spaces
4) ensure that the care of parks and public spaces is acknowledged to be an essential service
5) work to increase public debate about the issue of risk in outside spaces, and will encourage people to make decisions that give more weight to the benefits of interesting spaces, rather than to the perceived risks
6) work to ensure that national and local health policy recognises the role of high quality parks and public space in helping people to become physically active, to recover from illness, and to increase their general health and well-being
7) work to ensure that good paths and seating, play opportunities, signs in local languages, cultural events and art are understood to be essential elements of great places – not optional extras that can be cut from the budget
8) encourage people who are designing and managing parks and public spaces to protect and enhance biodiversity and to promote its enjoyment to local people
9) seek to ensure that public spaces feel safe to use by encouraging councils to adopt a positive approach to crime prevention through investment in good design and management of the whole network or urban green spaces
10) encourage people from all sectors of the community to give time to improving their local environment. If we work together we can transform our public spaces and help to improve everyone’s quality of life.
SECTION TWO – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

What this means for the Council?

2.19 The Council should understand the needs of the community and work with community members to ensure that public spaces are of high quality and effectively serve the local community.

The Value of Public Space, CABE Space (March 2004)

2.20 CABE Space market how high quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value, as well as being beneficial to physical and mental health, children and young people and a variety of other external issues.

2.21 Specific examples are used to illustrate the benefits and highlight the issues arising on the value of public space:

The economic value of public spaces
• a high quality public environment is an essential part of any regeneration strategy and can impact positively on the local economy. For example - property prices.

The impact on physical and mental health
• research has shown that well maintained public spaces can help to improve physical and mental health encouraging more people to become active.

Benefits and children and young people
• good quality public spaces encourage children to play freely outdoors and experience the natural environment, providing children with opportunities for fun, exercise and learning.

Reducing crime and fear of crime
• better management of public spaces can help to reduce crime rates and help to allay fears of crime, especially in open spaces.

Social dimension of public space
• well-designed and maintained open spaces can help bring communities together, providing meeting places in the right context and fostering social ties.

Movement in and between spaces
• one of the fundamental functions of public space is to allow people to move around with the challenge of reconciling the needs of different modes of transport.

Value from biodiversity and nature
• public spaces and gardens helps to bring important environmental benefits to urban areas, as well as providing an opportunity for people to be close to nature.

What this means for the Council?

2.22 Open spaces have a number of benefits, which should be recognised when planning for and maintaining open spaces both now and in the future.
2.23 A primary intention of the guide is to encourage wider use of management plans by dispelling the myth that the creation of a site management plan is an exceptionally difficult task that can be undertaken only by an expert.

2.24 The guide presents ideas on benefits of management plans identifying steps to be taken to writing the plan. It also provides a list of subject areas that need to be addressed in any comprehensive management plan. The document has been split into two sections, providing a logical explanation of the management process:

**Part 1: Planning the plan**

- the who, what, when, where and how questions that may arise in the preparation of a park and green space management plan.

**Part 2: Content and structure of the plan**

- what information needs to be contained in the final management plan and how should that information be presented?


2.25 The report recognises that parks and green spaces are a popular and precious resource, which can make a valuable contribution to the attractiveness of a neighbourhood, to the health and well-being of people and expand educational opportunities of children and adults alike. Halton Borough Council were identified as a beacon council for improving green spaces, highlighting the work done in this area.

2.26 The main messages to emerge from Green Spaces, Better Places are:

- urban parks and open spaces remain popular, despite a decline in the quality as well as quantitative elements
- open spaces make an important contribution to the quality of life in many areas and help to deliver wider social, economic and environmental benefits
- planners and planning mechanisms need to take better account of the need for parks and open spaces including related management and maintenance issues
- parks and open spaces should be central to any vision of sustainable modern towns and cities
- strong civic and local pride and responsibility are necessary to achieve the vision reinforced by a successful green spaces strategy
there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach at the national level to guide local strategies. Halton Borough Council has been identified in the report as having developed a strong matrix of partnerships and partners including public, private, voluntary and community.

**Improving urban parks, play areas and green space,** DTLR (May 2002)

2.27 In May 2002 the DTLR produced this linked research report to Green Spaces, Better Places which looked at patterns of use, barriers to open space and the wider role of open space in urban regeneration.

2.28 The vital importance of parks and other urban green spaces in enhancing the urban environment and the quality of city life has been recognised in both the Urban Taskforce report and the Urban White Paper.

**Wider value of open space**

2.29 There are clear links demonstrating how parks and other green spaces meet wider council policy objectives linked to other agendas, like education, diversity, health, safety, environment, jobs and regeneration can help raise the political profile and commitment of an authority to green space issues. In particular they:

- contribute significantly to social inclusion because they are free and accessible to all
- can become a centre of community spirit
- contribute to child development through scope for outdoor, energetic and imaginative play
- offer numerous educational opportunities.
- provide a range of health, environmental and economic benefits.

2.30 The report also highlights major issues in the management, funding and integration of open spaces into the wider context of urban renewal and planning:

**Community Involvement** - Community involvement in local parks can lead to increased use, enhancement of quality and richness of experience and, in particular, can ensure that the facilities are suited to local needs.

**Resources** - The acknowledged decline in the quality of care of the urban green space resource in England can be linked to declining local authority green space budgets but in terms of different external sources for capital development, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Section 106 Agreements are seen as the most valuable.

**Partnerships** - between a local authority and community groups, funding agencies and business can result in significant added value, both in terms of finances and quality of green space.
SECTION TWO – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Urban renewal

2.31 Four levels of integration of urban green space into urban renewal can be identified, characterised by an increasing strategic synergy between environment, economy and community. They are:

- attracting inward economic investment through the provision of attractive urban landscapes
- unforeseen spin-offs from grassroots green space initiatives
- parks as flagships in neighbourhood renewal
- strategic, multi-agency area based regeneration, linking environment and economy.

2.32 Green spaces are predominantly owned, managed and maintained by local authorities. The Government believes that strong local leadership is essential for improving parks and green spaces. Improving the parity of parks and green spaces with other local authority services will require a shared vision, integrated approaches and strategic planning at the local level.

2.33 At a regional level the Regional Development Agencies support improvements to urban green spaces through their target to deliver urban renaissance and excellence in design.

What this means for the Council?

2.34 The Council should facilitate the development of partnerships with providers, the community and other key stakeholders in order to establish a shared vision. Resources to enable the provision of high quality open space are available through a variety of sources.
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Planning for Open Space, Sport England (Sept 2002)

2.35 Sport England draws together the large body of research and good practice on the subject of open space and focuses on the revised PPG 17 and its companion guide.

The main messages from Sport England within this document are:

- Sport England’s policy on planning applications for development of playing fields (A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England) provides 5 exceptions to its normal stance of opposing any loss of all or part of such facilities and are reflected in PPG 17 (paragraphs 10-15)

- Sport England must be consulted on development proposals affecting playing fields at any time in the previous 5 years or is identified as a playing field in a development plan

- it is highly likely that planning inspectors will no longer accept a Six Acre Standard approach in emerging development plans and therefore increasing the importance of setting local standards

- in undertaking a playing pitch assessment as part of an overall open space assessment, local authorities will need to consider the revised advice and methodology ‘Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the production of Playing Pitch Strategies’


2.36 These documents provide Sport England’s planning policy statement on playing fields. It acknowledges that playing fields:

- are one of the most important resources for sport in England as they provide the space which is required for the playing of team sports on outdoor pitches

- as open space particularly in urban areas are becoming an increasingly scarce resource

- can provide an important landscape function, perform the function of a strategic gap or provide a resource for other community activities and informal recreation.

2.37 Sport England aims to ensure that there is no further reduction of supply of conveniently located, quality playing fields to satisfy the current and likely future demand.
What this means for the Council?

2.38 Halton Borough Council has already carried out a playing pitch strategy. It should be ensured that this strategy is integrated within the open space study. It is important that Sport England is consulted on any development, which may affect open space and playing fields.

2.39 It is becoming more important that local authorities set local standards to meet local needs rather than relying on nationally set standards, which do not necessarily meet local aspirations.
SECTION 3
THE LOCAL CONTEXT
The local context

3.1 This Green Spaces Strategy provides overall guidance and direction for each type of open space in terms of local needs both now and in the future and encourages a more joined up approach to public open space within the Council.

3.2 It supports specific strategic documents relating to each type of use (e.g. Playing Pitch Strategy) and also takes into account other related strategies and services.

3.3 The strategy will also influence and impact on other areas of work within the Council including:

- planning and housing developments
- neighbourhood renewal
- community development
- health improvement
- cultural developments
- supporting Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

3.4 Figure 3.1 overleaf illustrates how the open spaces strategy complements other existing and potential strategies within Halton Borough Council.

3.5 The following key applies:

- PPG 17 Typology
- Existing Halton Borough Council Strategy
- Potential Halton Borough Council Strategy
Figure 3.1 - The open spaces strategy complements other existing and potential strategies within the Borough

Halton Borough Council Open Space Strategy

Greenspaces
- Parks and Gardens
- Semi-Natural & Natural
- Green Corridors
- Amenity Greenspace
- Children & Young People
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Allotments
- Cemeteries and Churchyard

Civic Spaces
- Local Environmental Strategy
- Civic Spaces

Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Walking Strategy
- Park Management Plans
- Halton Natural Assets Strategy
- Play Provision Policy for Young People
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Allotments Strategy
- Sport and Recreation Strategy
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Regeneration
Local strategic documents

Community strategy – key priorities for Halton

3.6 The community strategy outlines the goals and priorities aimed at helping to improve the quality of life for people in Halton. The guiding principles outlined in the plan are:

- sustainable
- fair and inclusive
- good value for money
- co-operative
- evidence based – learning from good practice elsewhere.

3.7 The five strategic priorities identified in this document include:

- improving health
- promoting urban renewal
- enhancing life changes and employment
- increasing wealth and equality
- ensuring safe and attractive neighbourhoods.

3.8 These impact significantly on the open space strategy. As outlined in some of the national documents, including reports and research completed by CABE SPACE, provision of public open space can significantly contribute to achieving these strategic priorities.


3.9 The main function of the UDP is to state in broad terms the general policies and proposals of strategic importance for the development and use of land in Halton. It is intended at this point in time that the plan will provide the strategic framework for development in Halton until 2016.

3.10 The Halton Unitary Development Plan considers green spaces within the borough, and contains policies that are concerned with protecting and enhancing open land, including open countryside, green spaces and features of nature conservation and landscape importance. The plan states that the policies also aim to:

- improve greenspace of poor quality
- create new greenspace in areas of deficiency
- improve linkages between greenspaces
- increase the level of tree space in the borough.

3.11 The significance of green space and sports provision is recognised, highlighting that

- greenspaces in urban areas of the borough are worthy of protection as they are part of the immediate environment in which people live
- the amenity value of greenspace is wide ranging, and spaces may have visual, wildlife and structural roles to play in addition to fulfilling the primary purpose.
3.12 The plan sets out criteria against which to measure the amenity value of green space, which include:

- value in providing an important link in the greenspace systems
- value in providing a link in the strategic network of greenways
- value for organised sport and recreation
- value for informal or unorganised recreation
- value for children’s play
- value as an allotment
- wildlife and landscape interest
- value for an existing or potential role as part of the Mersey Forest
- value for environmental education
- visual amenity value
- structural value
- value in enhancing the overall attractiveness of the area
- contribution to the health and sense of well-being in the community.

3.13 The plan states that development will only be permitted within designated greenspace if the function is directly related and ancillary to the use and enjoyment of the green space. Similarly, development for educational purposes will be permitted.

3.14 Exceptions may be made where the loss of amenity value of the green space could be compensated for, either by generating improvements, which raise the overall amenity value of the greenspace or the provision of a replacement greenspace. It should however be noted that no proposal should result in the loss of amenity for local residents by forcing them to travel to a less convenient location.

3.15 The important role that the UDP plays in achieving a reasonable balance between the different open space types is highlighted.

3.16 In addition, development that would result in the loss of outdoor playing space for formal sport and recreation such as pitches, courts, greens and athletics tracks will not be permitted unless a number of criteria are met. Proposals for the development of outdoor, sport and recreation facilities in the urban fringe will be permitted providing the development satisfies the following criteria:

- directly related to existing or proposed activities
- sited and landscaped to be unobtrusive and to complement rural surroundings
- not spoil the enjoyment of the countryside for other users
- would not reduce public access to the countryside
- would not cause unacceptable damage to areas, features of wildlife or landscape interest
- would not have an unacceptable impact on nearby residents
- should use existing buildings and blend into the landscape where possible.
3.17 Specific local standards are set based on the NPFA six-acre standard, which suggests that 1.2 hectares of formal playing provision should be provided per 1000 population. This includes:

- football, cricket, hockey, rugby, tennis courts, greens, athletics tracks, miscellaneous sites, croquet lawns and training areas
- public facilities within the education sector which are available for public use
- facilities in the voluntary, private, industrial and commercial sectors.

3.18 The plan also aims to protect existing outdoor playing space for children, stating that development resulting in the loss of provision would not be permitted unless existing facilities were substandard and the development would fund improvements, or the developer provides suitable replacement facilities of an acceptable standard in terms of quality, safety and content in a no less convenient location.

3.19 In addition to protecting more formal types of open space, the UDP justifies the protection of sites for nature conservation. The designation criteria for such sites include the size, diversity, rarity, fragility, geographical provision, species, age or continuity of land, community or amenity value, access, educational value, natural habitats and recorded history. Policies are in place to protect specific types of natural open space including local nature reserves, species, special landscape value, trees and ancient woodlands (policies GE17 to GE25).

3.20 The key impact of the UDP on Halton Borough Council is the emphasis on protecting existing open space, while seizing to enhance the quality of open space where this achievable. This reflects the importance placed on public open space by the Council and their perceived importance to local residents. These policies place an emphasis on protecting facilities, and on quality improvements where appropriate.

3.21 The UDP policies aim to reflect the corporate priorities and principles outlined in the community plan.

*Halton’s Biodiversity Action Plan – A framework for local biodiversity conservation*

3.22 The biodiversity action plan (BAP) is part of a Cheshire BAP and contains action plans for the future development of species and habitats. The strategy has been developed in conjunction with other partners and is focused more on practical delivery.

3.23 The plan is the current system for the protection, conservation and enhancement of wildlife and sets quantifiable targets for both species and habitats and the production of action plans.

3.24 The plan develops action plans for:

- saltmarsh
- reedbed
- bluebell
- purple hairstreak
- great crested newt
- redshank
• skylark
• song thrush
• reed bunting
• and also considers wildlife corridors and the involvement of people in wildlife areas.

Best Value Performance Plan: April 2004

3.25 The best value performance plan was developed in April 2004 and highlights the main priorities of Halton Council as:

• Improving Health
• Promoting Urban Renewal
• Enhancing Life Chances & Employment
• Increasing Prosperity & Equality
• Ensuring Safe & Attractive Neighbourhoods.

3.26 One of the key achievements of the Council highlighted within the Best Value Performance Plan is the introduction of the Civic Pride Team, which has enhanced high profile areas such as roundabouts, open spaces, town centres though improved landscaping and street cleansing initiatives.

3.27 It was also indicated that a further achievement of the Council is the development of master planning for Town Park, which is part of the drive to improve the environment in the borough.

3.28 In addition, a number of initiatives have been developed around growing foods, which centre around the allotment sites within the borough.

3.29 The review concluded that overall, Halton was a good Council, a status achieved by only 38% of Councils across the Country. Perhaps more importantly, the environmental department received the maximum rating of four.

Halton Community Safety Partnership Strategy – April 2002 – March 2005

3.30 The community safety partnership is committed to:

• promoting community safety to make Halton a safer place to live
• working in partnership to address the root causes of crime and disorder
• reassuring communities and increasing public confidence.

3.31 Although open space is not referenced directly within the strategy, open space can contribute to a vast array of agendas, including the reduction of crime. This was also recognised within the Best Value Performance Plan. The crime and disorder strategy highlights the need for the appropriate development of open space including pods (teenage shelters) and skateparks, will have particular impact on this open space strategy.
Urban Capacity Study (April 2002)

3.32 The Urban Capacity Study was drawn up in line with the guidance given in PPG 3 to inform Halton’s view on future housing and employment requirements in the borough.

3.33 The brief identified land that may contribute to the employment and residential capacity of the borough which included:

- sites with planning permission or allocated in the Halton local plan
- sites with planning permission
- vacant and under used land
- green space
- undesignated land
- safeguarded land
- town centre sites.

3.34 The key issues report highlighted three issues that were restricting the choice of housing land, namely:

- the extent and tightness of green belt around Halton’s urban area
- the need to protect high grade agricultural land and areas of nature conservation
- the amount and importance of public and private greenspace.

3.35 The study concluded that there was sufficient supply to meet demand within Halton.

Analysis of common themes

3.36 An examination of the national and local strategic documents has revealed the following common themes:

- this analysis of open spaces supports wider governmental objectives of:
  - ensuring that all land development proposals, land-use policies and transport schemes are consistent with the need to ensure a sustainable future for local communities
  - social and community cohesion
  - promotion of a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle
  - reduction of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour
  - promotion of biodiversity and conservation of the natural environment
  - increased access to and participation in leisure, culture, sports and entertainment services
  - improved quality of urban and rural environment, reducing graffiti, vandalism and littering
- ensuring that facilities are accessible to people who are
disadvantaged e.g. those with a disability and those on low incomes.

3.37 In addition, open space has a vital role to play in meeting the key improvement areas
and priorities of Halton Borough Council.

3.38 In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the importance of
maintaining and improving open space sites within the Borough and this strategy will
contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.
SECTION 4

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY
Developing the strategy

**PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation**

4.1 The strategy has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).

4.2 One of the major changes in policy guidance is the requirement for local authority decisions regarding green space to be informed by local needs assessments, rather than nationally applied standards.

4.3 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of green space. This process was followed to develop this strategy. We have also used our own appropriate mechanisms to meet the requirements of the Council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of green space within the Borough. The five step process is as follows:

- **Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs**
- **Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision**
- **Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards**
- **Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards**
- **Step 5 – Drafting Implementation and Action Plan.**

4.4 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each Local Authority will need to be incorporated as each area has different structures and characteristics.

**Scope – types of green space**

4.5 The overall definition of green space within the government planning guidance (PPG17) is:

"all green space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity."

4.6 In accordance with PPG17 the strategy accounts for eight types of green space. These are outlined in appendix B.

4.7 Many green spaces are multi-functional. For example, a grass pitch is probably used for children’s play, exercising dogs or jogging as well as formal sports. Hence there is a requirement to classify each green space by its 'primary purpose' as recommended in PPG17.

**Methodology**

4.8 This strategy has been developed in conjunction with Halton Borough Council, following the five-step process detailed in PPG17 and explained further in the associated companion guide.
4.9 The development of the green spaces strategy has been closely linked with the production of the playing pitch strategy.

**Step 1 – Identifying local needs**

4.10 Desk based research has been undertaken to review many related documents and strategies that may have an impact on this strategy and upon which this strategy should be co-ordinated. A review of strategic context is provided within Sections Three and Four of this report.

**Consultations**

4.11 In the development of this strategy, consultations have been undertaken with many organisations and individuals. Methods have included one-to-one meetings, telephone calls, questionnaires and email. Organisations include:

- Internal consultation with Halton Borough Council Officers
- Parish Councils – questionnaires were distributed to the three Parish Councils
- Ward Councillors – similarly, ward Councillors were offered the opportunity, through the distribution of a questionnaire, to comment on green spaces within their ward
- local residents of the Borough – a household survey was distributed to 5000 households evenly geographically distributed across the seven area forums. In addition, drop in sessions were held at four locations around the borough which were advertised in the local papers, encouraging residents to give their opinions on open spaces and their vision for future development
- an on site survey was undertaken, questioning users of three specific green spaces in the borough regarding the site they were using, their means of reaching the site and their aspirations for future green space provision
- questionnaires to external agencies and providers of green space eg Wildlife Trust – all external providers within Halton were sent a questionnaire regarding existing sites and work and any future opportunities or plans
- press releases, specific email address and text messaging service were set up to allow the general public to provide comments on open space

**Step 2 - Auditing local provision**

4.12 The analysis within the strategy is based upon the audit supplied by Halton Borough Council planning department. This audit has been compiled and updated by Council officers who indicated at the start of the project that the audit was accurate and complete. This audit has been updated and amended by PMP during the strategy process where discrepancies have been found.

4.13 The original audit compiled by the Council has been reclassified into typologies reflecting those outlined in PPG17 in conjunction with the Council.

4.14 The database provided with this project will allow the amendment and updating of the audit as new sites are developed and old sites are destroyed. This is particularly important for play areas, which are under constant development and review at this time.
Steps 3 and 4 - Development and application of standards

4.15 Standards have been set for quantity, accessibility and quality.

(i) Quantity

4.16 PPG17 advocates that planning policies for green space, including playing fields, should be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local need.

4.17 The quantity of provision provided by the audit of green space has assisted in the setting of such local provision standards for the Borough. These are included for each type of open space in this strategy. As recommended by PPG17, these standards are undertaken by population to calculate the quantity of provision per 1000 people.

4.18 However the quantity analysis has also taken into account any key issues raised from the consultations with the public, internally within the Borough Council and externally with national, regional and local agencies. This then provides a more objective view rather than relying solely on statistical calculations.

4.19 The setting of quantity standards for all eight types of open space in Halton is deemed inappropriate. Further details can be found within the individual typology sections and appendices E and F.

4.20 PMP has ensured that the results of the market research and consultation were used robustly to define the local standards.

(ii) Quality

4.21 Quality and value of green space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. An example of this could be:

- a high quality green space is provided but is completely inaccessible; its usage is therefore restricted and its value to the public limited; or

- a low quality green space may be used every day by the public or have some significant wider benefit such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a relatively high value to the public.

4.22 The overall aim of a quality assessment should be to identify deficiencies in quality within:

- the geographical areas of the Borough
- specific types of green space
- specific quality factors that ensure a high quality green space.

4.23 This would enable resources to be concentrated on areas that need to be improved.

4.24 A sample of sites across the borough were visited by LDA Design, professional landscape architects. These site visits assessed the current quality and attributes of the sites and identified possible improvements that could be made to enhance the quality of sites. Each site was measured against a matrix which was agreed with the Council at the start of the process.
4.25 The outcomes of these site visits are summarised within the individual sections and the full report is available in appendix C.

4.26 In addition, site visits to sports facilities were undertaken by PMP, sport and leisure specialists, assessing the ability of the site to sustain the competitive sport it was developed for.

4.27 It is the intention that Council officers will be trained to use the site visit matrices developed for this strategy, with the intention that the remaining sites can be visited and assessed, and similarly, that site assessment scores can be updated as improvements are made.

4.28 Using the quality data obtained, consultation and specific feedback from site visits, a quality vision for each typology of open space has been established, in addition to a quality vision for green space in the borough as a whole.

4.29 All average quality percentages stated within each typology specific section are based on the mean score and include all responses, including not applicable (i.e. none present).

(iii) Accessibility

4.30 Accessibility is a key assessment of green space sites. Without accessibility for the public the provision of good quality or quantity of green space sites would be of very limited value. The overall aim of an accessibility assessment should be to identify:

- how accessible sites are
- areas of the borough which are limited in accessibility and therefore of priority importance, or alternatively, types of open space which are lower in accessibility
- key accessibility factors that need to be improved.

4.31 Accessibility standards have been developed based on consultation and existing site assessments. Using PPG17 guidelines, based on the location of sites within the borough in relation to residents, we are able to develop and apply standards in order to ascertain where there are areas of the borough without access to certain types of open space.

4.32 Accessibility is also analysed using the results of site visits where accessibility factors were commented on. Accessibility calculations include:

- footpaths
- navigation
- visual reference
- information and signage.

(iv) Level of usage and value

4.33 The value of an green space site is entirely different to quality and relates mainly to key factors as described in PPG17 companion guide:
4.34 Evaluating value involves assessing quality and accessibility and in particular relating the context of the green space against the level of use of each site.

4.35 From the assessment of the value of sites it is possible to determine policy options, which can be fed into a site-specific action plan. This is fundamental to effective planning.

4.36 For each open space type, usage has been rated by Council officers who have day to day experience and contact with all of the sites.

**Step Five – Drafting recommendations**

4.37 Finally policy recommendations and guidelines have been drafted. Recommendations and priorities identified throughout the report are the result of this detailed local assessment of need for the Borough. This data can be applied in future using the tools located in appendix G in conjunction with the open space database and GIS system.

**Area forums**

4.38 The analysis of each type of green space as been undertaken by groups of wards known as “area forums” in order to extract more detail within the Borough. This will enable resources to be concentrated in the right areas, on types of green space that are in most need, and on specifically named sites.

4.39 These areas have also been used as the basis for analysis of the playing pitch strategy, in addition to other surveys and pieces of work developed within the borough.

**Table 4.1 Area Forums**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Forum</th>
<th>Wards Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Broadheath, Ditton, Hough Green, Hale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Appleton, Kingsway, Riverside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Castlefields, Norton South, Windmill Hill, Norton North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beechwood, Halton Lea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mersey, Heath, Halton Brook, Grange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Daresbury</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.40 It is recognised that rural areas may not have the same access and range of green spaces as urban areas. Similarly, some spaces will be found exclusively in rural areas and some exclusively in urban areas.

4.41 Halton is a relatively urban borough with a high population density. Despite this, area forum 7, Daresbury is a particularly rural area with a low population density. Other lower areas of population density such as Hale are merged with higher density areas.
Figure 4.1 – Halton Area Forums
SECTION 5
IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS
Identifying local needs

5.1 In order to accurately develop an Open Space Strategy and set local policies from it, community consultation is essential to understand local needs. Establishing the views of local communities is also an essential part of the Best Value regime and the Community Planning process.

5.2 Community consultation was undertaken to identify:
- local people’s attitudes to existing provision
- local resident’s views according to appropriate levels of provision were adequate for each type of green space within their individual neighbourhoods
- local expectations and needs which are currently “invisible” because there is no current provision
- a qualitative “vision” for the type of green space that communities want to see in their area.

5.3 In order to identify needs for green spaces in Halton, a wide range of consultation has been undertaken and the following methods have been applied:
- on-site surveys at 3 green spaces throughout the Borough in which 376 face-to-face interviews were conducted
- household surveys were sent out to 5000 random addresses in Halton
- drop-in sessions for local residents were undertaken at four different locations throughout the Borough
- questionnaires were distributed to ward councillors and resident associations
- consultation meetings were held with Council Officers.

Local Demand - summary of key findings

Background and methodology

5.4 5000 household surveys were sent out to random addresses. The distribution was based on the proportion of population based in each area forum. The number of surveys sent out to the sub-areas was calculated using the total resident population statistics from each ward. On receipt of the 703 (14% response rate) returned questionnaires these were entered on to an Access database. This access database will be provided to the Council at the end of the study, and enables detailed analysis by both type of open space and area of residence.

5.5 The survey was designed to assess attitudes and views of the residents of Halton to help gain a greater understanding towards future open space provision. In particular the questionnaire set out to establish:
- value residents attach to green spaces
- attitudes to the range of green spaces available
- attitudes to existing equipment provided
SECTION FIVE – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

- distances travelled to green spaces
- main modes of transport used
- views of residents on the accessibility of green spaces
- barriers to accessing green spaces
- factors influencing use
- local needs and expectations.

Sample selection

5.6 Participants from the random addresses chosen for the household survey were selected according to who in the house will next have their birthday, including children aged 10 and over.

5.7 45% of respondents were male and 55% were female, with the majority of people being white British (95%) and aged between 40-59 (41% of all respondents).

Chart 5.1 – Age of respondents to household questionnaire

Key issues emerging from the household survey

5.8 A variety of key findings emerged from the household survey highlighting the relevance of open space to the residents of Halton Borough Council. Issues arising from the quality, quantity and accessibility for each type of open space will be discussed later on in the report under their specific headings. Detailed results for each area forum can be found in appendix H.

5.9 The following information summarises the views of the Borough’s residents:

Quantity

- in all area forums, parks and gardens were rated the most important of typologies with 92% of respondents rating this typology as important
- a significant number of residents (greater than 82%) felt the majority of open space typologies (allotments) were important to them
- only 38% of residents felt that allotments were important (with 21% of respondents having no opinion on this typology)
• provision for children and young people was considered the least well provided for, with 67% of respondents feeling the current provision was ‘too little’

• only 1.6% of residents felt there was ‘too much’ provision across any of the typologies

• with regards to quantity of provision, those typologies which were considered to be ‘about right’; (these percentages include people who had no opinion) scores were: parks - 53%, green corridors – 53% and cemeteries & churchyards – 66%.

Quality

• litter problems (43% of respondents) were stated as the most common significant problem across open spaces

• vandalism and graffiti (34%) and anti-social behaviour (26%) were also considered significant problems across the Borough

• over 50% of residents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality factors identified. The main areas of satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied) included paths (83%), condition of site boundaries (71%) and management and maintenance (68%)

• with regards to quality factors more than 50% of people were dissatisfied with the provision of toilets

• other areas of concern included a lack of seats / benches and provision of bins for litter (both over 45%).

Accessibility

• 88% of respondents were ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ that their chosen site was accessible by foot

• 74% of people were ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ with the opening times of their chosen open space area

• 85% of respondents were ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ with visibility of the site entrance

• the level of dissatisfaction with accessibility was relatively low with 20% of respondents unsatisfied with accessibility by public transport to their chosen open space and 17% of people unsatisfied with accessibility by pushchairs or wheelchairs and access by cycle ways.

Usage

• 19% of respondents stated they used green corridors and amenity greenspace on a daily basis (the highest daily usage rate of all the typologies)

• weekly usage of open space was greatest for parks and gardens (36% of the respondents use a park on a weekly occurrence), with 28% of residents using natural and semi-natural open space on a weekly basis
SECTION FIVE – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

- 86% of respondents do not use allotments and only 5% do not use parks and gardens
- the most popular reasons for using open space was 'to walk' (77% of all respondents), for 'fresh air' and to 'take exercise' (69%)
- the main reasons stated for non usage of open space included ‘lack of interest’ (39% of all respondents), ‘too far from home’ (26%) and ‘lack of time’ (24%).

Travel

- 60% of all respondents stated they normally walk to open space and 29% will use their car
- it takes between 5-10 minutes for 33% of all respondents to travel to the sites of open space they use most frequently and for a further 27%, the travel time is less than 5 minutes.

On site surveys

5.10 On site surveys were carried out at three different sites with 376 people face-to-face at Victoria Park, Rock Park and Runcorn Hill and a total of 251 people, 70 people and 55 people were surveyed respectively.

5.11 In surveying visitors to the park there was an equal split between males and females and a reasonable split in ages, as can be seen by chart 5.2 below. 94% of all respondents were white British.

Chart 5.2 – Age of respondents to on site surveys

5.12 Many of the comments made by visitors to the particular sites were general, as summarised below, however others were specific to the sites and showed examples of good and bad practice at the individual venues. The full report can be found in appendix D detailing all results for each site. The key issues emerging were:

- the three sites are generally used by respondents everyday or almost everyday and visited both weekdays and weekends
- sites are visited most often between lunchtime and early afternoon, spending approximately 30-60 minutes at the chosen site
most visitors travel by foot taking between 0-10 minutes to get to their destination

the most popular reason for choosing the site is because it is closest to home

the overall quality of all sites was rated good.

5.13 In general, these issues complement those raised in the household survey. Specific issues raised regarding the individual sites include;

Victoria Park

rated overall good in terms of cleanliness and tidiness with a good provision of rubbish bins, only experiencing some issues of vandalism and litter

little evidence and experience of anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, noise or smells

the toilets at Victoria Park were rated ‘poor’ and this was one of the top priorities for improvement (16% of all people questioned) along with development of the children’s play areas (31%)

35% of people feel the quality of open space has remained the same in the last three years

issues with accessibility were all considered good and no significant problems were highlighted.

5.14 This feedback suggests that on the whole, the quality of the park is good and there were few negative comments received. This substantiates findings of the household survey, where Victoria Park was highlighted as an example of good practice.

Rock Park

over 92% of visitors to Rock Park have never experienced problems of vandalism, litter, anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, noises or smells

despite the fact that the majority of visitors do not experience problems during visits to Rock Park, the top priority for improvement was highlighted as cleanliness and tidiness with more provision of litter bins (34% and 14% respectively)

second and third choices for improvement were increased provision of seats and benches

96% of people stated that the quality of open space had remained the same for the past three years

overall the majority of people stated that they visited Rock Park because it was the cleanest area of open space in comparison to others (24%), not because it was the closest to them (2%)
**SECTION FIVE – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS**

*Runcorn Hill*

- overall perceptions of the site were high with 58% of respondents indicating that the site is good and 29% very good in terms of cleanliness and tidiness. Provision of rubbish bins is good and there are few issues of vandalism and litter.
- issues with the site include poor lighting (29%) and very poor toilets (40%)
- priorities for improvement included provision of lighting and the quality of toilets (18% and 31% respectively)
- the quality of the site is perceived to have improved slightly in the last three years
- accessibility of Runcorn Hill was considered very good. The visibility of the site entrance and parking were in particular complemented.

**Internal consultation**

5.15 A selection of internal officers have been consulted with regards to the current provision and potential need of open spaces and sport and recreation.

5.16 The following points summarise the main issues which emerged;

**Quantity**

5.17 There are mixed feelings regarding the provision of open space within the Borough, however there is little opportunity to greatly increase the quantity of open space sites and so it may be necessary to improve the quality of existing spaces.

5.18 The number of play areas within Halton has decreased and attention has been focused on the larger play areas within the Borough. These well used play areas tend to attract less vandalism and misuse. The location of play areas as part of larger sites has been successful, although it may require residents to travel further as neighbourhood play areas are no longer provided. Other consultation indicated that residents were willing to travel further to reach better quality sites.

5.19 The need for additional provision for young people and children, particularly young people of teenage age was a key issue raised in numerous consultations, substantiating evidence compiled through other consultation mechanisms. Skate parks and teen shelters have proved popular within the Borough, deterring anti-social behaviour.

5.20 The Borough is currently suffering from the lack of burial ground, however new land for sites in Widnes are currently under review.

5.21 There is thought to be a growing demand for more allotment sites within the Borough and there are currently 283 allotment plots full to capacity with a 2-3 year waiting list. Plans to improve the capacity of plots in the area are currently prohibited by the 1916 allotment act.

**Quality**

5.22 There are some examples of good practice sites within Halton including the Green Flag Award Parks; Hough Green, Runcorn Hill, Pickering Pasture, Victoria Park and...
SECTION FIVE – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

Upton Rocks Park. Halton have also gained Beacon Council for greenspace, exemplifying the amounts of good quality open space and the hard work put into this issue by the Council.

5.23 Issues regarding quality stem mainly from anti-social behaviour, especially in parks and children’s play areas where young people tend to meet and socialise at these places, however these sites have improved since the introduction of a security surveillance team. The provision of a teenage shelter has also deflected bad behaviour from parks and play areas where it is a more controlled area. Interestingly, the issue of anti social behaviour has not arisen as a major issue during on site surveys and the household survey.

5.24 Natural and semi-natural sites suffer from litter and fly tipping, a prime example of this is Murdishaw Avenue site where litter is very problematic. Similarly, a number of the local nature reserves also experience this problem.

5.25 Allotment sites are generally very good quality and are policed on a regular basis. A number of thefts at one site recently have however emphasised the potential need for improved security.

Accessibility

5.26 There are few accessibility issues within the Borough and accessibility is supported by good public transport links around Halton. Most of the sites are also accessible all the time, except Pickerings Pasture and Wigg Island, which are locked up at night.

5.27 The promotion of sites through the Parks and Countryside Services events booklet helps raise the profile of larger sites, making maximum use of these open spaces.

Opportunities

5.28 The provision of a wide range of open spaces within the borough are sometimes not fully utilised mainly due to a lack of investment and available funding. There is huge potential with particular areas including:

- effectively implementing Halton’s “Greenway Network”, as identified in the Unitary development Plan, policy TP9, helping to provide networks of largely car-free off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces, as well as promoting exercise
- linking play areas to school provision, especially where there are no areas of formal play equipment or available space. Areas where play spaces are well used and in open areas often means that it less likely to be vandalised and misused
- the provision of more teenage shelters in the Borough, located in appropriate areas where the young people can take ownership
- there are opportunities to link the development of open space and the improvement of existing open space with the regeneration of the borough
- the development of a city farm is being considered. This will be a growing area that would attract many people with the added attractions of animals and a café for a meeting place.
SECTION FIVE – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

Drop-in sessions

5.29 Drop-in' sessions were held libraries around the Borough during July and August 2004. These were advertised using newspaper articles and posters at the venues.

5.30 The 'drop in' sessions gave residents an opportunity to discuss any key issues relating to open space in their area (including site specific and general issues), as well as the opportunity to comment on good and bad examples of open spaces.

5.31 Issues relating to quantity, quality and accessibility will be raised later on in sections 6-13. Other general issues have been summarised below:

- general concern about the level of provision of all open spaces, especially where various areas are becoming built-up and developed (e.g. Castlefields)
- various quality issues in all areas – especially in parks, litter, vandalism, anti-social behaviour, broken glass and graffiti
- general feeling about the lack of provision for young people – feel the need to provide more amenities for them.
- positive feedback on the provision of dog bins and the use of specific dog walking areas – however there is a general need for them in areas where they are not placed e.g. Wigg Island, Heath Park Common
- good practice examples include; Rock Park, Pickerings Pasture, Sandymoor and Runcorn Hill.

Ward councillor and resident association consultation

5.32 All ward councillors and residents associations were sent a questionnaire to complete with guidance notes attached. The data collected from these was then specific for each ward, although the comments received tended not to be dissimilar.

5.33 The key findings were;

- general maintenance and cleanliness issues with the provision of rubbish/litter bins rated very poor, possibly creating the underlying issue of poor cleanliness. Site visits and other consultations indicated that on the whole, maintenance and cleanliness was good
- feedback in general centred around complaints concerning dog fouling and anti-social behaviour
- residents associations felt that there was too little provision for young people and children, as well as a lack of outdoor sports facilities. This mirrored the opinions highlighted through the household survey
- overall, there is perceived to be deficiency of open space in Halton
- accessibility to sites tended to be lesser of a problem.

5.34 Similar issues were also raised within the ward councillor questionnaires:

- dog fouling and provision of litter bins were both considered to be poor
there were concerns over the maintenance of amenity greenspace including Grange and Hough Green

some Councillors indicated that there were the security and safety issues of equipment in open spaces was rated poorly by some councillors

overall quality rating of open spaces in Halton was rated average

provision for children and young people and allotments gardens were considered to have a deficiency in provision

the overall rating of quantity of open space was rated ‘about right’.
SECTION 6
PARKS AND GARDENS
Parks and gardens

Definition

6.1 This type of open space includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events.

Strategic context and consultation

6.2 A national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage was undertaken during 2003, looking at the provision of parks within England. The aims of the survey were to establish:

- how many adults in England use parks
- what activities people take part in when visiting parks
- the reasons people visit particular parks
- the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
- why non-users do not use parks.

6.3 The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks and recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land. The findings of the study were:

- just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months
- there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups, with almost three quarters of adults from the higher social group visiting a park compared with only half of those from the lower social group
- people from black and ethnic minority communities also have relatively low participation as well as those adults with a disability
- over 8 in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring/summer with almost two thirds visiting a
park at least once a week, and women tended to visit parks more often than men.

- it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits to parks during the spring and summer months and 600 million visits during the autumn and winter months—a total of 1.8 million visits a year.
- the most popular type of park visited was an urban/city park.

6.4 The household questionnaire indicated that parks and gardens were the most important type of open space with 99% of respondents indicating that parks were important or very important. Hough Green Park, Heath Park, Hale Park and Town Park appear to be particularly well used and overall parks and gardens were the typology that people visit most frequently.

6.5 Three parks in Halton have been awarded the green flag award out of a total of 58 green flag parks within North West England. The green flag award is a national quality scheme managed by the Civic Trust on behalf of CABE Space. Runcorn Hill, Hough Green Park and Pickerings Pasture all achieved the standard during 2003/2004, and work is now underway towards the same award for Rock Park and Victoria Park.

6.6 Parks and gardens are a priority for the Council and significant improvements have been made to the quality of parks in recent years. This was confirmed during consultation where a number of people highlighted parks as an example of good practice and praised the overall standard, in particular, Rock Park and Victoria Park. Rock Park recently received funding through the Living Spaces Fund and significant capital was spent on the development of this project. This park is now very well used and has become a highly valued open space within Halton. This improvement and provision of high quality of parks has raised both public expectation and public perceptions of the borough.

6.7 In support of the above, Cheshire Landscape Trust highlighted the significant quality and site management improvements which have been made in recent years. Cheshire Landscape Trust highlighted Wigg Island Community Park and Town Park as examples of good practice within Halton.

6.8 There is potential that parks will be further developed in future years through the introduction of the parks sponsorship scheme, where local industries are encouraged to give sponsorship in return for advertisement within or at the entrance to the park.

6.9 In addition to informal use of the parks, there is a significant amount of activity occurring within parks. The sports/community development team carry out a number of organised activities such as walks, circus entertainment classes and bands. These events are organised at parks across Halton. A master planning exercise for Town Park, Runcorn is currently underway with the aim of establishing the most appropriate use of the land. Consultation indicated that the local community supported this study, and felt that Town Park could become a central community attraction in future years.

6.10 Consultation suggested that there is currently perceived to be a shortage of formal parks in the Runcorn area. The presence of formal parks generally appeared to be highly valued by residents of all areas, and the majority indicated that they would travel further to reach a large scale formal park rather than use more informal amenity space. There are a number of informal parks which may benefit from more formal development and amenities within the park.
SECTION SIX – PARKS AND GARDENS

Setting provision standards

6.11 In setting local standards for Parks and Gardens there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other Local Authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix F.

Quantity

6.12 The audit of parks and gardens shows 146.51 hectares of parks and gardens in total across the borough. The current provision of parks and gardens per 1,000 population therefore equates to 1.24 hectares. The full spread of provision and justification of the standards set can be found in Appendix E and F.

6.13 There are no definitive national or local standards for parks and gardens.

6.14 53% of the household survey respondents felt the provision of parks and gardens was ‘about right’ with 46% of respondents indicating they felt the current provision was not enough.

6.15 Overall opinion is therefore almost evenly split between provision being about right and too little, potentially suggesting some localised deficiencies within the borough. This is supported by the qualitative consultation, suggesting there may be deficiencies of formal parks in some areas and also can be seen looking at the spread of provision in the borough where there is significant provision within area four.

6.16 Given that overall opinion is evenly split, we recommend a local standard of 1.25 hectares per 1000 population. This would enable a more equal distribution to be achieved.

Quality

6.17 The Green Flag Criteria states some benchmarks linked to a park being a welcoming facility, healthy, safe and secure environment. However, there are no definitive national or local standards for the quality of parks and gardens. The achievement of a number of green flag awards for parks in Halton supports consultation suggesting that parks and gardens are of high quality.

Example of good practice – Spike Island

The site has a clear identity and is completely surrounded by water – it is easy to access and use, spatially interesting and contains some challenging features

Key positive attributes of the site:
- visitor centre
- toilets and parking
- history of the site
- remnants of the site history
- mature tree structure
- good visual signs for footpaths well maintained paths

RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUANTITATIVE STANDARD
1.25 ha. per 1000 population
Overall, site assessments of parks and gardens in Halton indicate that:

- spatial qualities were scored highly in parks and gardens amounting to an average of 72%, indicating that overall navigation around sites, sense of security and the overall condition is good.
- the level of cleanliness and maintenance of parks and gardens is high, with an average score of 65%. This was a similar level to the quality of vegetation, which was also rated highly.
- the main area of weakness is the level of security and safety – the average score was 36% in total. The quality of footpaths, furniture and structures was also scored lower, with an average score of 46%.

Scores relating to specific sites and site-specific details of potential areas for improvement can be found in appendices C and I. The highest scoring sites in total were Hough Green Park, Spike Island and Victoria Park indicating that these are currently the best quality parks in the borough. Hough Green Park was almost faultless in terms of cleanliness and maintenance.

Household consultation indicated that the main issues in parks and gardens in the borough are litter, antisocial behaviour and vandalism and graffiti. These issues were considered problematic within all area forums.

Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for parks and gardens were clean and litter free, inclusion of flowers, trees and shrubs, well kept grass with toilets and seating. A variety of facilities and the presence of on site wardens are also highly valued.

A suggested quality vision standard for parks and gardens should therefore include elements of these aspirations to meet the needs of the public, and also other local and national standards.

This recommended local standard should provide the vision for any new provision in addition to a benchmark for existing parks to achieve in terms of enhancement. Many of the parks and gardens in Halton were named as examples of good practice, and are already achieving this vision.

Site assessment sheets and specific opportunities for the further improvement and enhancement of each park are contained within appendix C.

**Accessibility**

With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards.

Site visits assessed a number of factors relating to the accessibility of sites and the average score was 68%, indicating that the accessibility of parks and gardens is high. Spike Island and Sunnybank Woodland Park both scored over 80% in terms of accessibility.
6.27 Through the consultation and household survey, of those residents who selected parks and gardens as the type of open space they used most, 94% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance, 93% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the accessibility by foot and there was significant satisfaction on the access by pushchairs and wheelchairs. However, 32% of respondents were dissatisfied with the access by public transport and 22% were dissatisfied with the level of signage.

6.28 From the household survey the general perception is that a travel time of 15 minutes is reasonable. The majority of people indicated a walking time rather than a drive time with the 75% level being up to 15 minutes in five of the seven analysis areas.

**Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas**

6.29 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

6.30 As consultation suggests there are quantitative deficiencies within some areas although on the whole provision is about right. This is supported by the figures when applying the local quantitative standard of 1.25 ha per 1,000 standard. On the whole, provision of parks and gardens is good within the borough.

6.31 The main areas of quantitative deficiency identified are located within area forums one and six and seven and there is a small overall deficiency within the borough.

6.32 Although there are quantitative deficiencies within some areas, Maps 6.1 and 6.2 overleaf illustrate that the majority of the population are within the catchment area of a park. This occurs because people are willing to travel further to a park.

6.33 There are areas of area forum 5 lying outside of the suggested catchment areas, particularly within the Beechwood area although there is only a small undersupply in total. The small oversupply of amenity greenspace within this area may offer the opportunity to develop this space into a more formal park. This park should provide a mix of facilities and meet the quality standard set above.
Map 6.1 – Catchment areas for Parks and Gardens - Widnes
Map 6.2 – Catchment Areas for Parks and Gardens - Runcorn
6.34 Development of a small formal park / garden could also provide the opportunity to address any deficiencies in play provision in this area.

6.35 Similarly, almost all residents in area 7 are outside the specified catchment area. Consideration should be given to assessing the undersupply in this area. In particular, there is a quantitative oversupply of natural and semi natural and amenity green space provision which could be re-designated as a small formal park or garden.

6.36 The largest quantitative oversupply is seen within area forum 4 where all of the population are also within an appropriate catchment. Town Park is located within this area although it has limited formal amenities. Consideration should be given to providing amenities at this park and improving the quality of the site. In addition, it may be possible to re-designate some of this area to combat deficiencies in the provision for young people and children within this area.

Value assessment – Identifying specific sites

6.37 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. In the event of deviations to this, further analysis is required.

6.38 53% of respondents to the household survey indicated that they use parks on a weekly basis or more frequently, and less than 1% never use parks indicating that parks and gardens as a whole are highly valued by Halton residents. Indeed, the household survey indicated that parks are the most important type of open space in the borough.

6.39 All parks within the borough scored highly in terms of both quality and accessibility, particularly the larger parks such as Hough Green Park, Victoria Park and Rock Park. These parks achieve high levels of usage as confirmed by the on site user surveys and are therefore of high value to the local community.

6.40 The improvement of some of the smaller parks and gardens sites (such as St Maries Gardens) may increase the number of users and hence increase the value of the site.

Summary

6.41 When analysing provision of parks and gardens in terms in quantity and accessibility, it can be seen that the main priority areas are:

- area seven
- area five (in particular Beechwood).

6.42 There may be opportunities to address these through the redesignation of some amenity green space or natural and semi natural sites.

6.43 The main area of surplus exists in area four, primarily as a result of the presence of Town Park. Focus in this area should be given to improving the quality and range of amenities at this site rather than providing additional provision within area forum four.

6.44 The quality of parks is good, highlighted by the green flag awards that have been awarded to the Council.
6.45 Following the site visits, the key potential areas for improvement in parks and gardens were highlighted as:

- many of the parks and gardens would benefit from a richer and more diverse landscape. The incorporation of flowering shrubs, specimen trees and shrubs, herbaceous material and bulbs would help to enliven the spaces and provide opportunities for increased horticultural interest. This would need to be accompanied by increased maintenance budgets.

- care should be taken to define the entrances/exits and to impart the parks and gardens with more identity and individuality

- site safety and security can be poor in these spaces - lighting should be considered for those spaces subject to approved use after dark

- ensure use of appropriate and co-ordinated furniture including seats, bins and lighting. Develop a furniture strategy for the Borough – this might well vary according to the different typologies.

- Halton has some potentially very attractive parks and gardens that could be made much more of – the open spaces of the Borough would benefit from a greater contrast between the different typologies with more investment being made in parks and gardens to give them an added richness.

**Recommendations**

- PG1 - Improve access to parks and gardens in areas where there are currently deficiencies

- PG2 – Consultation has indicated parks are highly valued amenities and should be protected from development

- PG3 – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision

- PG4 – Continue to focus resources on large quality parks, and consider sponsorship opportunities to enhance opportunities for further development of smaller more informal parks and gardens

- PG4 – Continue to produce detailed management plans for larger park sites

- PG5 – Continue to encourage the use of parks for events and activities across the borough to increase awareness and usage of sites

- PG6 – Promote the development of Friends Groups for each park

- PG7 - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new sites and improve existing sites
SECTION 7

NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL
Semi-natural and natural open space

Definition

7.1 This type of open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Paddocks have also been included within this definition within Halton, as they have been recognised as an important natural land use within the borough.

7.2 Natural and semi natural open space is of particular importance in the Halton area as there is a large amount of contaminated land due to previous land uses. There is opportunity for this land to be used for the creation and development of natural and semi natural open space to support the regeneration of the borough. Open space can play a significant role in regeneration.

Picture 7.1

Specific strategic context and consultations

Conservation importance

7.3 The Local Biodiversity Action plan (LBAP) focuses on both the protection and development of species, and of habitats, making specific reference to sites of importance within Halton Borough. In addition, it highlights the importance of wildlife corridors in the character of Halton, which create and maintain links between urban open spaces and enable species to range over wider areas.

7.4 There are now eight local nature reserves within Halton Borough Council, three of which opened during Summer 2004 following extensive work and development by Council officers. An additional number of sites are also under consideration for future development. Many of the local nature reserves are located within larger natural and semi natural sites.

7.5 The local nature reserves have social, educational and recreational value and are home to many species of wildlife. In contrast to this, recent development at Dorchester Park has provided enhanced quality through the addition of seating and paths.
7.6 Pickering’s Pasture was highlighted as an example of good practice in consultation. In addition to relatively large visitor numbers, which are enhanced through the presence of the Trans Pennine Trail, which runs through the site, there are a number of events at the site which increase the awareness of the site and nature in Halton. The popularity and value of the site was reinforced by Cheshire Landscape Trust, who indicated that this site is an example of innovative management and community engagement. Large numbers of consultees indicated that they use Pickering’s Pasture informally. This site has a green flag award and could also be considered to be a park.

7.7 Similar to the above, the Cheshire Landscape Trust highlighted further examples of good practice including Daresbury Firs and Dorchester Park Local Nature Reserve.

7.8 There are also a number of SINCs within Halton Borough. The Mersey Estuary is an internationally renowned site of scientific interest and plays an important role in linking Runcorn and Widnes. In addition, Beechwood Wood and the Runcorn Widnes Bridge have been designated as being of national significance.

7.9 Local Agenda 21 encourages the involvement of communities. Officers at Halton Council have successfully secured funding for the development of a number of initiatives to increase the involvement of the local community. This builds on consultation findings, which suggested that although wildlife sites are highly valued, the level of awareness of the presence of such sites within Halton is perhaps lower.

7.10 Halton is part of the Mersey Forest, which is one of the two largest community forests in England. It borders the Red Rose Forest, the other largest forest and these two community forests are the only forests to share borders in the country.

7.11 Both forests were established during 1992, and a government approved 30-40 year plan was designed. These plans are implemented by teams of people involved from the voluntary sector, public sector and private organisations. Over the two forests over 3700 hectares of woodland have been planted and public access is increasing. It is hoped that the presence of these forests and the work done to improve the forest and involve the community will enhance the environment and appearance of the area.

7.12 Reflecting the vast array of natural greenspaces in Halton, 94% of respondents in the household survey indicated that natural greenspaces were considered to be important. 48% of all respondents indicated that they visit natural sites weekly or more frequently.

7.13 The household survey indicated that Pickerings Pasture is the most frequently used natural and semi-natural open space in the borough.

Setting provision standards

7.14 In setting local standards for natural and semi-natural open space there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within appendix F.

Quantity

7.15 The provision of natural and semi-natural open space amounts to 587.63 hectares in total across the borough. The current provision of natural and semi-natural open
space per 1,000 population therefore equates to 4.97 hectares per 1,000 population. The full spread of provision and justification of the standards set can be found in Appendix E and F.

7.16 The only definitive national standards for natural and semi-natural areas is the English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). This suggests that there should be at least 2 ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 population, based on no-one living more than 300 metres from the nearest natural and semi-natural open space/ 2 km from a site of 20 ha / 5km from a site of 100 ha and 10 km from a site of 500 ha. The Halton Local Biodiversity Action Plan considers the level of provision within Halton using these standards, and indicates that Halton meets these standards.

7.17 There is no national or local standard that covers the whole of this category of open space although English Nature does approve other greenspace standards set by other organisations.

7.18 Within Halton, it is important to acknowledge that in addition to natural and semi-natural sites, there are a number of linear natural sites, which serve as green corridors. These complement natural and semi-natural open space.

7.19 Excluding those with no opinion, 45% of the household survey respondents felt the provision of natural and semi-natural open space was ‘about right’, 54% of replies stated there was insufficient provision. Overall opinion is therefore relatively evenly split, although there may be localised deficiencies.

7.20 It is also important to emphasise the role of larger sites and areas of national and international significance in meeting local needs and the contribution they make towards providing borough wide facilities. In addition, such sites may attract visitors from outside the borough.

7.21 A standard of 2.75 recognises the significance of natural space within Halton and ensures an even distribution across the borough.

**Quality**

7.22 There are no definitive national or local quality standards although the Countryside Agency states that land should be managed to conserve or enhance its rich landscape, bio-diversity, heritage and local customs.

### Example of good practice – Sandymoor Pools

Sandymoor has quite a light airy feel to it unlike some of the other wooded areas, there are numerous informal routes through the woodland.

**Key positive attributes of the site:**
- lighter more airy canopy
- various sub-shrub species
- a good mix of open sunny areas, that is easy to navigate around
- mature tree structure
SECTION SEVEN – SEMI-NATURAL AND NATURAL OPEN SPACE

7.23 Overall, site assessments of natural and semi-natural open space in Halton indicate that:

- the cleanliness and maintenance of sites assessed were scored highly with an average of 63%, indicating that there was little evidence of dog fouling, litter and unattractive smells
- total vegetation averaged at 58%, and although there was evidence of well kept grass and planted areas, there was potential for improvement with the maturity and maintenance of planted areas
- the quality of facilities and pathways was not considered to be as high, although a lack of requirement for such facilities will have influenced this score. In terms of spatial qualities, the overall average was 53%, indicating that there is potential for further development.

7.24 Scores relating to specific sites and site-specific details of potential areas for improvement can be found in appendices C and I. The highest scoring sites in total were Lodge Plantation and Arley Woods.

Setting provision standards

7.25 The overall quality of natural and semi-natural open across the borough is slightly below that of other spaces although there are also some very high quality spaces.

7.26 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for natural and semi-natural open space were clean and litter free, clear footpaths, nature conservation water and natural features (e.g. wildlife).

7.27 A suggested quality vision standard for natural and semi natural open space needs to take into account the aspirations of the public and the Council, in addition to protecting the biodiversity and wildlife of such sites.

7.28 The recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also acts as a benchmark for existing natural and semi natural open space to achieve in terms of enhancement.

Accessibility

7.29 With regards to accessibility the definitive national standard has been produced by ANGST, who recommend 2 ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 people based on the principles listed in paragraph 6.6. There are no local standards, although the biodiversity action plan assesses natural green space in Halton using this standard.

Setting provision standards

7.30 Overall, natural and semi-natural open space areas are considered to have relatively low accessibility in comparison to some other types of open space. Site visits indicate that the average accessibility score was just 40%.
7.31 Through the consultation and household survey, it is clear that the public satisfaction with opening hours, accessibility of natural and semi-natural sites by foot and the visibility of site entrances is high, with over 80% of respondents either satisfied or very satisfied. In contrast, only 56% are satisfied with public transport links to natural and semi-natural sites and 67% with accessibility of such sites with wheelchairs and pushchairs.

7.32 From the household survey the findings show the majority of people indicated a walking time rather than a drive time with the 75% level being up to 15 minutes. This suggests that people are willing to travel a total distance of approximately 1.2km.

### RECOMMENDED LOCAL ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD

15 minute walk (1.2km)

### Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

7.33 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

7.34 There are many large natural areas within the borough and also sites with potential to become designated protected sites in future years. There are number of existing sites which are currently protected and a small number of sites are of national and international significance. The Local Biodiversity Action plan indicates that the majority of Halton residents are within acceptable distances of natural and semi-natural sites.

7.35 When applying the quantity and accessibility standards this appears to support this perception with the majority of the borough area living within the catchment of such sites, but with small quantitative deficiencies in analysis areas two and three and five. Area forums three and two are the only areas with any population outside the catchment of natural and semi-natural sites.

7.36 Maps 7.1 and 7.2 highlight the areas of deficiency within the borough.
Map 7.1 – Deficiencies of Natural and Semi Natural Provision – Widnes

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Mapping under licence to Halton Borough Council.
Map 7.2 – Deficiencies of Natural and Semi Natural Provision - Runcorn

Overview Map: Analysis Areas and Open Space Type Catchments, Natural & Semi-Natural

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office (c) Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.
7.37 In particular, priority should be given to the development of natural and semi natural open space sites within area three, where there is a deficiency and accessibility issues. Recognising that this is not an easy type of open space to develop and is usually primarily opportunity led, in these areas of deficiency any improvements to accessibility of existing sites should be considered a priority.

7.38 Although there is an oversupply in area two some people do not have access to provision. Opportunities in this area should therefore also be considered.

7.39 In areas of oversupply (particularly area four) there may be opportunities to redesignate some existing natural and semi natural open space to offset unmet demand in other typologies, particularly provision for young people and children.

Value assessment – Identifying specific sites

7.40 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.

7.41 There are number of natural open space sites within the borough which are inaccessible. Although these sites have little benefit in terms of use to the community, they offer a visual amenity and benefit to the borough. They have been included within the audit and it may be possible to consider increasing their accessibility in future years.

7.42 There are a number of sites within the borough, which are perceived to have high usage in addition to high quality and accessibility. Many of these sites are more formal nature reserves and include:

- Wigg Island
- Murdishaw Wood
- Runcorn Hill Nature Reserve.

7.43 These sites are highly valued by the community and therefore should be protected.

7.44 Pickerings Rough is considered to be a well-used site. Despite this it scored on 40% on the quality assessment, indicating that there is potential for improvement.

7.45 There are a number of public open space sites, which are considered to have low usage. These are:

- Hale Road Woods
- Haystack Lodge
- Red Brow Lane SSSI
- Brook Plantation

7.46 These four sites need further investigating to see whether the purpose of the open space is appropriate considering the low levels of usage or whether the quality or
accessibility require improvement. There may be scope to consider changing the primary purpose of these three sites if the usage cannot be increased.

**Summary**

7.47 The quality of natural and semi natural open spaces is lower than other types of open space. There are concerns over safety and structures. Despite this, there are some very high quality sites.

7.48 The majority of residents within the borough are within an acceptable catchment distance of natural and semi natural open space. There are a number of natural open spaces with international and national significance.

7.49 Priority should be given to the development of natural and semi natural open space sites within area three, where there is a deficiency and accessibility issues. Recognising that this is not an easy type of open space to develop and is usually primarily opportunity led, in these areas of deficiency any improvements to accessibility of existing sites should be considered a priority. There is an overall oversupply, so effort should be concentrated on improving the existing quality and accessibility.

7.50 In areas of oversupply (particularly area four) there may be opportunities to re-designate some existing natural and semi natural open space to offset unmet demand in other typologies, particularly provision for young people and children.

7.51 There are number of natural open space sites within the borough which are inaccessible. Although these sites have little benefit in terms of use to the community, they offer a visual amenity and benefit to the borough. It is important to enhance the awareness of the public to natural and semi natural sites, particularly to sites which are within larger sites.

7.52 In addition, there are four sites in need of further investigation as a result of low usage to see whether their primary purpose of the open space is appropriate.

**Recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSN 1</th>
<th>Improve access to natural and semi natural open spaces in areas where there are currently deficiencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSN 2</td>
<td>Ensure that those sites listed as high value are protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 3</td>
<td>Investigate the reasons for low use of some sites and ensure that their primary purpose is appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 4</td>
<td>Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSN 5</td>
<td>Develop a marketing plan to increase the awareness of natural and semi natural sites, in particular Local Nature Reserves and sites where usage is low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 6</td>
<td>Ensure continued contribution to the biodiversity targets as highlighted in the biodiversity action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 7</td>
<td>Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new sites and improve existing sites.</td>
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SECTION 8

AMENITY GREENSPACE
Amenity greenspace

Definition

8.1 This type of open space is frequently around housing areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and greenspaces in and around housing with its primary purpose to provide opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.

8.2 For the purposes of this study, incidental green space is not included and only larger green space sites suitable for informal recreation have been taken into account.

Picture 8.1

Specific strategic context and consultations

Doorstep Greens and Millennium Greens (Countryside Agency)

8.3 The Doorstep Greens programme is helping communities around England to create their own new amenity green space, or to transform existing open spaces to meet their needs. Many projects have been funded in urban and rural areas, particularly in disadvantaged areas, to create and manage ‘multi-purpose’ community greens and for the community to be involved in creating open space, however all the funding for this has now been allocated.

8.4 The aim of the Millennium Greens initiative is to provide new areas of public open space close to people’s homes that could be enjoyed permanently by the local community. They were to be breathing spaces - places for relaxation, play and enjoyment of nature and pleasant surroundings. They could be small or large, and in urban or rural locations. A Millennium Green has been developed in Halton Village.

8.5 Applications for this scheme closed in April 2003 and it is hoped that the aim of the completion of 200 projects across the country by 2006 will be achieved.

8.6 Consultation highlighted that amenity greenspace sites can be large useful areas of land but also can be small pieces of land within housing estates that may be too small to have any significant recreational value. However there is an aesthetic value of small amenity greenspace sites within housing areas.

8.7 The returned household questionnaire indicated that only 5% of respondents felt that the provision of amenity green space was unimportant. Despite this, 28% of
respondents indicated that they never use amenity green space sites. In contrast, 40% of respondents use amenity green space weekly or more frequently.

8.8 Consultation suggested that many people are more likely to travel further to reach a larger site such as a park than they are to use small areas of amenity open space.

Setting provision standards

8.9 In setting local standards for Amenity Greenspaces there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix E and F.

Quantity

8.10 Formal open spaces such as playing pitches are classified under the category of outdoor sports facilities (see section 10) as their primary purpose, however in many instances, they do provide the function of amenity greenspace in more rural areas and urban areas where there is limited amenity greenspace. Frequently, areas designated as official sports pitches are used for dog walking midweek, and are a vital piece of open land within the community. This should be taken into account if it is necessary to make a more detailed specific analysis of an area. Many informal kickabout areas are classified as amenity greenspace.

8.11 The provision of amenity green space indicates that there are 115.67 hectares in total across the borough. Therefore the current provision of amenity green space per 1,000 population equates to 0.98 hectares per 1000 population. The full spread of provision and justification of the standards set can be found in Appendix F.

8.12 The only national standard for amenity greenspace provided is 0.5 ha per 1,000 population based on the current UK average of all applicable local authorities provision standards for amenity open space as defined in the Rethinking Open Space Report (2001).

8.13 Open spaces such as football pitches are classified under outdoor sports facilities as their primary purpose, however in a number of instances pitches do provide the function of amenity greenspace in areas where there is limited amenity green spaces.

8.14 Other national standards make reference to amenity green space, including National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), which states there should be 2.43 ha per 1,000 population for ‘playing spaces’. Some local authorities in the past have added an extra 1 ha per 1,000 population intended for residential areas. These standards however include formal playing fields.

8.15 Taking into account just those with an opinion, 44% of people in Halton indicated that the level of provision of amenity green space was about right, 54% suggested that was a deficiency. Opinions within the borough vary, suggesting that there are perhaps specific locational deficiencies. In particular, residents in area forums two and three felt there were shortfalls.

8.16 Given that although overall opinion suggests there is a deficiency, and qualitative consultation indicates that other types of open space are more valued by the community, it is suggested that a provision
standard of 1 hectare per 1000 is set.

**Quality**

8.17 There is no national or local quality standard for amenity green space.

8.18 The site assessments for amenity green space indicated that:

- the overall cleanliness and maintenance of amenity green space sites is good, with an average score of 69%
- spatial qualities were also rated highly with an average of 64%. Similarly, vegetation was considered good
- the main areas of weakness in amenity green spaces are security and footpaths, furniture and structures where average scores were only 43% and 33% respectively. This suggests that there is perhaps limited furniture eg seats where this might be appropriate.

8.19 Scores relating to specific sites and site-specific details of potential areas for improvement can be found in appendix E and I. The highest scoring sites in total were Mersey Road Riverfront, West Bank Shore, Sandymoor Open Space, Mullion Open Space and Ainley Close amenity green space.

### Examples of good practice – Ainley Close

A small courtyard that is mounded into a basic pyramid shape with mature trees and shrubs at it’s heart – the site has a clear identity with a good mix of sun and shade and is exceptionally easy to navigate around

**Key positive attributes of the site:**

- incidental supervision
- play equipment
- courtyard arrangement – cosy feel
- tree structure

8.20 Household consultation indicated that the main problems with amenity green space in Halton were litter, vandalism and anti-social behaviour – considered only as minor problems. There were no significant problems with dog fouling, noises and smells in any area forum.

8.21 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations the quality of green corridors were clean and litter free, well-kept grass, clear footpaths and the presence of flowers and shrubs.

8.22 A suggested quality vision standard for amenity green space should therefore include elements of these aspirations to meet the needs of the public.
8.23 This recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing amenity green space to achieve in terms of enhancement. In particular, the Mersey Road River Front Area should be considered as an example of good practice.

**SUGGESTED QUALITY VISION**

‘an individual green space site that enhances the appearance of the local environment and offers opportunity for recreation through high levels of maintenance and provision of shrubs. Larger amenity spaces should also contain footpaths’

**Accessibility**

8.24 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards.

8.25 Site visits rated access to amenity green spaces across the borough as reasonable with an average score of 53%. Mersey Road Riverfront was considered to be the most accessible site, with a total of 83%.

8.26 On the whole from those residents who selected amenity green spaces as the type of open space they used most, fewer people were very satisfied or satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance in comparison to other types of open space. 26% of respondents were dissatisfied with the signage to and at the amenity green space. This potentially reflects the nature of amenity green space, much of which is not of sufficient size to require signage.

8.27 From the household survey the general perception is that a travel time of a 5-minute walk time is reasonable in 5 of the 7 analysis areas and 10 minutes in the other 2 areas. This suggests that this type of open space should be relatively local to residents.

**Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas**

8.28 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

8.29 Few respondents stated that amenity green space was the type of open space they used most frequently. This suggests these open spaces may have a more visual benefit rather than an actual functional usage benefit to the local community. Functions of amenity green space can vary, and in addition to a visual benefit, many can serve as informal play areas or kickabout areas.

8.30 Overall, there are only minor quantitative deficiencies within the borough of amenity green space. Despite this, the catchment map demonstrates the overall impression that there are a number of areas which are not within the catchment area of amenity green space. The quality of these spaces that appears also to be an issue, primarily relating to the lack of provision of seating.

8.31 The residential areas located outside of an acceptable catchment area are:

- Farnworth (north west area forum 3)
- Parts of Hale (southern area of area forum one)
- Preston Brook
- Daresbury.

8.32 Residents in Preston Brook in particular have access to the linear open space / green corridor running alongside the weir which may compensate for the lack of amenity greenspace.

8.33 In quantitative terms there are shortfalls particularly in the Widnes area, reflected by the lack of access to sites in parts of area forums one, two and three. Area forums three (containing the Farnworth area) and one (containing Hale) should be considered priority for further analysis as these areas contain both the largest deficiencies numerically and the largest proportion of residents outside of a catchment area. There are also issues in accessibility in area forum 7 although there is a small quantitative surplus. It is therefore important to consider the location of sites within this area.

8.34 Perhaps surprisingly, the highest quantitative surplus occurs in area five, where there are some areas outside the acceptable catchment area. Further investigation into these areas should be undertaken as there is potentially a number of sites within a small geographical area. This would offer the opportunity for redesignation of sites and enable some unmet demand to be met. Some parts of area forum five are outside of the catchment for an allotment facility for example.
Map 8.1 – Deficiencies of Provision of Amenity Green Space - Widnes
Map 8.2 – Deficiencies of Provision of Amenity Green Space - Runcorn

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office (C) Crown Copyright. Map Scale 1:10000.

Halton Borough Council – Open Space Study
8.35 Amenity green spaces are complemented by the linear greenspaces (discussed within the green corridors section) many of which have similar functions to amenity green space although they are linear in shape. When these linear open spaces are overlaid with existing amenity green spaces, there are few gaps in provision.

8.36 Similarly, many outdoor sports facilities, where formal sport is the primary purpose provide the function of amenity green space in areas where is limited amenity green space and this must be taken into account within this analysis. While this should not necessarily be encouraged (as it can frequently result in dog fouling on important pitch sites) this can offset deficiencies of this type of open space. While there are playing pitches located in areas of quantitative deficiency, many are located on secure sites and are therefore not accessible to the public.

**Value assessment – Identifying Specific Sites**

8.37 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning for open space. This can be done simply through comparing value with quality or more detailed in assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.

8.38 It is thought that amenity green space is used less frequently than other types of open space, although it also has wider benefits in terms of visual amenity and a sense of place. Amenity green space also frequently provides informal recreation.

8.39 As a result of the informal nature of the majority of amenity green space, levels of usage are unclear. It is suggested that further investigation is undertaken on usage in order that the value of specific sites can be ascertained. In particular consultation has suggested that smaller sites are of little value.

**Summary**

8.40 The quality of amenity green space is good, although the main concerns centre around security, furniture and structures. Household surveys indicate that there are also issues with litter, antisocial behaviour and graffiti.

8.41 The key areas for improvement highlighted through the site visits include:

- amenity green spaces generally would benefit from the addition of sensitively located highlight plants such as flowering shrubs and seasonal bulbs to add visual interest and to enliven often quite monotonous spaces and/or corridors
- safety is often poor in these spaces – lighting should be considered for those spaces that may be used after dark
- increased usage of amenity greenspaces might be encouraged through more regular management and maintenance to ensure removal of rubbish, grass clippings and weeds
- many of the greenspaces could benefit from strategically located seating and other additional co-ordinated street furniture.

8.42 Area forum three (containing the Farnworth area) should be considered priority for further analysis as this area contains both the largest deficiency numerically and the largest proportion of residents outside of a catchment area. There are also issues of accessibility in area forum 7 despite the oversupply of provision.
Amenity green spaces are complemented by the linear greenspaces many of which have similar functions to amenity green space. When these linear open spaces are overlayed with existing amenity green spaces, there are few gaps.

Recommendations

- AGS 1 - Improve access to amenity green space in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- AGS 2 – Undertake further assessment into the use and value of amenity green space across the borough
- AGS 3 - Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- AGS 4 – Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new sites and improve existing sites
SECTION 9

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Provision for children and young people

Definition

9.1 This type of open space includes areas such as equipped play areas, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people.

Specific strategic context and consultations

9.2 Although the Council does not currently have a play strategy, it is clear that play areas are an important priority for the Council. In addition to a spread of outdoor children’s play areas, there are six indoor play centres within the borough.

9.3 A rolling programme of improvements and significant investment in play areas has been carried out during the past three years and the quality and frequency of maintenance of play areas within the borough has increased. There are now 14 LEAPs and two NEAP’s within the borough. The overall reduction in the number of play areas in the borough has been overshadowed by the increase in the quality and range of provision, a perception that was echoed through consultation.

9.4 Recent developments have included the provision of teenage shelters located around the borough. Consultation indicated that these facilities have been successful in removing teenagers both from streets and play areas intended for younger children although there is still perceived to be a shortfall of suitable provision for teenagers. In addition, the development of basketball areas and skate parks has already proved a success, and many younger consultees indicated that they were looking forward to the development of the site under the arches in Runcorn. The skate park located within Victoria Park is particularly well used and it was highlighted that there is a need for a similar facility in Runcorn.

9.5 The household survey reinforced the significance of play provision with 94% stating it to be important. Although almost half of respondents did not use this provision, 9% visited such sites daily.
SECTION NINE – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Setting provision standards

9.6 In setting local standards for the provision of children and young people there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs.

Quantity

9.7 From the audit, the current provision for children and young people is 8.22 hectares in total across the borough. The current provision for children and young people per 1,000 population therefore equates to 0.07 hectares per 1000 population. The full spread of provision and justification of the standards set can be found in Appendix E and F.

9.8 The main national standard for provision is the NPFA 6 acre standard which stipulates 2.43 ha of ‘playing space’ per 1,000 population, consisting of 0.81 ha per 1,000 population for children’s playing space.

9.9 The UDP states that the Council will aim to achieve an overall minimum standard for the borough of 0.8 hectares per 1000 population. This includes 0.3 hectares for equipped play space and 0.5 hectares for casual play. These are based on the six-acre standard.

9.10 68% of respondents stated that they felt the current provision for children and young people was not enough, whilst only 30% indicated they thought this particular provision was ‘about right’. There was not considered to be a surplus in any area. This opinion was reflected in the more qualitative consultation, particularly supporting the view that the deficiency is in provision for teenagers rather than younger children.

9.11 The UDP highlights significant deficiencies, although this is inclusive of unequipped play space. The plan states that all play areas should be protected from development.

9.12 The consultation therefore suggests that there is not enough provision for children and young people, and Halton was considered to be most deficient in this typology compared to other typologies.

9.13 The consultation therefore suggests that the local standard should be above current levels of provision. However consultation emphasised the importance of quality provision, hence it is more important to ensure the quality of sites than to gain new facilities. Similarly, it appears that larger play areas within larger strategic sites such as parks are more valued by the community than small neighbourhood sites. This should be taken into account when considering further provision.

Quality

9.14 LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs indicate some quality aspirations in terms of needing seating for adults, a varied range of equipment and teenager meeting places. There is however a need to set out what is meant by high quality in relation to the aspirations of the local Halton population.
9.15 Overall, site assessments for areas of children and young people in Halton conclude:

- the cleanliness and maintenance of areas for children and young people were rated the highest of all aspects for quality, scoring an average of 74%. Thus indicating that there are few problems with litter, dog fouling, maintenance and management. This was one of the highest scoring typologies, reflecting recent improvements

- footpaths, furniture’s and structures were rated the worst of all qualities with a score of 41% - this relates mainly to the quality of seating, range of facilities offered and footpaths, including condition and usage. This may imply that some play equipment is in need of renovation at some sites.

9.16 Scores relating to specific sites and site-specific details of potential areas for improvement can be found in appendix C and I. The highest scoring sites in total were Hough Green Park and Park Road Play Area.

9.17 Although the cleanliness and maintenance of play areas was on the whole good as illustrated above, the UDP highlights that the majority of play areas do not meet with NEAP, LEAP and LAP criteria. It is likely that this is a reflection of the low score discussed above for facilities.

9.18 Household surveys suggest that the key issues in this typology are litter and vandalism and graffiti. However although these were key in all area forums, they were only reported as minor problems and it appears that there are relatively few concerns with the quality of play areas, although it is important that equipment is closely monitored.

9.19 It appears that the main concerns relate to misuse of sites by teenagers, primarily caused by a deficiency in provision at this level. There have been a number of recent additions to provision in Halton including skateparks and shelters. It is hoped these will start to address this deficit.

9.20 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for the provision of children and young people were a clean and litter free, dog free area with toilets and facilities for young people.
9.21 A suggested quality vision should therefore include elements of these aspirations to meet the needs of the public, and also other local and national standards.

**SUGGESTED QUALITY VISION**

’a site providing a mix of well maintained formal equipment in a safe, secure and convenient location that is close to housing and includes clean, litter free and dog fouling free green space for more informal play’.

**Accessibility**

9.22 With regards to accessibility there are national standards for LAP’s, LEAP’s and NEAP’s. These are set out as follows:

- LAPs – aged 4-6 years; 1 minute walk or within 100 metres with a minimum area of 100m square. LAPs typically have no play equipment and therefore could be considered as amenity green space.
- LEAPs – aged a minimum of 5 years; minimum area of 400 square metres or within 5 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes
- NEAPs – aged a minimum of 8 years; minimum area of 1000 square metres and should be located within 15 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes.

9.23 There are no existing local accessibility standards. Halton’s UDP supports these standards and attaches great importance to the ease with which children can reach open space.

9.24 Site visits assessed a number of factors relating to the accessibility of sites and the average score was 57%, indicating that the accessibility of sites is reasonable.

9.25 Consultation has identified that a high proportion of people are satisfied with the access to play areas by foot, pushchairs or wheelchairs and by cycleways. 32% of respondents felt access to play areas by public transport was not applicable suggesting that access to play areas by public transport by is not important reinforcing points made during consultation that play areas should be a relatively local facility.

9.26 From the household survey, 75% of respondents are willing to walk up to 10 minutes to access play areas. This 10-minute walking time was consistent across all analysis areas and is in line with the national average standard for LEAP’s and NEAP’s. This supports consultation, which has indicated that residents of Halton are willing to travel outside their own neighbourhood to reach quality facilities.

9.27 Over 50% of respondents who use provision for young people and children as their main play space travel for 10 minutes or less at the present time.

**RECOMMENDED LOCAL ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD:**

‘10 minute walk time’

**Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas**

9.28 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.
9.29 Consultation suggests there are many deficiencies within the borough of provision for children and young people. However when making the analysis of applying quantity and accessibility standards the deficiencies are concentrated in specific areas.

9.30 Although there are quantitative deficiencies in play provision throughout the borough, maps 9.1 and 9.2 overleaf illustrate that the majority of the population is currently within acceptable catchments of a play area, suggesting that play areas are effectively geographically distributed across the borough. This is highlighted further on close examination, where it is revealed that the majority of area outside the catchment of a play area is industrial land.
Map 9.1 Deficiencies of Play Provision in Halton - Widnes
Map 9.1 Deficiencies of Play Provision in Halton - Runcorn
9.31 The specific residential areas with both a quantitative deficiency and lying outside the catchment of existing play areas are a high priority for new provision, (predominantly focused in areas 2 and 3 – Widnes. The Farnworth area is particularly without provision in addition to some residents in the eastern area of Widnes.

9.32 In addition, the majority of residents living within Area Panel 7 (Daresbury) are outside a catchment area. This is primarily a rural area however so it is less practical to provide facilities and there is less expectation. In addition, this is the only area within the borough where there is a small surplus of provision (0.02).

9.33 In other areas inside the catchment of existing sites but still with a quantitative deficiency (this is the case in most areas) there is a potential need to enhance the accessibility to existing sites and may also be a possible need for new provision - although what this provision should be investigated further through the development of a play strategy. It is likely that much of this deficiency is focused on the need for different play provision serving the needs of teenagers. The recent provision of ball park sites should also be considered as this may meet some of these needs.

**Value assessment – Identifying Specific Sites**

9.34 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning of future provision for children and young people. This can be done simply through comparing value with quality or more detailed in assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.

9.35 Sixteen sites have been highlighted as having high usage within Halton. Many of these sites are also of good quality and accessibility including:

- Victoria Gardens
- Hough Green Park
- Parker Street Playground
- Town Hall
- Heath Park
- Hale Park.

9.36 These sites are considered highly valuable sites for the community and need protecting.

9.37 Most sites with a low level of use have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. Only Victoria Park was considered to be of relatively poor quality but still sustains a high level of use.

9.38 There a number of sites sustaining a low level of use including:

- Linkway Play area, Off Boston Avenue - Grange
- Castner Avenue Play Area
- Littlebourne Park
9.39 These sites need further investigation to see whether the primary purpose of the open space is appropriate with low levels of usage. It is suggested that in the first instance, consideration is given to improving the quality and accessibility of these play areas. If this is not successful, it may be necessary to consider whether these sites could be redesignated in order to offset deficiencies in other types of provision.

9.40 Overall there are a reasonable number of sites which have low usage. Bearing in mind the overall perception that there is not enough provision for children and young people the investigation into why some sites have such low levels of usage is a high priority for future action.

Summary

9.41 The quality of play provision in Halton is high and cleanliness and maintenance of areas is particularly good. Footpaths, furniture’s and structures were rated the worst of all qualities with a score of 41% - this relates mainly to the quality of seating, range of facilities offered and footpaths, including condition and usage. This may imply that some play equipment is still in need of renovation.

9.42 The key areas identified for improvement through the site visits were:

• whilst many of the play areas within the Borough are tired, rundown and heavily used there are also recently refurbished play areas which generally work well and presently require no further capital expenditure. The siting and level and type of equipment provision within unsuccessful play areas should be reviewed.

• better provision for the improved security and supervision of the sites should be undertaken so that they are less vulnerable to abuse and children can play safely

• some of the play areas were very monotonous and could benefit from a wider range of play equipment

• the landscape setting of play areas could often be improved – there is a need to provide a richer palette of plant material, improve spatial enclosure and variation and to provide a visually richer landscape environment to provide a greater stimulus to the children

• security is sometimes poor in these spaces, lighting needs to be considered for those spaces that may be used after dark. Opportunities for incidental supervision is sometimes lacking rendering the play areas vulnerable to abuse.

9.43 Although there are quantitative deficiencies in all areas of the borough with the exception of Area Forum 7, the majority of residents are able to access to play provision within the recommended catchment indicating that provision is geographically well distributed. Demand for additional play facilities was evident in all consultation, although this focused primarily on facilities for teenagers. Although recent developments have taken place, further may be required.

9.44 The Farnworth area was identified as a priority for future development.
Recommendations

- PA1 - Improve access to play areas in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- PA2 – Consider redesignation of other types of open space in order to address levels of deficiency
- PA3 – Ensure that play areas highlighted above as highly valued are protected
- PA4 - Investigate reasons why some play areas have low use at present and improve the accessibility and quality where appropriate
- PA5 – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- PA6 – Produce a play strategy for the borough. This should include detailed investigation as to the balance of provision required between younger children and teenagers
- PA7 – Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites
SECTION 10

ALLOTMENTS
Allotments and community gardens

Definition

10.1 This includes all forms of allotments with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. This type of open space may also include urban farms.

Picture 10.1

Specific strategic context and consultations

10.2 Like other open space types, allotments can provide a number of wider benefits to the community as well as the primary use of growing produce. These include:

- bringing together different cultural backgrounds
- improving physical and mental health
- providing a source of recreation
- wider contribution to green and open space.

10.3 There are fifteen allotment sites currently within Halton providing a total of 283 plots. All sites are operating at 100% capacity at present and there is a minimum of one person on the waiting list at each site indicating that these sites are well used, albeit by a small proportion of the population.

10.4 Haddocks Wood Allotment site is considered to be the flagship facility for the borough, and consultation indicates that this should be considered an example of best practice. A strong and dedicated committee have developed the site to include CCTV an on site shop and a learning area and the allotment holders provide food for a community café. It is hoped that committees at other sites will develop in a similar manner to encourage the proactive development of allotment communities facilitated by Halton Borough Council.

10.5 Consultation highlighted that demand for allotments was relatively limited and is focused on small groups of people. The household survey revealed that opinion was
SECTION TEN – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

evenly split as to the level of importance attached to allotments, with 50% of respondents indicating that allotments are unimportant.

Setting provision standards

Quantity

10.6 In setting local standards for allotments there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided with Appendix F.

10.7 The audit of allotments highlights that there are 8.86 hectares in total across the borough. This equates to 0.08 hectares per 1000 population. The full spread of provision and justification of the standards set can be found in Appendix E and F.

10.8 National standards for allotments from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, who state 20 allotments per 1,000 households (ie 20 allotments per 2,200 people (2.2 per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. The 1969 Thorpe Report suggests 0.2 ha per 1,000 population.

10.9 Overall in the household survey more people suggested that levels of allotment provision were about right. 23% of respondents stated they had no opinion on the provision of allotments. Excluding these people, 52% of responses indicated that provision was about right, and 4% felt there to be a surplus. This suggests that there is sufficient provision.

10.10 It is recommended that a standard of 0.09 hectares per 1000 population is used as the local standard. Consultation has suggested that this standard is appropriate and it will extract deficiencies in particular areas of the borough.

10.11 It is however vital that research is undertaken on the demand for allotment at the time, as demand fluctuates, and all allotments are currently operating at 100% capacity. Similarly, if efforts are made to increase the demand for allotments it is likely that this standard will require adaptation.

Quality

10.12 There are no definitive national or local standards for the provision of allotments and community gardens.

10.13 Again, the quality of allotments sites was perceived to be relatively good and site assessments of seven allotment sites in the Borough indicate that:

- the cleanliness and maintenance of allotment sites in Halton is impeccable with an impressive score of 73% for all sites assessed
- spatial qualities were also reasonable with an average score of 58%, suggesting the spatial variation, sense of enclosure and overall condition of the allotments are good
- the main area of weakness in the assessment was the footpaths, furniture and structures with a score of 31%. This mainly accounted for the lack of seats, poor information and signage and a lack of facilities at the various sites.
SECTION TEN – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

10.14 The scores relating to each of the specific sites assessed, as well as site specific details with areas and suggestions for potential improvement can be found in appendix C and I. The highest scoring allotment sites were Avondale Road Allotments and Haddocks Wood Allotments.

Example of good practice – Avondale Road Allotments

Avondale allotments are well-used and is a valuable site within the Borough

Key positive attributes of the site:
- security fencing and sturdy gates
- there appears to be a high active take up of plots
- the mature screening vegetation to the railway line
- each individual plot looks well tended and they all have their own 6ft high fencing surrounding them

10.15 Through the household consultation there were few responses directly relating to allotments, nevertheless, it was indicated that the main problems were vandalism and anti-social behaviour – considered as significant problems. There were no problems with dog fouling, noises and smell. The issue of vandalism and graffiti also emerged as significantly problematic during qualitative consultation.

10.16 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for allotments and community gardens were well kept grass, clean and litter free, access to and within the site, information boards and toilets. In addition, access to water and the provision of CCTV was also considered important.

10.17 It is important that any qualitative standard for the borough reflects these aspirations and visions raised during other consultation in addition to any local and national standards

SUGGESTED QUALITY VISION
‘a site that encourages sustainable development, bio-diversity, healthy living and education objectives with appropriate ancillary facilities to meet local needs, including individual allotment sheds and clearly marked allotment pathways and allotment plots. Sites should be clean and litter free and protected from damage by CCTV where possible’.

10.18 This recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also acts as a benchmark for existing allotment sites.

Accessibility

10.19 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards for this type of open space.
10.20 The accessibility of allotments was considered to be relatively low in comparison to other open space types. The highest scoring site was Haddocks Wood Allotments, which was given a score of 54%. However the average score was only 46%. This indicates that the accessibility of allotments is an area for improvement.

10.21 Through the consultation and household survey, of those residents who selected allotments as the type of open space they used the most, 80% respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance to their allotments. Access by walking was considered very satisfactory by 60% and only 2 out of the five respondents rated access by cycle, public transport and wheelchairs as poor suggesting that accessibility of allotments is not as problematic as site visits may suggest.

10.22 Residents in 6 out of the 7 analysis areas indicated that walking was the preferred method of reaching allotment sites. 75% of those people who responded suggested walking 20 minutes as reasonable. In the other analysis area driving to allotments was considered more popular. The reliance on foot is perhaps surprising, given that many allotment users frequently transport equipment to the site.

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

10.23 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

10.24 Consultation suggests there maybe a limited demand for this type of open space from the general public, although all allotment sites are currently operating at full capacity with waiting lists.

10.25 When analysing the application of quantity and accessibility standards it is clear that the deficiencies and lack of access correlate as shown in Map 10. 1. These are:

- Area forum Four
- Area forum five south and eastern areas (in particular Murdishaw and Norton areas)
- Area forum one - Hale
- Analysis area seven Preston Brook and Daresbury. There is limited access to allotments within the specified catchment for people living in this area although there is an oversupply of provision.
SECTION TEN – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Map 10.1 – Catchment areas for allotments – Widnes

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty’s Stationery Office (Crown Copyright, Map Scale 1:10,560).
Map 10.2 – Catchment areas for allotments - Runcorn
10.26 However allotments are a demand-led open space type i.e. there is little purpose in providing allotments in these areas if there is no demand for them. Therefore it is recommended further investigation be undertaken into the demand for allotments specifically in these areas and across the borough.

10.27 In the event there is demand there is a surplus of natural and semi-natural open space in area seven, and a small surplus of amenity green space in area five and therefore potential to use part of such areas for the provision of new allotments.

Value assessment – Identifying Specific Sites

10.28 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning. This can be done simply through comparing value with quality or more detailed in assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.

10.29 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. However there are deviations to this, which suggests that these sites would need some further analysis.

10.30 Although usage of all allotment sites is high, the quality and accessibility of these sites is amongst the lowest of all open space sites in the borough. As a result of the high levels of use, all site are valuable and require protection. In particular, sites with low quality and accessibility but high usage include:

* Heath Road
* Halton View
* Lancaster Road.

10.31 Priority should be given to accessibility and quality improvements. Accessibility is particularly important in encouraging more residents of the borough to use allotment sites. In addition, it is important to ensure that the quality of all sites within the borough is sufficient to meet the expectations of the local community.

Summary

10.32 When analysing the application of quantity and accessibility standards it is clear that quantitative deficiencies and lack of access directly correlate. Priority areas are:

* Area Forum Four
* Area Forum One - Hale
* Area Forum Five – south and eastern areas (in particular Murdishaw and Norton areas)
* Area Forum Seven - Preston Brook and Daresbury. There is limited access to allotments within the specified catchment for people living in this area.

10.33 As allotments are primarily demand led, further investigation should be undertaken into these deficiencies. It may be appropriate to redesignate other sites in these areas where there is an oversupply.

10.34 The quality of allotments is relatively good, with the main area of weakness being footpaths, furniture and structures mainly accounted for the lack of seats, poor information and signage and a lack of facilities at the various sites.
10.35 The key areas for improvement arising from the site visits include:

- Allotment sites would benefit from a cohesive planted/fenced (e.g. maintained hedge) perimeter around their site areas.
- The allotments would benefit from better access and parking facilities.
- Need to ensure that plots are not left derelict and that they do not become overgrown with weeds and pioneer vegetation.

Recommendations

- AG1 - Improve access to allotments in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- AG2 – Protect allotment sites from development – replace any allotment sites developed on and ensure there is no net loss – these sites are highly valued and are currently operating at 100% capacity
- AG3 – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- AG4 – Produce a detailed allotments strategy outlining detailed action plans for each allotment site including appropriate performance indicators
- AG5 – Continue to encourage the development of community management groups at each allotment site. The Council should facilitate this development.
- AG6 - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites
SECTION 11

CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS
Cemeteries and churchyards

Definition

11.1 Churchyards are encompassed within the walled boundary of a church and cemeteries are burial grounds outside the confines of a church. These include private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and disused churchyards. The primary purpose of this type of open space is for burial of the dead and quiet contemplation but also for the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Specific strategic context and consultations

Conservation importance

11.2 Cemeteries and churchyards can be a significant open space provider in some areas particularly in rural areas. In other areas they can represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land, but are able to provide areas of nature conservation importance. Some churchyards retain areas of unimproved grasslands and other various habitats.

11.3 They can make a significant contribution to the provision of urban green space sometimes providing a sanctuary for wildlife in urban areas devoid of greenspace.

11.4 Although many have restricted access they still provide a useful resource for the local community. A wide variety of habitats can be often be found supporting the other open space types such as areas of semi-natural and natural areas.

11.5 Within urban areas, churchyards are often among the few areas of greenspace where the local community is able to have some contact with the natural world.

11.6 Although over 70% of respondents indicated that cemeteries and churchyards are important, this one was one of the less frequently used types of open space.
SECTION ELEVEN – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

**Quantity**

11.7 No quantity standards are to be set for cemeteries and churchyards. PPG17 Annex states "many historic churchyards provide important places for quiet contemplation, especially in busy urban areas, and often support biodiversity and interesting geological features. As such many can also be viewed as amenity green spaces. Unfortunately many are also run down and therefore it may be desirable to enhance them. As churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard required is a qualitative one."

11.8 For cemeteries PPG17 states “every individual cemetery has a finite capacity and therefore there is a steady need for more of them. Indeed, many areas face a shortage of ground for burials. The need for graves, for all religious faiths can be calculated from population estimated coupled with details of the average proportion of deaths, which result in a burial and converted into a quantitative population-based provision standard. This does not related to a quantitative hectare requirement.

**Quality**

11.9 There are no definitive national or local standards for the quality of cemeteries and churchyards.

11.10 No site visits were undertaken to cemeteries within the borough however consultation has indicated that there are few issues with the quality of cemeteries and there are few complaints. The majority of complaints relate to grounds maintenance issues such as grass cutting remaining on the gravestones.

11.11 The consultation and household questionnaires illustrated the highest rated aspirations for cemeteries were well kept grass, clean and litter free, clear footpaths, flowers, trees and shrubs, toilets and access within the site.

11.12 The quality vision standard should therefore take these factors into consideration.

**Accessibility**

11.13 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards. At the request of the Council, no site visits were undertaken to cemetery or churchyard sites.

11.14 Through the consultation and household survey, of those residents who selected cemeteries and churchyards as the type of open space they used most, the majority were satisfied or more than satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance, the accessibility by foot and access by cycles, pushchairs and wheelchairs.

11.15 Only small numbers of people were dissatisfied with the access by wheelchairs and pushchairs and by cycleways.

11.16 Only two of the people who selected this type of open space expressed concerns over the opening times and signage.

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**SUGGESTED QUALITY VISION**

’a well maintained, clean site with long term burial capacity, provision of seating areas and varied vegetation that provides sanctuary for wildlife in areas devoid of green space and one that encompasses bio-diversity’. The site should include clear well defined footpaths’
11.17 There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such typologies as they cannot easily be influenced through planning policy and implementation.

**Value assessment**

11.18 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.

11.19 Consultation indicated that all cemeteries are highly valued in Halton at present, primarily as a result of the shortage of provision, but also as a result of the high quality of these sites.

**Recommendations**

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<td><strong>CC 1</strong> – Undertake detailed site assessments on cemeteries and churchyards in order to ascertain any quality and or accessibility issues</td>
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<td><strong>CC 2</strong> – Conduct more detailed work regarding the supply of cemetery space compared to death rates and any expected rises over the next five to ten years</td>
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<td><strong>CC3</strong> - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites</td>
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SECTION 12
GREEN CORRIDORS
Green corridors

Definition

12.1 This open space type includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines with the primary purpose to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel and opportunities for wildlife migration.

12.2 In addition, Halton has a number of green spaces which were defined as linear open spaces. Although some of these are large in area and also have amenity green space and natural and semi natural functions, they link up green spaces within the borough and linkways to amenities. These linear green spaces have been digitised and should be overlaid with the public rights of way network to see the linkages between open spaces.

PPG17 – the role of green corridors

12.3 With regards to green corridors the emphasis of PPG17 appears to be on urban areas. It uses the typology from the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce Report that is an ‘urban typology’.

12.4 Furthermore, elements of PPG17 are contradictory with the companion guide on this issue, where despite PPG17 suggesting that all corridors, including those in remote rural settlements should be included, the Companion Guide insinuates that unless a green corridor is used as a transport link between facilities i.e. home and school, town and sports facility etc, it should not be included within an audit.

12.5 Linear green spaces play an important role in Halton in terms of their roles as green and wildlife corridors, in addition to their wider roles as amenity green spaces and natural and semi natural spaces. Although they are measured in area (typically green corridors would be measured as a length) they have been assessed as green corridors. Despite this, in many senses they are amenity green spaces. It is important that their presence is also taken into account when considering the provision of amenity green space and natural and semi natural open spaces.
Local context

12.6 A cycling strategy for Cheshire was published during 1998 which indicated that cycling is not currently fulfilling it's potential in Cheshire.

It identified several reasons including:

- the dedicated cycle network and specific provision for cyclists at junctions is limited;
- cyclists have to compete for road space, within increasingly congested and polluted traffic routes, at considerable risk;
- facilities for secure cycle parking at major destinations are limited; and
- facilities for interchange with other modes (eg: rail, bus) are limited.

12.7 The strategy plans to implement a number of routes over the next five years within Cheshire, including within Halton in order to address the lack of cycling activity within the area.

12.8 It is likely that the Mersey Forest will be a target site for the development of green corridors and cycle networks.

12.9 Halton’s Greenway Network is made up of proposed and potential off-road routes for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horse riding, connecting people to facilities and greenspaces in and around the urban area and to the countryside.

12.10 Halton Borough Council have also developed a walking strategy as part of their local transport planning work, and work is also underway to develop greenways, which will link urban areas with the countryside.

12.11 The Council are currently working towards the production of leaflets illustrating public rights of way within the borough. This will be an important step towards the achievement of targets outlined in Sport England’s Game Plan.

Setting provision standards

Quantity

12.12 There is a vast network of green corridors within Halton. In addition to the public rights of way network, covering both the more urban and rural areas there is also a large number of linear open spaces, which serve the purpose of green corridors. These linear green spaces amount to a total of 173.6 hectares and supplement existing amenity greenspace and natural and semi natural provision.

12.13 The Annex A of PPG17 – Open Space Typology states:

“the need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas. This means that there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard, just as there is no way of having a standard for the proportion of land in an area which it will be desirable to allocate for roads. “

12.14 It is therefore recommended that no provision standard should be set. PPG17 goes onto to state that:
“instead planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans national cycle network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities. In this sense green corridors are demand-led. However, planning authorities should also take opportunities to use established linear routes, such as disused railway lines, roads or canal and river banks, as green corridors, and supplement them by proposals to ‘plug in’ access to them from as wide an area as possible”

12.15 Linear open spaces are also important wildlife corridors within the borough.

12.16 Green corridors represent an important chance to link urban and rural areas, and to promote transport by cycle and walking. Many of the linear greenspaces link different housing estates together.

12.17 41% of respondents to the household questionnaire indicated that there is currently insufficient provision of green corridors, however 42% felt that provision levels were currently about right. Green corridors were considered to be important by 95% of respondents.

Quality

12.18 There are no real national standards for green corridors although the Countryside Agency does suggest that what the user should expect to find is:

i) a path provided by the protection and reinforcement of existing vegetation;

ii) ground not soft enough to allow a horse or cycle to sink into it;

iii) a path on un-vegetated natural surfaces

12.19 Overall, the quality of linear greenspaces within the borough is relatively good, particularly in terms of the cleanliness and maintenance and vegetation (63% and 64% on average). The level of security and safety is considered to be sufficiently lower, scoring only 33%. This indicates that this area is the main focus for improvement in green corridors. It is important to note that a lack of sense of security may reduce the numbers of people using green corridors for walking and cycling, and consequently may impact on the Council’s ability to achieve targets outlined in the Government document ‘Game Plan’.

12.20 The spatial qualities of green corridors were relatively good on the whole, although a score of 59% on average indicates that there are potential areas for improvement. Full details of assessments on a site-by-site basis can be found in appendices C and I.

Examples of good practice – Halton Brow Mounds

It is an area of linear open space with a good mix of sunny and shaded areas within the tree structure, acting as a landscape buffer between residential housing and the central expressway (A533). This area is an excellent example of a linear green space which also serves an amenity green space function.
12.21 The consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations were the quality of green corridors were clean and litter free, well kept grass, clear footpaths and the presence of flowers and shrubs.

12.22 A suggested quality vision standard should therefore take into account these issues in order to sufficiently address the needs of the local community.

12.23 Overall, site assessments of green corridors in Halton indicate that:

- cleanliness and maintenance were scored fairly high, amounting to an overall average of 64%, indicating that the footpaths, towpaths etc. are well-kept and in general good condition
- total vegetation, including planted areas and grassed areas also scored well, with an average of 63%
- areas of weakness included security and spaces (33%) and footpaths, furniture and structures (30%). In many of these linear greenspaces, provision of seating etc would be inappropriate.

12.24 This indicates that security and safety is the main focus for improvement in green corridors. It is important to note that a lack of sense of security may reduce the numbers of people using green corridors for walking and cycling, and consequently may impact on the Council’s ability to achieve targets outlined in the Government document ‘Game Plan’.

12.25 Scores relating to specific sites and site-specific details of potential areas for improvement can be found in each site sheet. The highest scoring site in total was Halton Brow Mounds, highlighted above as an example of good practice.

12.26 Household surveys indicated that litter was a significant problem (47% of all respondents), and vandalism and graffiti was considered to be a minor problem.

**Accessibility**

12.27 There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such an open space typology as they cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation and are very much opportunity-led rather than demand-led. In addition, these spaces aim to provide a network across the borough complementing the rights of way network.
SECTION TWELVE – GREEN CORRIDORS

Links with Health Agenda

12.28 Green corridors represent an important chance to link open spaces within the urban area and to promote transport by cycle and walking. These opportunities for informal recreation will help towards keeping the public active and improving health within the local area.

12.29 The latest government plan published by the Department for Transport and entitled “Walking and Cycling: an action plan” states:

“Walking and cycling are good for our health, good for getting us around, good for our public spaces and good for our society. For all these reasons we need to persuade more people to choose to walk and cycle more often”

12.30 Therefore it is important to consider the “Greenway Network” capitalising on any opportunities to increase and enhance the existing network, promoting healthy commuting to work and school and encouraging more people to walk or cycle in their leisure time.

Identifying geographical deficiencies

12.31 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards it is also not appropriate to state areas of deficiency or need.

12.32 The aim is to provide an integrated network of high quality green corridors linking open spaces together and opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport.

Summary

12.33 Provision of green corridors in Halton are clearly well valued, therefore opportunities for further development of green corridors where there is demand should be taken. It is likely that a large proportion of future provision will need to be opportunity led.

12.34 The quality of green corridors is good although again, the level of security and safety at these sites is an area of concern. The key areas highlighted for improvement from the site visits are:

- green corridors would benefit from the introduction of focal points to add visual interest and variety. This could include informal groupings of specimen trees/shrubs, drifts of bulbs and/or the introduction of wildflower mixes into areas of poorer quality soil.

- a number of the sites contain Japanese knot weed. This plant is exceptionally invasive and should be eradicated.

- the green corridors generally would benefit from a considered review (and redesign) so as to better relate them to adjoining areas of housing and other land use (where appropriate).

- safety and security is often poor in these spaces, lighting should be considered.

- more regular spraying out of weed growth from footpaths would be beneficial.
12.35 Green corridors complement other types of open space and contribute to the network of open spaces and opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport. They have important links with the wider health agenda. When looking in depth at specific areas, linear green spaces should be linked with natural and semi natural areas and amenity greenspaces.

Recommendations

- GC1 - the Council should work to increase awareness of these green links through a targeted marketing campaign
- GC2 – Improvements should focus on security and safety and individual opportunities identified for each site assessed
- GC3 - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites
SECTION 13
OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES
Outdoor sports facilities

Definition

13.1 Outdoor Sports Facilities is a wide-ranging category of open space and includes natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens and golf courses with the primary purpose of participation in outdoor sports.

Picture 13.1

Strategic context and consultations

13.2 88% of respondents indicated that outdoor sports facilities were important. This was also reflected in the findings of the playing pitch strategy, where there were high numbers of clubs in the borough wanting to use outdoor sports facilities.

13.3 It is perceived that many outdoor sports facilities also serve as amenity green spaces, particularly for dog walking. Pitches frequently used in the borough include Heath Park, Pavilions, Wilmere Lane and Prescott Road. There are also a number of informal kickabout goalmouths located on amenity greenspace sites.

13.4 The Halton Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy made the following observations regarding pitch provision in Halton:

- there is an apparent oversupply of adult pitches which contrasts with significant levels of undersupply in junior pitches. This situation is evident in both rugby and football
- there is significant potential for the provision of excellent quality sports pitches within Halton, and many of the pitches are already of good quality. There is a good level of satisfaction with the pitches by users
- some teams use school pitches through ‘informal’ agreements
- there are particular issues regarding the lack of training facilities within the borough – this may have an impact on open space provision as it may be that some types of green space serve as informal outdoors provision
- participation is high within the borough and this is likely to continue to increase in the foreseeable future. Participation in junior sports is particularly promising.
13.5 The Local Plan also recognises the significance of playing fields and sports pitches and indicates that they will normally be protected from development because of their recreational value. Planning permission on existing sites would only be granted if:

- the proposals are in association with the use of the land for recreation; or
- sports and recreation facilities on the site can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site; or
- suitable alternative facilities are provided in the locality; and
- the development is in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding area.

13.6 There are no athletics tracks located within Halton Borough Council at present, hence residents must travel outside the borough boundaries. There are however a number of tennis court and bowling sites within the borough. Access to all of these facilities is free of charge and it is thought that these facilities offer an important opportunity for residents of the borough. Consultation indicates that these facilities are well used and well supported by the local community. It was however indicated through consultation that a number of local children felt that they had insufficient local access to areas suitable for outdoor sports.

13.7 The ski slope which borders Town Park in Runcorn offers an additional attraction both to residents and for visitors to the borough travelling further afield.

13.8 There are four golf courses within Halton Borough. Facilities at Widnes Golf Club are now considered to be inadequate for an 18-hole golf course and the club is hoping to relocate to the edge of Widnes in order to improve these facilities. Although some of the existing golf course site would be developed for public open space, it is proposed that the remainder would be available as public open space within Widnes. Should this proposal be accepted, the findings of this strategy could inform the selection of the most appropriate land use for the site.

Setting standards

13.9 In setting local standards for outdoor sports facilities there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other Local Authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs.

13.10 However a quantity standard for this typology is set for broad planning need only as its application for surplus and deficiencies would be meaningless considering its wide ranging context from golf courses to bowling greens.

Quantity

13.11 The current provision of outdoor sports facilities indicates 393.31 hectares in total across the borough. The current provision of outdoor sports facilities per 1,000 population is therefore 3.33 hectares per 1000 population. This includes playing pitches on school sites which are not available to the public.

13.12 In addition, this also includes golf courses, the ski slope and a number of bowling greens, unlike many other types of open space, public opinion identifies relatively strongly that there is perceived to be a deficit of open space provision – 62% of respondents to the household survey felt there to be insufficient provision within the
borough. This may potentially be a reflection on the level of community access to pitches such as school sites, rather than total provision as identified within the playing pitch strategy.

13.13 Additionally, this may suggest some location and specific sport deficiencies, which is supported by the more qualitative consultation. The full spread of provision can be found in appendix E. There a number of multi use games areas within Halton. These are highly used and also permit informal activity for young people and children.

13.14 The definitive national standard for outdoor sports facilities is the NPFA’s 6-acre standard, 2.43 ha per 1,000 population. This includes pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens, tennis courts, training areas and croquet lawns.

13.15 It is suggested that any standard follows this pattern and excludes golf courses. This therefore reduces supply by 106 hectares to 287, equivalent to 2.43 hectares per 1000 population. A standard of 2.75 hectares per population could therefore be set, increasing provision slightly in line with public aspirations. Much of the perceived deficiency could however be offset by enhancing the accessibility of existing sites.

**Quality**

13.16 The NPFA suggests benchmarks for the quality of this type of open space, these include criteria such as gradients, orientation, ancillary accommodation, planting and community safety. Many of these factors were assessed using the Sport England Playing Pitch Methodology for the playing pitch strategy. Full pitch assessments are available in a separate document.

13.17 There is no local standard for the quality of outdoor sports facilities, although one of the objectives of the playing pitch strategy is to enhance the quality of the pitches in the borough.

### Example of good practice – Ford Recreation Ground

Within this very well-maintained sports club there is a very clear identity and it feels safe to use and interact with the space – there is also a diverse range of sports facilities available.

**Key positive attributes of the site:**

- well maintained bowling green and football pitch
- pavilion and terraces for the pitch
- the site is secure and locked up at night
- picnic tables and benches
- ample clean and tidy parking spaces

13.18 Overall, site assessments for outdoor sports facilities relating specifically to quality were rated very highly. These refer to the site as a whole, rather than the more technical elements required for pitch sports, which are assessed as part of the pitch strategy. The key messages from site visits are:
• an average score of 77% for cleanliness and maintenance was given for the 10 sites assessed, suggesting that the majority of sites were free of litter, vandalism and dog fouling and are generally well maintained. This was the highest average of all typologies.

• spatial qualities were also good with an average with a score of 69%, with specific reference to enclosure, security and visual reference being highly regarded throughout these sites

• total security and safety, footpaths, furniture and structures both scored average of 58% indicating that this is the main area for improvement.

13.19 Scores relating to specific sites and site-specific details of potential areas for improvement can be found in each site sheet. The highest scoring sites in total were Ford Recreation Ground and Hough Green Park.

13.20 Pitch assessments taking into account the quality of the pitch for the purpose of sport were also undertaken. Although pitch quality varied, on the whole conditions were good with the main issues concerning line marking, grass cutting, drainage and ancillary facilities.

13.21 Consultation through the household survey highlighted vandalism and graffiti as the main problems with outdoor sports facilities in the Borough of Halton. This was perhaps surprising, as very little vandalism and graffiti was found during site visits to playing pitches.

13.22 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for outdoor sports facilities were well kept and maintained grass, clean and litter free, good level and good drainage, toilets, quality soils, access within the site and information boards.

13.23 A suggested quality vision for outdoor sports facilities should therefore include elements of these aspirations to meet the needs of the public, and also other local and national standards. This recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing outdoor sports facilities to achieve in terms of enhancement.

**SUGGESTED QUALITY VISION**

‘a comprehensively well planned sports facility site, which is well drained with good quality surfaces, appropriate ancillary accommodation including changing facilities and car parking and toilets, good signage and access to and within the site and varied landscaping’.

**Accessibility**

13.24 With regards to accessibility there are also no definitive national or local standards for outdoor sports facilities.

13.25 Sites visits indicated that outdoor sports facilities are relatively accessible in terms of their paths, signage etc. With an average of 79%, they are the most accessible facility type in the borough.

13.26 Through the consultation and household survey, of those residents who selected outdoor sports facilities as their most frequently used type of open space, a significant number of people were either very satisfied or satisfied with the visibility of the site
entrance, the accessibility by foot, cycles, pushchairs and wheelchairs. Then opening times and signage were also considered satisfactory.

13.27 It must however be noted that in terms of overall access to the public, a number of outdoor sports facilities, primarily those on school sites are inaccessible. None of these were assessed. Accessibility in this sense is therefore poor.

13.28 48% of respondents to the household survey indicated that a walking time of 15 minutes is reasonable. This is symptomatic of the nature of the borough, which is relatively compact with many localised facilities.

Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas

13.29 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

13.30 As indicated in the consultation section and through the playing pitch strategy, the Council has a good level of provision, although some sport specific deficiencies remain. Although there are no athletics tracks within the borough, no demand was identified during consultation. There are few tennis courts but again no additional demand was identified.

13.31 However it is recommended that further investigation is undertaken along with a specific sports facility strategy. The open space typology is very broad from golf courses to tennis courts. Specific studies on each facility type will enable surplus and deficiencies to be identified more accurately in accordance with the local needs and would complement the existing playing pitch strategy.

Value assessment – Identifying specific sites

13.32 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning. This can be done simply through comparing value with quality or more detailed in assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.

13.33 The popularity and value of outdoor sports facilities with Halton is clear and few sites have low usage. This suggests outdoor sports facilities have a vital role to play within the borough. This is influenced by the free hire policy for juniors, which encourages active recreation.

13.34 There are a number of sites, which have high quality and accessibility and are combined with a high level of usage. These sites include all of the community use playing fields and golf courses. The level of use on tennis courts, as a result of the play for free policy is unknown, however there has been no further demand for facilities.

13.35 Despite the high usage and quality of many sites many outdoor sports facilities have low or no accessibility to the local community. This was also highlighted in the playing pitch strategy. These sites need the accessibility issues addressing as a matter of priority in order to maintain levels of usage and prevent overuse of accessible pitches. Priorities include:
SECTION THIRTEEN – OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

- Hale C of E School
- Weston Point School
- Fairfield High School
- St Mary’s School
- St Augustines RC Primary School
- St John Fisher Primary School
- St Michaels Primary School
- St Basils Primary School
- The Heath High School

13.36 In addition to pitches, it is also important to highlight the value of other sites such as golf courses, tennis courts and the ski slope. All of these are valued amenities within Halton.

Summary

13.37 The quality of outdoor sports facilities was good both in terms of the landscape qualities and also in terms of the degree the site is fit for purpose. Although there are some quality concerns outlined in the playing pitch strategy, it is considered overall that Halton Borough Council has an opportunity to provide excellent standard pitch provision.

13.38 From the site visits and a landscape perspective, the key areas for improvement to outdoor sports facilities include:

- outdoor sports facilities generally have a reasonable landscape setting. However, equipment is often worn, tired and in need of maintenance and/or replacement. Goalmouths are commonly in need of repair.
- site visits suggested that some of the playing fields would benefit from remedial drainage works and/or gentle regrading.
- consideration should be given to including some seating provision around some of the more intensively used sports facilities.
- outdoor sports facilities generally would benefit from a visually richer and more attractive landscape setting – consideration should be given to incorporating areas of highlight tree and shrub planting. Much of the existing landscape structure is very monotonous.

13.39 Accessibility is the primary problem with outdoor sports provision in Halton. There are a number of facilities at school sites that are currently unavailable for use by the Community. Access to tennis courts is however excellent as there are no charges for such facilities.

13.40 Although it is considered inappropriate to set an overarching quantity standard, a pitch sport specific standard has been specified in the playing pitch strategy. Other outdoor
sports facilities should be assessed on a demand led opportunity basis although a standard is suggested for planning purposes.

Recommendations

- **OSF 1** – The quality and accessibility standards highlighted should be adopted. Quantitative calculations should be sport specific and detailed work should be undertaken to produce appropriate figures. This may include the production of a sports specific facility strategy

- **OSF 2** – More development work should be undertaken to set up formal community use agreements with local schools, particularly for sports pitches

- **OSF 3** – Work should be undertaken to access potential resources for facility improvements

- **OSF 4** - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites
SECTION 14

RESOURCING OPEN SPACE
Resourcing open space

Introduction

14.1 Budgets for both the enhancement and maintenance of open spaces has been reduced nationally and priorities for the management and maintenance of open space in Halton are under constant review.

14.2 The report by the Urban Green Space Taskforce “Green Spaces Better Places” highlights the challenge faced by local authorities in the face of increasing demand from other public service areas and suggests that in future years authorities will find it impossible to generate the capital investment required. It is therefore suggested that the most effective form of funding to improve the quality of parks and public spaces is through capital funding external from Council budgets delivered through successful partnership working and targeting the areas that are most in need.

14.3 CABE Space make the point within their 'manifesto' that:

- a strategic vision is essential
- political commitment is essential
- and to start by making the case for high quality green spaces in-house (persuading other departments is key – high priority)

14.4 This will be essential to gain any financial support (both internally and externally) for any improvements to existing provision or new provision.

Sustainability of funding

14.5 There is a high risk of services becoming dependent upon external funds that cannot be guaranteed in the future. Although this increased dependence helps to increase opportunities, there are serious concerns in the event of funding applications being unsuccessful. This would mean a reduction in opportunities for local people, having raised their expectations.

14.6 There is a significant risk that, without a clear strategy based upon thorough assessments, short-term budget reductions could damage the Council’s ability to deliver long-term improvement.

Decisions

14.7 Should the general standard of maintenance be reduced across all types of open space or should there be wider differential maintenance regimes between the different categories of open space? What is the ideal balance? How successful have recent prioritisation activities been in Halton? Initial outcomes from consultation indicate that prioritisation of sites in Halton has been very successful.

14.8 Can the Council sell open space land to improve maintenance budgets whilst still meeting any recommended standards?
14.9 Almost all the parks and open spaces budget is tied up with maintaining existing provision and therefore there is little scope to respond to changing needs?

14.10 There are always improvements, enhancements and new provisions that could be made to improve the network of open space across the borough. However most would require funding of some format.

14.11 Identified priorities can be resourced in a number of ways. Initially it may be necessary to allocate funding from within existing budgets for open spaces. This funding will be used to support other funding that is available from external sources, much of which will come from governmental organisations or quangos, which require match-funding from local authorities.

14.12 Each site visit sheet identifies the main attributes of each open space site and highlights site specific priorities and potential improvements that could be made. The completed site assessment report sheets and scoring matrices can be found in appendix C (bound as a separate document).

14.13 Potential sources of income are outlined below:

**Sale of Council land**

14.14 Generating and reinvesting resources obtained from land which is surplus to requirements is a principle that has been successfully adopted in the London Borough of Bromley, and by Glasgow City Council (through its Parks and Opens Spaces Strategy).

14.15 This is, however, likely to be a long process, and ultimately may prove difficult to achieve.

14.16 If considered feasible at some future stage, reinvestment would:

- secure political credibility for the sale of land
- provide sufficient funding to carry out significant rather than purely minor open space improvements. It should, however, be realised that the process may take two/three years to introduce, owing to planning, legal and other restrictions which could delay its introduction
- also, this mechanism is likely to be create some public controversy and its potential success depends on how the process and sale of land is sold to the public in terms of benefits and outcomes.

**Section 106 planning agreements**

14.17 In particular, Section 106 agreements can be used to achieve environmental improvements. Once a Strategy framework has been established, the process of obtaining these improvements will be enhanced because they can be used to achieve specific purposes, eg:

- by opening linear route ways to connect green spaces
- providing walking and cycling routes
- obtaining open space in areas of deficiency
funding open space improvements

there are maintenance considerations to be taken into account; ie
significant costs may arise, particularly if new open space is acquired.
These should be outlined in an associated SPD enabling the required
contribution to be calculated

it may therefore be necessary to obtain an endowment fund wherever
possible to cover these ongoing costs

it should of course be noted that such Agreements have to meet the
test of Circular 1/97, and “Developers should not be expected to pay
for facilities which are needed solely in order to resolve existing
deficiencies”

some councils have used part of the contributions towards revenue
‘Development Officer’ posts; e.g. in N Nottinghamshire.

14.18 Further information regarding section 106 agreements can be found in
section 15, planning overview.

Use of redundant buildings

14.19 Sympathetic use of redundant facilities for leisure and recreational purposes
is also a possibility. This could include the establishment of small commercial
sports facilities in parks. Another example could be the use of a redundant
sports pavilion as a children’s crèche or nursery.

Business funding/sponsorships

14.20 Examples from other boroughs include sponsorship of Cardiff City Council’s
events and festivals programme, and the Body Shop Playground Project in
Auchinlea Park, Glasgow.

Partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector

14.21 This could include the formation of further parks “Friends” groups and other
voluntary committees. An example is that of Rossmere Park, Hartlepool,
where the community was encouraged to take ownership. The park was
promoted and became heavily-used, attracting investment from funding
bodies. This has proved particularly successful in Halton where in addition to
the presence of a number of parks friends groups, an active allotment society
have improved and developed their own allotment site, developed their own
management committee and now run a shop, providing produce for other
community groups.

Lottery funding

14.22 This could include the Heritage Fund if works are carried out which are of
outstanding interest and importance to the national heritage. Funding is
provided for whole-park projects, the conservation of park features or park
activities. Grants are available from £50,000 to £5 million for a period of up to
five years. Projects must be designed to involve all stakeholders, must
demonstrate sustainability, and must demonstrate the heritage value of the
park in question.
14.23 Halton have been particularly successful in gaining funding from the Heritage Lottery funding, and have recently received notification of a further award for the development of a nature reserve commencing in April 2005.

**Review of pricing**

14.24 This needs to cover all charges where income is obtained, including outdoor sports, allotments and burials. The review needs to consider:

- charges for similar provision in other local authorities
- the quality of provision
- whether the service can be improved to justify a price increase
- the extent to which the market will bear any future increase
- whether differential pricing can be used to encourage off-peak usage
- concessions for minority groups, or those which the Council particularly wishes to encourage
- pricing at a level which does not deny access
- lower and/or more favourable charges for Halton residents.

14.25 This is of particular importance for Halton, as charges are currently very low in comparison to other authorities and indeed many amenities are free of charge (such as the hire of tennis courts and junior pitches). While this actively promotes and encourages activity (as reflected by high team generation rates and use of facilities) this represents a future opportunity for income if required.

**Living spaces**

14.26 The “Living Spaces” grant scheme was launched in May 2003, and covers schemes with a value of grants between £1,000 and £25,000 to fund projects that improve community open spaces. It may be suitable for small local parks, and is open to existing neighbourhood groups. The scheme supports:

- improving local parks
- creating or improving pocket parks or community gardens
- creating or improving play or seating areas
- cleaning up neglected residential land
- restoring village greens
- carrying out planting schemes on estates or verges
- creating or improving nature areas or city farms
- restoring local cemeteries
- restoring paths, gateways, ponds or boundaries.

14.27 At present the scheme is not currently accepting any applications this is to ensure that the scheme can support as many existing applications as possible within the limits of the funding still available.
The Liveability Fund

14.28 The liveability fund is a Government initiative which provides funding with the aim of improving the quality of public open spaces. New ways of working and innovative solutions are key to obtaining funding. Both revenue and capital funding is available under this scheme.

The “People's Places” Scheme

14.29 The “People's Places” scheme runs until the year 2006, and is administered by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. It is provided for local community groups, and is for the transformation of derelict, underused or unsightly land or buildings. The scope of grant available is for schemes with a value of £3,000 to £10,000.

The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

14.30 The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme was revised in April 2003, and allows registered landfill operators to contribute 6.5% of their annual landfill tax liability to environmental bodies approved by the organisation ENTRUST.

14.31 The scheme must be used for social, environmental and community based projects complying with specific “approved objects.” These objects are the provision and maintenance of public amenity, and restoration and repair of buildings open to the public with historical or architectural significance.

14.32 The project must be within 10 miles of a landfill/extraction operation.

Local Heritage Initiatives

14.33 Local Heritage Initiatives are to assist local communities in the preservation of their environment, landmarks and traditions including archaeological, natural, built and industrial heritage. A community group could investigate and celebrate a historic park, prepare a public exhibition in a park, and repair a feature. Up to 100% of project costs between values of £3,000 and £25,000 are payable.

14.34 Your Heritage Grants are available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and are for projects of between £5,000 and £50,000 in value.

14.35 English Heritage supports the Heritage Grant Fund for historic parks and gardens where there is a significant risk of losing important landscape features.

Lottery Small Grants Scheme

14.36 The Lottery Small Grants Scheme offers Awards for All grants of between £500 and £5,000 for small projects which involve people in their community, and can include local environmental work and community park projects.
Barclays Sitesavers

14.37 Barclays Sitesavers is a grant mechanism for community projects which transform derelict land into community leisure and recreation facilities. Between £4,000 and £10,000 per project is available.

The Tree Council

14.38 The Tree Council supports the Community Trees Fund which funds up to 75% of all expenditure on tree planting schemes having a value of £100 to £700.

The Esmee Fairburn Foundation

14.39 The Esmee Fairburn Foundation aims to improve quality of life, particularly for people who face disadvantage. Eligible activities include the preservation and enhancement of open space, and good management of woodlands, gardens and allotments. The size of grant is not limited, with the average award for the year 2002 being £33,500.

Others

14.40 These could include other pro-active mechanisms such as:

- increased income from events and activities
- improvements negotiated as “added value” from service providers

14.41 The degree of funding will define the scope and timescale over which any developments could be implemented. It is therefore essential to carefully consider all possible sources of funding.

14.42 These should include Council capital and revenue funding, but should also include consideration of the release of existing funds; commercial opportunities such as the franchising of facilities such as catering outlets; the delegated management of facilities such as outdoor sports; commercial sponsorship (e.g. floral bedding); planning gain (e.g. through Section 106 agreements); volunteer support; reviews of fees and charges; and increased income from events and activities. The roundabout sponsorship scheme has already been particularly successful in Halton.

14.43 Further detailed information regarding grants can be found in Claiming Your Share: A Guide to External Funding for Parks and Green Space Community Groups, obtainable from http://www.greenspace.org.uk
SECTION 15

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
Overall summary

Introduction

15.1 The study has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002). The main objectives were to:

- calculate the quality and accessibility of Council open space and recreational facilities
- set local standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of different types of open space and recreational facilities taking into account local needs and priorities in accordance with PPG17
- identify any deficiencies or surpluses in the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and provide recommendations for resolving them
- inform the Local Development Framework process
- provide information to inform decisions and help determine future development proposals in the area and feed into the Local Development Frameworks, (LDF) (in line with recent Central Government guidance contained in the draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS12))
- support corporate and departmental strategies including the community strategy, cultural strategy, leisure plan, parks strategy and regeneration strategies.

15.2 This strategy has been developed to provide an overall framework that will guide the Council in the future management and designation of open spaces.

15.3 The following sections summarise the key findings of the study, under the headings of quantity, quality, accessibility and value.

Quantity

15.4 From the quantity analysis, in association with consultations and surveys undertaken, we are able to determine provision standards appropriate for a number of types of open space within the borough.

15.5 PPG17 advocates the development of local standards rather than the use of national standards which do not take into account the local context. The standards have therefore been developed for consideration and possible adoption by the Council. Full justifications for these standards can be found in appendix F.

These standards are outlined in table 15.1 overleaf.
Table 15.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PPG17 Typology</th>
<th>Quantity Provision Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Public Gardens</td>
<td>1.25 hectares per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and Semi Natural Space</td>
<td>2.75 hectares per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports Facilities</td>
<td>It is suggested that a standard is not required due to the nature of this typology. A planning standard has been set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity Green Spaces</td>
<td>1 ha per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for Children &amp; Young People</td>
<td>0.2 hectares of play provision per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>0.09 ha per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries and Churchyards</td>
<td>PPG17 suggests quantity standard not required due to the nature of the typology. However if a quantity standard is needed this should be a quantitative population based provision standard but also take into account statistics on the average number of deaths which result in burials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Corridors</td>
<td>PPG17 suggests that the setting of a quantitative standard is inappropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quality**

15.6 A quality vision has been developed for each typology based on national or local standards, current provision, other Local Authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix F.

15.7 These could be used as a benchmarking measurement to assess where open space sites are now and what improvements could be made in the future and could be broken down into a detailed assessment matrix for any future quality assessments of sites.

15.8 In addition, site visits have been undertaken to a sample of sites within the borough. Each site visit identifies the positive qualities of the site and identifies possible opportunities for improvement at the site. This complements the matrix completed at each site enabling benchmarking.

**Accessibility**

15.9 Accessibility is a key assessment of open space provision. Without accessibility for the public the provision of good quality or good quantity of open space sites would be of little benefit to the community.
15.10 PPG17 encourages that any new open space sites or enhancement of existing sites should ensure accessibility by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and by public transport. There is a real desire to move away from a reliability on the car.

15.11 There is an overall satisfaction level by residents regarding accessibility to existing sites. However the main area of concern is with regards to information and signage of sites with the public unaware that good quality accessible sites exist within some areas of the borough. In addition, for some typologies public transport was considered to be an issue.

15.12 The consultations both through the household questionnaire and neighbourhood ‘drop-in’ sessions provide specific information to assist in establishing distance thresholds and accessibility standards for each type of open space as defined by PPG17. Table 15.2 shows recommended distance thresholds for each type of open space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open Space Type</th>
<th>Realistic Mode of transport (from analysis)</th>
<th>Recommended Travel Time</th>
<th>Estimated Equivalent Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Gardens</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>1.2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Open Spaces</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>1.2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity Green Space</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>0.4 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Spaces for Children and Young People</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>0.8 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports Facilities</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>1.2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>1.6 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries and Churchyards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Standard Set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Corridors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Standard Set</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15.13 It is not entirely straightforward to set specific distance thresholds for each type of open space for all areas as there are many dependencies. However these standards, as PPG17 recommends, provide guidance in order to identify gaps in provision and meet the local needs of Halton’s residents.

15.14 Full details of the accessibility analysis by site can be found in Appendix C.
Applying standards

15.15 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together.

15.16 In order to identify specific sites of importance and priority we analyse the quality, site access and usage of these sites simultaneously.

15.17 Areas where there are quantitative deficiencies in addition to issues of accessibility should be prioritised for development.

15.18 The main issues for each typology are as follows:

**Parks and gardens**

15.19 The quality of parks is good, highlighted by the green flag awards that have been awarded to the Council. The main areas for improvement were highlighted to be an increase in levels of security and safety within parks. Parks play an important role within Halton and consultation highlighted them to be the most important type of open space from a resident’s perspective.

15.20 When analysing provision of parks and gardens in terms in quantity and accessibility, it can be seen that the main areas of deficiency are:

- area five (in particular Beechwood)
- area seven.

15.21 There may be opportunities to address these through the re-designation of some amenity green space or natural and semi natural sites.

15.22 The main area of surplus exists in area four, primarily as a result of the presence of Town Park. Focus in this area should be given to improving the quality and range of amenities at this site rather than providing additional provision within area forum four.

**Natural and semi natural open space**

15.23 The quality of natural and semi natural open spaces is lower than other types of open space. There are concerns over safety and structures. Despite this, there are some very high quality sites.

15.24 The majority of residents within the borough are within an acceptable catchment distance of natural and semi natural open space. There are a number of natural open spaces with international and national significance.

15.25 Priority should be given to the development of natural and semi natural open space sites within areas three, where there is a deficiency and accessibility issues. Recognising that this is not an easy type of open space to develop and is usually primarily opportunity led, in these areas of deficiency any improvements to accessibility of existing sites should be considered a priority. As there is sufficient natural and semi natural open space, effort should be concentrated on improving the quality and accessibility of existing sites.

15.26 In areas of oversupply (particularly area four) there may be opportunities to re-designate some existing natural and semi natural open space to offset
unmet demand in other typologies, particularly provision for young people and children.

15.27 There are number of natural open space sites within the borough which are inaccessible. Although these sites have little benefit in terms of use to the community, they offer a visual amenity and benefit to the borough.

*Amenity green space*

15.28 The quality of amenity green space is good, although the main concerns centre around security, furniture and structures. Household surveys indicate that there are issues with litter, antisocial behaviour and graffiti.

15.29 Area forum three (containing the Farnworth area) should be considered priority for further analysis as this area contains both the largest deficiency numerically and the largest proportion of residents outside of a catchment area. In addition there is a deficiency and an accessibility issue in Area Forum One, particularly Hale. There are also issues in accessibility in area forum 7 (Preston Brook and Daresbury) although there is a small oversupply.

15.30 Amenity green spaces are complemented by the linear greenspaces many of which have similar functions to amenity green space. When these linear open spaces are overlayed with existing amenity green spaces, there are few gaps.

*Children and young people*

15.31 The quality of play provision in Halton is high and cleanliness and maintenance of areas is particularly good. Footpaths, furniture's and structures were rated the worst of all qualities with a score of 41% - this relates mainly to the quality of seating, range of facilities offered and footpaths, including condition and usage. This may imply that some play equipment is still in need of renovation.

15.32 Although there are quantitative deficiencies in all areas of the borough with the exception of area 7, the majority of residents are able to access to play provision within the recommended catchment indicating that provision is geographically well distributed. Demand for additional play facilities was evident in all consultation, although this focused primarily on facilities for teenagers. Consultation indicated that the quality of provision was more important than the quantity.

15.33 The Farnworth area and was identified as priority for future development.

*Allotments*

15.34 When analysing the application of quantity and accessibility standards it is clear that quantitative deficiencies and lack of access directly correlate. Priority areas are:

- Area forum One - Hale
- Area forum Five – south and eastern areas (in particular Murdishaw and Norton areas)
- Area forum Seven - Preston Brook and Daresbury. There is limited access to allotments within the specified catchment for people living in this area. As allotments are primarily demand led, further investigation should be
undertaken into these deficiencies. It may be appropriate to redesignate other sites in these areas where there is an oversupply.

15.35 The quality of allotments is relatively good, with the main area of weakness being footpaths, furniture and structures mainly accounted for the lack of seats, poor information and signage and a lack of facilities at the various sites.

*Outdoor sports facilities*

15.36 The quality of outdoor sports facilities was good both in terms of the landscape qualities and also in the level of fit for purpose. Although there are some quality concerns outlined in the playing pitch strategy, it is considered overall that Halton Borough Council has an opportunity to provide excellent standard pitch provision.

15.37 Accessibility is the primary problem with outdoor sports provision in Halton. There are a number of facilities at school sites which are currently unavailable for use by the Community.

15.38 Although it is considered inappropriate to set an overarching quantity standard, a pitch sport specific standard has been in the playing pitch strategy. Other outdoor sports facilities should be assessed on a demand led opportunity basis. Despite this, an overall standard has been suggested.

*Green corridors*

15.39 All linear green spaces within Halton have been classified as green corridors. Provision of green corridors in Halton is well valued, therefore opportunities for further development of green corridors where there is demand should be taken. It is likely that a large proportion of future provision will need to be opportunity led.

15.40 The quality of green corridors is good although the level of security and safety at these sites is an area of concern.

15.41 Green corridors complement other types of open space and contribute to the network of open spaces and opportunities for informal recreation and alternative means of transport. They have important links with the wider health agenda.

*Summarising policies*

15.42 A number of policies have arisen as a result of the strategy for each type of open space. These are summarised at the end of each typology specific section. It is proposed that these policies are adopted where appropriate. In addition, it is proposed that the following more generic policies are considered:

*New open space provision*

- any new open space sites should be targeted at areas of deficiency identified within this strategy
- support the interim use of disused railway lines to footpaths and cycleways, linking various types of open space, subject to satisfactory arrangements for maintenance and car parking.
when dealing with developers contributions and new provision of open space the council should ensure that the area of land is large enough on one site to provide significant recreational value as well as aesthetic value within the new development. Again the findings of this strategy should be used to determine the most appropriate type of open space.

Protection

• ensure all sites of high usage and high quality are afforded maximum protection and are seen as best practice examples

• in accordance with PPG17 any proposal to dispose of open space land needs to be assessed in context within an overall analysis of all open space types within the Borough particularly with identified deficiencies in specific areas

• for any future developments to modify any areas of open space, it is recommended that an ecological survey is undertaken at an early stage to determine the presence of legally protected or notable species and conservation value of the site

• support the protection of playing fields through consultation with Sport England and the identification and protection of playing fields and surrounding grounds that either currently or potentially could provide opportunities for enhancing and promoting biodiversity

Management

• no additional open spaces to be provided without realistic plans for implementing and resourcing maintenance agreements to provide the required quality

• involve and support communities in open space planning, management and delivery.

Planning context

Key planning policy framework

15.43 The companion guide to PPG17 ‘Assessing Needs and Opportunities’ illustrates 5 steps that should be followed when undertaking open space, sport and recreation assessments and audits. This process has been followed during the production of this study. Step 5 provides guidance for drafting planning policies.

15.44 The Companion Guide highlights four strategic options for policies:

• existing provision to be protected;

• existing provision to be enhanced;

• areas in which new provision is required; and

• opportunities for new, enhanced or relocated provision.
15.45 A matrix providing further information on the application of these principles is provided within appendix G.

15.46 The Companion Guide also suggests a fifth component – land or facilities that are surplus to requirements and therefore no longer needed.

15.47 It is suggested that policies should:

- protect or enhance existing open spaces of value (or potential value) to the local community;
- re-locate poorly located but necessary open spaces or sport and recreation facilities;
- address circumstances in which the planning authority may allow the redevelopment of an existing open space or sport and recreation facility;
- require new provision to fill identified gaps in existing provision; and
- address additional on-site or off-site provision as a consequence of new developments, together with how the authority will assess any related commuted maintenance or establishment sums.

Changes in the Planning Policy Framework

15.48 The government’s Planning and Compulsory Bill has now passed through the Palace of Westminster and received Royal Assent on 13 May 2004. The legislation formally commenced in July 2004.

15.49 The Bill sets out to reform the planning system and includes the introduction of overarching Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) which will consist of a portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDDs). This local development document will include:

- Development Plan Documents (DPDs) to replace local plans and unitary development plans,
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to replace SPGs
- Statements of Community Involvement (SCIs).

15.50 Local Authorities will also need to produce Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs).

15.51 Under the new Act the Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the existing Unitary Development Plans. Halton are therefore required to have an adopted LDF in place three years after commencement of the Act.

Review of open space guidance

15.52 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is used to show how policies will be put into practice; gives greater detail on policies and proposals than would be appropriate in the Plan and anticipates guidance, which may be included in a future review of the Plan.
15.53 The open space study should be supplemented by a new type SPD document relating to open space provision. This should also include playing pitch provision and should set out the requirements of the Council giving reasons behind the assessment of costs and financial contributions.

15.54 In general, developers should not be asked to make up for current deficiencies in provision in terms of buying and selling of planning permissions, however new housing should not exacerbate any existing problems. The SPD should include costs relating to planning and design, installation and longer-term maintenance. These costs should allow for inflation and should either be set out per additional person or per dwelling.

15.55 Not all housing developments will justify additional recreation facilities in their own right, however all new residents will place additional demands on facilities, and the collective impact in this respect of major housing allocations will be significant.

15.56 This open space strategy sets out three standards:

- quantity standard – per 1000 population for each type of open space
- quality standard – a quality benchmark for each type of open space
- accessibility standard – catchment thresholds for each type of open space.

15.57 In determining the required contribution for developers, the three standards should be applied in conjunction with GIS system in order to ascertain the most appropriate input from developers in terms of use of the money.

15.58 The accessibility and quantity standards should be used to determine the most appropriate type of provision for an area. A structure for this is provided in appendix G and a current application of the standards based on the situation at the present time is provided in appendix E. Alternatively, where there is sufficient provision, it may be more appropriate to improve the quality of existing open space in line with the suggested quality standards.

15.59 The GIS system is linked to an Access Database. When a new open space site is developed and the site is added to GIS site details are updated, the database will automatically update the shortfall and surplus in each area in relation to the quantitative standards. Accessibility standards can also be updated ensuring that the database can be used as a tool for determining developer contributions.

**Worked example – Developer Contributions**

1. Developer A has identified a site within Area Forum Five on which he would like to build a number of houses. The SPD therefore indicates that a contribution to open space provision must be made.

2. Area Forum Five currently contains a quantitative undersupply of parks and gardens, natural and semi natural open space, provision for young people and children and allotments.

3. Using the accessibility standards and the maps provided, some residents in Area Forum Five do not have access to allotments or to parks and gardens. This is illustrated in the maps below:
4. There is therefore both an undersupply and a lack of access to allotments and parks and gardens within this area. Appendix G provides a table to guide the development of priorities. If the new development does not require on site provision (guidance for this should be outlined in the SPD) based on this example, the developments of allotments or a small park should be considered a priority as residents in this area are both out of the catchment and there is a deficiency. If there had been no deficiencies within this area, it may have been appropriate to improve the quality of existing sites.

5. Contributions should therefore be made by developers towards the cost of open space provision including maintenance contributions. Contributions should be made on a per dwelling basis at a pre-determined rate outlined in the SPD.

Key Recommendations

15.60 The key recommendations for each typology emerging from the strategy are summarised overleaf:
### Parks and Gardens

- **PG1** - Improve access to parks and gardens in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- **PG2** – Consultation has indicated parks are highly valued amenities and should be protected from development
- **PG3** – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- **PG4** – Continue to focus resources on large quality parks, and consider sponsorship opportunities to enhance opportunities for further development of smaller more informal parks and gardens
- **PG4** – Continue to produce detailed management plans for larger park sites
- **PG5** – Continue to encourage the use of parks for events and activities across the borough to increase awareness and usage of sites
- **PG6** – Promote the development of Friends Groups for each park
- **PG7** - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new sites and improve existing sites

### Natural and Semi Natural

- **NSN 1** - Improve access to natural and semi natural open spaces in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- **NSN 2** – Ensure that those sites listed as high value are protected.
- **NSN 3** – Investigate the reasons for low use of some sites and ensure that their primary purpose is appropriate
- **NSN 4** – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- **NSN 5** – Develop a marketing plan to increase the awareness of natural and semi natural sites, in particular Local Nature Reserves and sites where usage is low.
- **NSN 6** – Ensure continued contribution to the biodiversity targets as highlighted in the biodiversity action plan
- **NSN 7** - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new sites and improve existing sites.
SECTION FIFTEEN – OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Amenity Greenspace
- AGS 1 - Improve access to amenity green space in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- AGS 2 – Undertake further assessment into the use and value of amenity green space across the borough
- AGS 3 - Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- AGS 4 – Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new sites and improve existing sites

### Provision for Young People and Children
- PA1 - Improve access to play areas in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- PA2 – Consider redesignation of other types of open space in order to address levels of deficiency
- PA3 – Ensure that play areas highlighted above as highly valued are protected
- PA4  - Investigate reasons why some play areas have low use at present and improve the accessibility and quality where appropriate
- PA5 – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- PA6 – Produce a play strategy for the borough. This should include detailed investigation as to the balance of provision required between younger children and teenagers
- PA7 – Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites
**Allotment Gardens**

- **AG1** - Improve access to allotments in areas where there are currently deficiencies
- **AG2** – Protect allotment sites from development – replace any allotment sites developed on and ensure there is no net loss – these sites are highly valued and are currently operating at 100% capacity
- **AG3** – Adopt the suggested local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility as benchmarks for optimum provision
- **AG4** – Produce a detailed allotments strategy outlining detailed action plans for each allotment site including appropriate performance indicators
- **AG5** – Continue to encourage the development of community management groups at each allotment site. The Council should facilitate this development.
- **AG6** - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites

**Cemeteries and Churchyards**

- **CC 1** – Undertake detailed site assessments on cemeteries and churchyards in order to ascertain any quality and or accessibility issues
- **CC 2** – Conduct more detailed work regarding the supply of cemetery space compared to death rates and any expected rises over the next five to ten years
- **CC3** - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites

**Green Corridors**

- **GC1** - the Council should work to increase awareness of these green links through a targeted marketing campaign
- **GC2** – Improvements should focus on security and safety and individual opportunities identified for each site assessed
- **GC3** - Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites
Outdoor Sports Facilities

- **OSF 1** – The quality and accessibility standards highlighted should be adopted. Quantitative calculations should be sport specific and detailed work should be undertaken to produce appropriate figures. This may include the production of a sports specific facility strategy.

- **OSF 2** – More development work should be undertaken to set up formal community use agreements with local schools, particularly for sports pitches.

- **OSF 3** – Work should be undertaken to access potential resources for facility improvements.

- **OSF 4** – Capitalise on available funding initiatives and seek developer contributions to provide new facilities and improve existing sites.
APPENDIX A

BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE – CABE SPACE
Appendix A - Benefits Of Open Space according to CABE SPACE

Environmental
- providing habitats for wildlife as an aid to local biodiversity
- helping to stabilise urban temperatures and humidity
- absorbing pollutants in the air and ground water
- providing opportunities for the recycling of organic materials
- providing opportunities to reduce transport use through the provision of local facilities, and by providing walking and cycling routes from urban and suburban areas into the surrounding countryside.

Economic
- adding value to surrounding property, both commercial and residential, thus increasing local tax revenues for public services
- contributing to attracting visitors, including using the parks as venues for major events
- encouraging tourism into the area
- encouraging employment and inward investment
- helping to create an attractive local image
- complementing new development with a landscape that enhances its value
- helping to reduce social exclusion and its associated costs to society.

Social
- providing safe outdoor areas that are available to all Members of the local population
- providing opportunities for community events, voluntary activities and charitable fund raising
- providing easily accessible recreation as an alternative to other more chargeable leisure pursuits
- providing opportunities to improve health and take part in a wide range of outdoor sports and activities
- providing an educational resource or outdoor classroom.
APPENDIX B

TYPOLOGIES OF PPG 17
### Appendix B - Typologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Space Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parks and gardens</strong></td>
<td>Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland</strong></td>
<td>Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green corridors</strong></td>
<td>Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outdoor sports facilities</strong></td>
<td>Participation in outdoor sports, such as the pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amenity greenspace</strong></td>
<td>Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provision for children and young people</strong></td>
<td>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, skateboard areas and teenage shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allotments and Community Gardens</strong></td>
<td>Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cemeteries and Churchyards</strong></td>
<td>Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead. Often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

SITE ASSESSMENT MATRICES AND REPORT
APPENDIX D

ON SITE ASSESSMENTS AND USER SURVEYS
Street-Focus™

Research for Halton Borough Council:
Open Spaces

September 2004
Executive Summary

The aim was to interview a total of 400 users of the open spaces identified by visiting them during the period 16th to 25th Aug 2004. A revisit was required on 28th/29th Sept to try to complete the sample.

In the event and largely due to inclement weather and the nature of one of the open spaces, Pickering Pasture, we were unable quite to achieve this. The overall sample of 377 is close to the overall target and allows for statistically significant analysis in total. Over half of the interviews took place at Victoria Park, which was clearly the busiest and arguably the most strategically important of the open spaces.

There was quite a good spread across the postcodes - we did not work to quota on this and so it is a good indication of where people who use the open space live. Over a third of those using Victoria Park live in WA8 6**; nearly a half of those using Rock Park are from WA8 3**; and nearly a third using Runcorn Hill are from WA7 4**.

The main reason overall to use the open space sites, for nearly 1 in 4 users, is to walk; just under half do so at Rock Park. The majority visit nearly every day, rising to about two thirds at Victoria Park and Rock Park. Few people see the features such as floral displays, fauna etc as a main reason to visit. There is no discernible peak period for use between week-days and week-ends and the most popular time is afternoons, although other times of the day are also popular.

Most people spend the best part of an hour in the park; only in the case of Victoria Park do many people stay longer than 90 minutes. How people travel varies: 71% walk to Victoria Park and 20% drive in their car. For Rock Park, the corresponding figures are 36% and 32%. Runcorn Hill’s figures are in between. Nearly half of Victoria Park’s users get to the park in less than 5 minutes, the average travel time to Runcorn Hill is a little longer and the longest average journey is to Rock Park, where the most frequent response is 10-15 minutes – still a relatively short trip. Only 5% of all users travel for more than 20 minutes.

We asked for any problems encountered. The only issue that achieved double figures as a frequent problem was vandalism/graffiti. This is often encountered at Victoria Park for 15% of respondents; none of the users of the other spaces encountered this problem often and nearly all said that it was never a problem at Rock Park. Litter, anti-social behaviour and dog fouling are sometimes a problem at Victoria Park and Runcorn Hill but rarely at Rock Park. There is little concern overall with noise and smells.

Over two thirds of the total sample said that the overall quality of the open space is good or very good and only 8% rate it less than fair; most of the latter were at Victoria Park. Cleanliness/tidiness was the top scoring factor overall. Toilets only rated good or better for one in five of the sample, but there were a high proportion of ‘don’t know/not applicable’
responses to this; nevertheless, more than one in five rated them poor or very poor. The toilets in Runcorn Hill fared worst, rating poor or very poor for more than half the sample.

We asked which element of the service would be the first priority for improvement. The first choice at Victoria Park for 31% was the play area and equipment with toilets second. Litterbins and pathways are the priorities at Rock Park and toilets at Runcorn Hill, followed by lighting. 'Other' produced along list of suggestions, many of them relating to services for young people – the 'something for them to do' agenda, perhaps.

Most people thought that the quality of provision at Rock Park had changed little in the last 3 years. One in five thought that standards had deteriorated during the same period in Victoria Park, but then 40% thought that things have improved. 70% had seen at least some improvements at Runcorn Hill and no one reported any deterioration in standards.

For accessibility factors, the most common opinion in every case was 'good'; only in the case of parking was this relatively low as a response, and this is due mainly to the responses at Victoria Park, where accessible parking scores poor or very poor for 35% of respondents.

61% of visitors to Victoria Park choose to visit this particular area because of its location close to where they live. Rock Park, in contrast, is chosen for a variety of reasons, the most frequent relating to cleanliness and safety. Proximity to home is also the most frequent reason to choose Runcorn Hill, but second in this case is that it is seen as the best site for children.

Unfortunately, none of the people we interviewed at Runcorn Hill were interested in volunteering.
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**Q3. What is your main reason for visiting this site today?**

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<td>For fresh air</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<td>To take exercise</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To play sport on courts/pitches</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>For a kick about / informal play</td>
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<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sit and relax or read</td>
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<td>To observe wildlife</td>
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<td>To look at floral displays / scenery</td>
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Other, please specify:
Bike riding: 1 1 0 0

**Q4. How often do you visit this site?**

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<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less often</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time visit</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q5. When do you usually visit this site?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>23%</th>
<th>24%</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekdays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekends</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time visit</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q6. Which time of the day do you visit most often?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>9%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>13%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late morning</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunchtime</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early afternoon</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late afternoon</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time visit</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q7. How long do you usually spend at the site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15 mins</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 mins</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 30-60 mins</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 60-90 mins</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 90 mins</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time visit</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8. How do you usually get to this site/how did you travel today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On foot</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private car</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skate</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (see below)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other, please specify

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scooter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q9. How long does it usually take to get there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 mins</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5-10 mins</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10-15 mins</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 15-20 mins</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 20-30 mins</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 30 mins</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10. Have you ever experienced any of the following problems at this site?

Q10A. Vandalism and Graffiti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10B. Litter problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10C. Anti-social Behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LEISURE-NET SOLUTIONS LTD
Sometimes 19% 23% 2% 24%
Never 72% 66% 98% 76%

Q10D. Dog Fouling
Often 6% 7% 0% 11%
Sometimes 24% 26% 4% 38%
Never 70% 67% 96% 51%

Q10E. Noise
Often 2% 2% 0% 0%
Sometimes 12% 14% 6% 13%
Never 86% 84% 94% 87%

Q10F. Smells
Often 1% 2% 0% 0%
Sometimes 8% 8% 8% 11%
Never 90% 90% 92% 89%

Q10G. Other
Overgrown grass 1 1 0 0
Broken glass 1 1 0 0

Q11. How would you rate the overall quality of this site?
Very good 13% 11% 2% 31%
Good 54% 53% 60% 53%
Average 25% 25% 38% 13%
Poor 6% 8% 0% 0%
Very poor 2% 3% 0% 2%
Not applicable 0% 0% 0% 0%
Don’t know 0% 0% 0% 0%

Q12. Please give your opinion on the quality of the following factors at this site

Q12A. Cleanliness/Tidiness
Very good 13% 12% 2% 29%
Good 51% 53% 38% 58%
Fair 29% 26% 60% 13%
Poor 5% 6% 0% 0%
Very poor 2% 3% 0% 0%
Not applicable 0% 0% 0% 0%
Don’t know 0% 0% 0% 0%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12B. Maintenance/Management</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>3%</td>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12C. Lighting</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>1%</td>
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<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12D. Boundaries e.g. railings, hedges</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>63%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12E. Toilets</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12F. Parking</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12G. Provision of bins for litter</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>38%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12H. Seats/benches</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>40%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12I. Pathways</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12J. Information and signage</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
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<td>6%</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12K. Planted and grassed areas</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q12L. Nature/wildlife/conservation

Very good
7% 8% 0% 9%

Good
44% 41% 40% 67%

Fair
25% 19% 58% 22%

Poor
6% 7% 0% 2%

Very poor
3% 4% 0% 0%

Not applicable
1% 2% 0% 0%

Don’t know
14% 20% 2% 0%

Q13, 14, 15. What would be your top priority for improvement?

Cleanliness / Tidiness
8% 4% 34% 0%

Maintenance/management
3% 3% 2% 0%

Lighting
6% 3% 2% 18%

Boundaries
1% 0% 4% 0%

Toilets
17% 16% 4% 31%

Parking
1% 2% 0% 0%

Provision of litter bins
4% 3% 14% 0%

Seats / benches
8% 8% 8% 7%

Pathways
5% 4% 12% 2%

Information and signage
1% 1% 4% 0%

Planted and grasses areas
1% 0% 4% 0%

Dog walking facilities
0% 0% 0% 0%

Dog free area
0% 0% 0% 2%

Childrens play area
23% 31% 2% 2%

Conservation area/nature trail
0% 0% 2% 0%

Picnic area
1% 1% 0% 0%

Warden
3% 3% 4% 2%

Other (see below)
17% 17% 4% 36%

Other, please specify
STOP GANGS HANGING AROUND
1 1 0 0
START AGAIN & REBUILD
1 1 0 0
SOMETHING FOR TEENAGERS
1 1 0 0
SKATE BOARDING
1 1 0 0
SKATE BOARD AREA
1 1 0 0
SECURITY
1 1 0 0
ROOF OVER RAMPS
1 1 0 0
REPLACE BANDSTAND
1 1 0 0
REMOVE SKATE PARK
1 1 0 0
PLAY AREA FOR DOGS
1 0 0 1
OPEN EARLIER
1 1 0 0
OLDER KIDS FACILITIES
1 1 0 0
MORE SKATE RAMPS
1 1 0 0
MORE FOR CHILDREN
1 0 0 1
MORE FACILITIES IN SKATE PARK
1 1 0 0
MAKE SKATE PARK BIGGER
1 1 0 0
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Response 1</th>
<th>Response 2</th>
<th>Response 3</th>
<th>Response 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live sound</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less youngsters hanging around</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less dogs mess</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake needs cleaning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake could do with a clean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep the yoobs out</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve skate park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grids need seeing to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get roof on skate park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of the skate park</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of skate park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate on play area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football pitchs need more attention</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football pitch</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish in pond</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing around tennis courts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenced in play area</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlarge skate park</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking and smoking in park</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog mess bins</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog fouling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean up broken glass</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean the grids out</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clamp down on anti social behavior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bring bandstand back</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowling green looked after better</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger skate park</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better fencing for kids</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better bowling facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandstand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q16. Do you think the quality of this open space has improved in the last 3 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Significantly</th>
<th>Slightly</th>
<th>Remained the same</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</table>

Q17. Please state your opinion about access to this site in terms of the following factors

Q17A. Visibility of site entrance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Don't know/Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q17B. Accessibility by walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not applicable</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                  |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Q17C. Accessibility with pushchairs or wheelchairs |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Very good        | 19%       | 15%   | 6%    | 22%       |                           |
| Good             | 73%       | 78%   | 62%   | 53%       |                           |
| Poor             | 5%        | 3%    | 0%    | 22%       |                           |
| Very poor        | 1%        | 0%    | 0%    | 2%        |                           |
| Don't know/Not applicable | 8%     | 4%    | 32%   | 0%        |

|                  |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Q17D. Accessibility by cycle ways |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Very good        | 12%       | 13%   | 4%    | 16%       |                           |
| Good             | 69%       | 69%   | 62%   | 73%       |                           |
| Poor             | 5%        | 6%    | 2%    | 9%        |                           |
| Very poor        | 0%        | 0%    | 0%    | 0%        |                           |
| Don't know/Not applicable | 13%    | 12%   | 32%   | 2%        |

|                  |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Q17E. Accessibility by public transport |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Very good        | 9%        | 10%   | 6%    | 9%        |                           |
| Good             | 63%       | 66%   | 62%   | 47%       |                           |
| Poor             | 9%        | 10%   | 0%    | 11%       |                           |
| Very poor        | 3%        | 1%    | 0%    | 20%       |                           |
| Don't know/Not applicable | 16%   | 12%   | 32%   | 13%       |

|                  |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Q17F. Accessible parking |           |       |       |           |                           |
| Very good        | 7%        | 6%    | 2%    | 18%       |                           |
| Good             | 48%       | 40%   | 66%   | 78%       |                           |
| Poor             | 20%       | 26%   | 0%    | 4%        |                           |
| Very poor        | 6%        | 9%    | 0%    | 0%        |                           |
| Don't know/Not applicable | 18%   | 18%   | 32%   | 0%        |

Q18. Why have you chosen to visit this site instead of another piece of open space in the area?
It is the closest to my home 48%  61%  2%  40%
It is the closest to my place of work/school 1%  2%  0%  0%
I am en route to somewhere else  7%  7%  6%  2%
It is the most visually appealing 2%  1%  0%  2%
It has the best floral displays / gardens 1%  1%  0%  2%
It has sports facilities  9%  9%  2%  9%
It is the best site for the children 5%  2%  0%  27%
It was someone else’s choice/here with others 6%  7%  10%  2%
It is the cleanest 3%  0%  24%  0%
It feels safer than other open spaces 5%  2%  22%  4%
It is the only open space of its type 3%  0%  10%  9%
It has the best public transport links for me 0%  0%  2%  0%
It is animal/pet friendly 1%  0%  4%  2%
It is the most accessible to pushchairs/wheelchairs 0%  0%  0%  0%
It has bike parking 0%  0%  2%  0%
Good car parking 1%  0%  6%  0%
It is the easiest to get to (best route) 1%  0%  4%  0%
It is the highest quality site 1%  0%  4%  0%
It contains a lot of wildlife and conservation 0%  0%  0%  0%
Other (see below) 6%  8%  0%  0%

Other, please specify
UNDER 5’S WILDLIFE  1  1  0  0
TO WATCH THE BOWLS  6  6  0  0
TO SEE BOYFRIEND  1  1  0  0
TO RIDE MY BIKE  1  1  0  0
TO PLAY TENNIS  1  1  0  0
TO PLAY BOWLS  3  3  0  0
THIS ONE HAS A SKATE PARK  1  1  0  0
NOWHERE ELSE TO GO  1  1  0  0
NEAR MY MUMS  2  2  0  0
NEAR IN-LAWS HOUSE  1  0  0  0
GOOD MEETING POINT  1  1  0  0
BUTTERFLIES  1  1  0  0

Q19R. What is your favourite part of the site (Runcorn Hill only)?
WALKS  2%
WALKING THROUGH HILLS  2%
WALKING THE DOG  2%
THE LAKE  6%
SWINGS  2%
RUNCORN HILL  4%
POND & HILLS  2%
POND  2%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLAY AREA</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAKE &amp; PLAY AREA</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAKE &amp; FIELDS</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HILLS</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOOTBALL PITCH</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUCKS</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUCK POND</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRYSIDE &amp; HILLS</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRYSIDE</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COUNTRY WALKS</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIMBING FRAME</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAND STAND</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q20R. Would you be interested in doing volunteering?
- Yes: 0%
- No: 100%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50% 53% 36% 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50% 47% 64% 60%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-15yrs</td>
<td>16% 17% 22% 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>22% 20% 34% 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-39</td>
<td>23% 22% 18% 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59</td>
<td>18% 16% 18% 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-75</td>
<td>16% 18% 8% 13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>5% 7% 0% 0%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>94% 98% 72% 98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>3% 0% 18% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Other</td>
<td>0% 0% 0% 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black British</td>
<td>0% 0% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black caribbean</td>
<td>0% 0% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Other</td>
<td>0% 0% 2% 0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian British</td>
<td>0% 0% 2% 0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian Pakistani</td>
<td>1% 0% 4% 0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>0% 0% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Bangladesi</td>
<td>0% 0% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Other</td>
<td>0% 0% 0% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed White and Black Caribbean</td>
<td>0% 0% 2% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>AB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed White and Black Asian</td>
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<td>Mixed Other</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Socio-economic Group:</td>
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<tr>
<td>C1</td>
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<tr>
<td>C2</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>19%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

QUANTITY CALCULATIONS
## Open Space Calculations Quantity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Populations</th>
<th>Parks &amp; Gardens</th>
<th>Net &amp; Semi Net Open Space</th>
<th>Amenity Greenspace</th>
<th>Provision for Children and Young People</th>
<th>Allotments</th>
<th>Outdoor Sports Facilities</th>
<th>Cemeteries and Churchyards</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Provision - Existing Open Space (ha)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.52</td>
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<td>115.67</td>
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<td>8.66</td>
<td>393.31</td>
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<td>Existing Open Space (ha per 1000 Population)</td>
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<tr>
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### Consultation (%)

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<th>Deficiency</th>
<th>Surplus</th>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>79</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
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</tr>
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<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
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### RECOMMENDED PROVISION STANDARD

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<tr>
<td>Area 1</td>
<td>-20.30</td>
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<td>-7.31</td>
<td>-4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>24.76</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>-2.07</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-7.76</td>
<td>-23.05</td>
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<td>-1.82</td>
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### Future Balance

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<th>0.08</th>
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</tr>
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<td>-0.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area 4</td>
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<td>134.77</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-2.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 5</td>
<td>-7.18</td>
<td>-3.29</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area 6</td>
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<td>25.95</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area 7</td>
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<td>8.56</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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</table>
## HALTON BC - Population Projections

<table>
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<th>AREA</th>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>Parks &amp; Gardens</th>
<th>Natural &amp; Semi Natural</th>
<th>Amenity Greenspace</th>
<th>Provision for Children &amp; Young People</th>
<th>Outdoor Sports Facilities</th>
<th>Allotments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantity (per 1,000 pop)</td>
<td>Too Much</td>
<td>About Right</td>
<td>Not Enough</td>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>Quantity (per 1,000 pop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Area Forum 1</td>
<td>0.31 0% 66% 33% 1%</td>
<td>3.87 2% 51% 45% 3%</td>
<td>0.66 6% 46% 41% 7%</td>
<td>0.01 3% 30% 61% 6%</td>
<td>2.08 3% 38% 48% 11%</td>
<td>0.07 3% 27% 21% 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Area Forum 2</td>
<td>1.26 0% 59% 41% 0%</td>
<td>4.18 0% 39% 54% 7%</td>
<td>1.18 0% 36% 58% 6%</td>
<td>0.08 1% 35% 61% 2%</td>
<td>7.91 1% 42% 51% 6%</td>
<td>0.08 4% 33% 18% 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Area Forum 3</td>
<td>0.80 0% 47% 53% 1%</td>
<td>1.38 1% 18% 80% 2%</td>
<td>0.44 1% 34% 58% 7%</td>
<td>0.02 1% 25% 70% 4%</td>
<td>2.06 2% 41% 52% 5%</td>
<td>0.08 3% 34% 16% 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Area Forum 4</td>
<td>3.53 1% 42% 57% 0%</td>
<td>8.57 4% 55% 38% 3%</td>
<td>0.96 4% 49% 42% 5%</td>
<td>0.07 1% 18% 75% 5%</td>
<td>1.96 2% 19% 67% 12%</td>
<td>0.00 1% 24% 22% 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Area Forum 5</td>
<td>1.07 0% 59% 41% 0%</td>
<td>1.86 0% 50% 50% 0%</td>
<td>1.73 0% 50% 47% 3%</td>
<td>0.02 3% 44% 47% 6%</td>
<td>1.40 0% 16% 81% 3%</td>
<td>0.00 0% 10% 42% 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>3.64 1% 46% 50% 2%</td>
<td>0.85 2% 35% 53% 10%</td>
<td>0.14 1% 20% 70% 9%</td>
<td>3.99 1% 36% 54% 9%</td>
<td>0.11 1% 23% 30% 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Area Forum 7</td>
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<td>4.12 4% 54% 37% 6%</td>
<td>0.49 4% 43% 47% 6%</td>
<td>0.04 7% 13% 69% 11%</td>
<td>0.66 2% 21% 65% 12%</td>
<td>0.08 7% 22% 24% 46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

SETTING QUANTITY STANDARDS
APPENDIX G

APPLYING STANDARDS – MATRICES AND TOOLS
Assessing Value

Value is entirely different to Quality and relates to 3 factors:

- **Context** *(ACCESSIBILITY v QUALITY)*
  - inaccessible despite high quality – little value
  - more high quality provision than needed - some maybe of little value
  - little provision and mediocre quality – some maybe valuable

- **Level & Type of Use** *(USAGE)*
  - poorly used spaces – little value (but maybe of some visual value)
  - well used spaces – high value (also means by wildlife)
  - where low value – policy = relocate / ↑ usage / ↑ benefits

- **Wider Benefits**
  - biodiversity and wider environment
  - structural and landscape benefits
  - ecological
  - educational
  - social inclusion / health benefits
  - cultural and heritage
  - sense of place
  - economic benefits – enhance property value etc

**Combining Quality and Value**

In assessment examples could include:

i) good quality, good accessibility sites, with significant wider benefits that are not being used – in this case questions maybe why this site is not being used

ii) poor quality, good accessibility, high usage – in this instance a possible investigation increasing the quality will enhance the user experience

iii) good quality, poor accessibility, with significant wider benefits but low usage – in this instance the low usage maybe a result of the low accessibility and with the quality and wider benefits being very positive improving the accessibility at this site maybe a priority over other sites.

There are so many combinations that sites can be put into different priority categories and therefore this analysis provides a comprehensive review and will help with any future decision making etc

Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning. This can be done simply through comparing value with quality (see diagram) or more detailed in assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites (assessment chart)
Assessment Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Quality / Low Value</td>
<td>High Quality / High Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Enhance value in its primary purpose</td>
<td>i) Protect all open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Re-delegate to other purpose to increase value</td>
<td>Vision: for all open spaces within this category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Change of use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Quality / Low Value</td>
<td>Low Quality / High Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Enhance quality &amp; enhance value</td>
<td>i) Enhance quality where possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Re-delegate to other purpose to increase value</td>
<td>ii) Protect open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not possible, maybe surplus to requirements in terms of present primary purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is not an exclusive assessment chart as wider benefits need to be taken into account, but leads the way in identifying priorities and actions from simple quality, usage and accessibility assessments. Each action is listed in priority order i.e. if the first action is undertaken and unsuccessful, consider second action etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Protect – highest valued sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| High    | Low   | Low           | Enhance value in its primary purpose – increase accessibility to increase usage  
Re-delegate to other ‘open space’ purpose to try and increase value (usage and accessibility etc)  
Consider change of use | |
| High    | High  | Low           | Address accessibility issues as a priority – increase and/or maintain usage at a high level  
Protect due to high usage value and quality of the site. | |
| High    | Low   | High          | Investigate whether primary purpose of open space site is appropriate sue to low usage  
Consider change of open space use  
Maintain the high quality and accessibility features of the site if usage can be addressed either through change of open space or other means. | |
| Low     | Low   | Low           | Enhance quality & enhance value – address accessibility issues  
Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase value (usage) – refer to demand for other open spaces  
If not possible, maybe surplus to requirements. | |
| Low     | High  | High          | Enhance quality where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience  
Protect open space as value is high | |
| Low     | High  | Low           | Enhance quality and accessibility where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience  
Protect open space as value is high in terms of high usage rates by the local community. | |
| Low     | Low   | High          | Enhance quality – may increase usage with no problems with accessibility.  
Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase usage – refer to demand for other open spaces  
If not possible or not required, maybe surplus to requirements. | |
NOTE: surpluses and deficiencies need to be considered across all typologies simultaneously to undertake appropriate analysis. There will be different approaches to each action depending on the circumstances – see table for details.
## Allotments score sheet

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<th>Quality Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Halton View Allotments</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avondale Road Allotments</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath Road Allotments</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54.4</td>
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<td>Haddocks Wood Allotments</td>
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<td>70.9</td>
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## Natural and semi-natural score sheet

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<td>Ice House Plantation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moorfield Recreation Club</td>
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<td>64.4</td>
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# Young people and children score sheet

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# Parks and gardens score sheet

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| OUT | Deficiency | • Highest priority for **NEW** provision of open space typology  
• PROTECT existing sites  
• ENHANCE accessibility to existing open space sites where possible |
| OUT | Surplus (this type of open space) | • ENHANCE accessibility to existing open space sites where possible  
• Consider **PRO-ACTIVE** approach of disposal of surplus areas to acquire resources to provide **NEW** provision in areas outside effective catchment of existing sites |
| OUT | Surplus (other types of open space) | • Consider **RE-DESIGNATION** of other open space typology sites in areas outside effective catchment particularly where surpluses are indicated of these other open space typologies.  
• If other typologies are in surplus within the area and re-designation is not appropriate consider **PRO-ACTIVE** approach of disposal to acquire resources to provide **NEW** provision in areas outside effective catchment of existing sites |
| IN | Deficiency | • ENHANCE accessibility to existing open space sites where possible  
• Possible need for **NEW** provision – through provision of new sites or extended provision of existing sites  
Note: further analysis maybe required to determine where the quantity **deficiency** is concentrated within the analysis area |
| IN | Surplus | • Lowest Priority for additional provision  
• Consider **RE-DESIGNATION** of sites to other open space types which are deficient in quantity terms in this catchment area  
• If other typologies are deficient within the catchment and re-designation is not appropriate consider **PRO-ACTIVE** approach of disposal to acquire resources to provide **NEW** provision  
*Note: further analysis maybe required to determine where the quantity **surplus** is concentrated within the analysis area* |