Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Open Space, Sport & Recreational Facilities Study
July 2011
1. Introduction

Introduction and background

The study

1.1 In September 2009 pmpgenesis was commissioned by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (the Council) to undertake an assessment of open space, and recreational facilities across Hinckley and Bosworth Borough. Pmpgenesis went into administration in July 2010 and the study was then finalised by S and LP Consultancy. The key aims of the study are to:

- Identify local needs in relation to the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough up to 2026 by assessing local needs and auditing current provision;
- Provide a record of existing sites (public and private) in a format which can be used by development control officers in the application of Section 106 (S106) contributions;
- Develop a consistent and uniform database for recording quantitative and qualitative information on all public and private open space, sport and recreation facilities identified;
- Set local quantitative, qualitative, accessibility and design provision standards for open space, sport and recreation facilities;
- Evaluate the adequacy of existing open space, sport and recreation provision in relation to the local standards set, for both current and future years; and
- Provide a clear framework for practical action to protect and improve open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough including consideration of the Council’s preferred strategic growth options.

1.2 This document sets out the key findings of the open space, sport and recreation assessment and has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide (September 2002) as well as the Best Practice Guidance for the preparation of open space strategies (CABE Space and Mayor of London May 2009).

1.3 In addition to enabling the Council to adopt a clear vision for the future delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities, this assessment will form an important component of the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) and will facilitate informed decision making with regards open space, sport and recreation facilities. This study will also replace the Green Space Strategy and will inform the preparation of the Green Space Delivery Plan. It should be read in conjunction with the Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy.

1.4 The TellUS4 national survey measures children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and open spaces (national indicator NI199). 54.4% of children and young people in Leicestershire indicate that they are satisfied in comparison with the national average of 54.1%. This suggests that parks and play areas are just above average in Leicestershire County.
1.5 Improved parks and open spaces is a key priority of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. According to the recently completed Place Survey (2008), 67% of residents are satisfied with the quality of parks and open spaces. This places the Borough in the bottom 40% in terms of overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the survey indicates that only 34% of residents in the Borough are satisfied with sports facilities, meaning that satisfaction with sports facilities is higher in 80% of local authorities in England.

1.6 The Hinckley and Bosworth Citizen’s Panel also measures satisfaction for parks and open spaces and presents a more positive picture. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces in January 2011 was 92%, which is much higher than in 2008/2009 when 64% of residents were satisfied. The percentage of residents who think that over the past three years access to nature has improved or stayed the same decreased slightly from the 2009 to 2010 surveys. In January 2011, 89% of respondents in were satisfied with the quality of play areas.

1.7 This assessment of open space, sport and recreation provision provides an important platform for future decision making to improve these facilities.

Why public open space?

1.8 Recognition of the role that open spaces play in supporting the implementation of both national and local objectives is essential if the benefits that can be derived from open spaces are to be maximised.

1.9 The profile of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is becoming increasingly high on the national stage and the value placed on open spaces by local communities is reflected in the Park Life Report (Greenspace, June 2007), which indicates that 92% of all those questioned had visited a park within the last month.

1.10 On a national level, PPG17 states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, many of which are also reflective of local priorities across Hinckley and Bosworth. These include:

- Supporting an urban renaissance;
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion;
- Enhancing health and well being; and
- Promoting more sustainable development.

1.11 The value of open space is not just recreational. The strategic contribution that open spaces can make to the wider environment includes:

- Defining the local landscape character and providing an appropriate context and setting for built development and infrastructure;
- Helping to achieve a softer interface between urban and rural environments;
- Emphasising the presence of particular natural features within the landscape;
- Supporting habitats and local wildlife;
- Promoting and protecting biodiversity and habitat creation; and
- Adapting to climate change and reducing flood risk.

1.12 The foreword to the recently produced guide to the production of open space strategies (CABE Space and Mayor of London 2009) states that:

‘Open space has never been more important than it is today. In the face of new environmental, social and economic challenges, it is essential to our quality of life, our health and well-being and to ensuring a more sustainable future for all. Creation, protection and improvement of a high quality open space network should be at the heart of every authority’s vision for an area.’
1.13 This guidance also reinforces the importance of considering open space, sport and recreation facilities within the planning system. The Government White Paper (May 2007) highlights that minimising climate change and the protection of the environment are two of the key challenges to be addressed. ‘Adapting Public Space to Climate Change’ (CABE Space 2009) states that adaptation to climate change means making towns and cities more resilient and advises that well-designed, flexible public spaces offer the most effective opportunity to adapt to threats. The document goes on to highlight that:

‘Spaces that are softer, greener, more organic and natural will store water and are critical to modifying urban temperatures. Green spaces with a generous planting of trees link to form a network offering cooler, cleaner air........ Urban green spaces form a natural infrastructure that is as critical to support urban life as streets, railways, drainage and sewers’.

1.14 Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council has signed the ‘Nottingham Declaration’ on climate change, demonstrating its commitment to reduce its own emissions of ‘greenhouse gases’ and to support others to do the same. Effective planning and provision of open spaces across the Borough will be central to the achievement of this objective.

1.15 Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) (Local Spatial Planning 2008) reinforces the importance of spatial planning in creating strong and prosperous communities. Consideration of the green infrastructure and the creation of a positive framework for the protection, development and enhancement of open space will contribute to the overall achievement of sustainable development. PPS3 (Housing 2010), PPS4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth 2009), PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation 2005), and PPS25 (Planning and Flood Risk 2006) all specifically reference the importance of appropriately designed open space in the creation of sustainable communities.

**Multifunctional open spaces**

1.16 Almost all open spaces have both primary and secondary functions. For example, outdoor sports facilities frequently function as amenity areas and many cemeteries are also havens for wildlife and encourage biodiversity. Provision of a balance of different types of open space is essential to meet local aspirations. These aspirations may vary from place to place and change over time.

1.17 Changing social and economic circumstances, work and leisure practices, more sophisticated consumer tastes and higher public expectations have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from developers. While the provision of open spaces can be challenging, they can promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector.

1.18 Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wider range of people than some sport and leisure facilities and are therefore better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation facilities is key to an ideal, sustainable and thriving community. The Park Life Report (Green Space June 2007) highlighted that 83% of those surveyed feel that parks are the focal point of a community.

1.19 The benefits of open space are further outlined in Appendix A.

**The local context**

1.20 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is a largely rural Borough located in south west Leicestershire. The majority of the population live in the main urban settlements of Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton in the south of the Borough. Other settlements of various sizes are dispersed across the Borough. Population density in Hinckley and Bosworth is above the East Midlands average (3.37 people per hectare compared to 2.67 people per hectare) but falls below the UK average population density of 3.77 people per hectare.

1.21 The Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy indentifies that together, Burbage, Barwell, Earl Shilton and Hinckley form the sub-regional centre within the Borough. In the Core Strategy it is referred to as the urban area of Hinckley and Bosworth, with each settlement containing an urban core. This overall urban area
provides services, employment, leisure and a range of travel modes to the surrounding population as well as to the local residents. The core strategy indicates that population growth will be focused in these areas.

1.22 Older residents are making up an increasing proportion of the Borough’s population and in contrast, numbers of children and young people are predicted to decline (Office of National Statistics, Census 2001). Of those residents who are of working age, the Census 2001 indicated that there are a higher proportion of residents in full time employment (45.6%) compared to the East Midlands (41.06%) and nationally. The significant majority of residents currently travel to work by car (72%) and there is a net outflow of employees to the administrative areas of Leicester, Blaby, Nuneaton and Bedworth.

1.23 As a whole, the Borough has relatively low levels of deprivation, with the Borough ranked 283 out of 354 local authorities according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 (where 1 is the most deprived and 354 the least). However, despite this, pockets of deprivation do exist. The most deprived areas in the Borough are Hinckley, Earl Shilton, Barwell and Burbage and these settlements fall within the top 10 most deprived areas in Leicestershire. Deprivation is most prevalent in relation to education, skills, training, income, environment, health, crime and employment. The Bagworth & Thornton ward also suffers from income deprivation affecting children (children aged under 16 years who live in income deprived households, that is, living below 60% of medium income), and is ranked within the 10% most income deprived areas in England.

1.24 While a lack of skills, low incomes, crime and a poor environment affect parts of the urban areas and the former coalfield, isolation from local services is an issue in the rural areas, especially in parts of the more sparsely populated west of the Borough. There are two wards which feature in the 10% most deprived wards in relation to access of services nationally and a further three which are in the bottom 20%.

1.25 There are also health inequalities within the Borough. For example, men in the least deprived areas can expect to live more than four years longer than those in the most deprived areas (Association of Public Health Observatories Department of Health Profile 2009). Effective open space, sport and recreation provision is an important means of increasing physical activity and improving the health of the local population.

1.26 Raising participation in sport and physical activity is critical for improving the health of Hinckley & Bosworth residents. Current levels of participation in the Borough are good, at 22% (Active People Survey 2) but have fallen from 23.7%, as measured by the Active People Survey 1 in 2005/06. Furthermore, levels of physical activity among school children appear to be significantly worse than the average for England (APHO Department of Health Profile 2009).

1.27 Both the Community Plan and the Core Strategy identify the importance of open space, sport and recreation facilities in Hinckley & Bosworth.

1.28 The Hinckley and Bosworth Community Plan sets out the vision for the Borough in 2026. The Plan seeks to ensure that the quality of the Borough’s environment will be highly valued by local people. To achieve this aim, improved landscape quality, biodiversity and recreational opportunities and environmentally friendly new developments will be key factors.

1.29 The Core Strategy (2009) seeks to facilitate the creation of a comprehensive and high quality network of green infrastructure, facilities for sports and arts activities and meetings and events that are easily accessible to all. It targets an improvement of the Borough’s unique built, historic and natural environment.

1.30 Map 1.1 overleaf illustrates the geographical location of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, as well as the density of the population within the Borough.
Report structure

1.31 As highlighted, this report summarises the assessment of open space sport and recreation facilities across Hinckley and Bosworth. It is split into 13 sections as follows:

- Section Two – Methodology (Page 8)
- Section Three – Strategic Context (Page 20)
- Section Four – Parks and Gardens (Page 39)
SECTION 2 - METHODOLOGY

2. Methodology

2.1 As highlighted in Section 1, this study has been undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its Companion Guide as well as the Best Practice Guide to the preparation of Open Space Strategies (CABE Space and Mayor of London 2009). PPG17 emphasises the importance of making decisions based on local needs and aspirations as opposed to following national trends and guidelines.

2.2 The Companion Guide indicates that the four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:

• (i) understanding that local needs will vary according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
• (ii) recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
• (iii) considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
• (iv) taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment

2.3 Paragraph 7 states that “local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas”. PPG17 sets out the Government’s belief that national standards are inappropriate as they do not take into account the demographics of an area, the specific needs of residents and the extent of built development.
2.4 Setting local standards through the PPG17 process therefore ensures that the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities is tailored to the needs and aspirations of local residents as well as the characteristics and environment of the Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth.

Types of open space

2.5 The overall definition of open space within PPG17 is:

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

2.6 PPG17 identifies 10 typologies including nine types of green space and one type of urban open space. It states that when preparing assessments of needs and audits of existing open space and recreation facilities, local authorities should use these typologies, or variations of it. These typologies are based on the primary purpose of a site.

2.7 Table 2.1 sets out the typologies used for this assessment of open space across Hinckley and Bosworth. For information purposes, it also outlines the correlation between the typologies used for this assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities, and the typologies set out in the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy Policy 19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Description and Examples</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Correlation with Core Strategy Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Gardens</td>
<td>Includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks Subdivided into:</td>
<td>informal recreation</td>
<td>Includes District Parks and Green Space and Neighbourhood Parks and Green Spaces.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal Parks for example, Hollycroft Park, Clarendon Park, Ferndale Park</td>
<td>community events</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Country Parks (offering easy access for countryside recreation) for example, Market Bosworth Country Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces</td>
<td>Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (example downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water and wastelands.</td>
<td>wildlife conservation</td>
<td>Correlates with Accessible Natural Open Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>biodiversity</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>environmental</td>
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<td>education and</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Amenity Greenspace                      | Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens. | • informal activities close to home or work  
• enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas | Links with incidental/amenity green space and casual/informal play space. Some sites included within this PPG17 category may also fit into the local parks category. |
| Provision for Children and Teenagers | Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people. | • equipped play areas  
• ball courts  
• outdoor basketball hoop areas  
• skateboard areas  
• teenage shelters and ‘hangouts’ | Correlates with the equipped children’s play space typology |

**Typology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description and Examples</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Correlation with Core Strategy Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields. | • outdoor sports pitches  
• tennis and bowls  
• golf courses  
• athletics  
• playing fields (including school playing fields)  
• water sports | Correlates directly with outdoor sports facilities typology |
| Allotments | Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. | • growing vegetables and other root crops  
N.B. does not include private gardens | No direct correlation |
| Cemeteries and Churchyards | Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds. | • quiet contemplation  
• burial of the dead  
• wildlife conservation  
• promotion of biodiversity | No direct correlation |
| Green Corridors | Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. | • walking, cycling or horse riding  
• leisure purposes or travel  
• opportunities for wildlife migration | No direct correlation |
| Indoor Sport and Recreation | Opportunities for participation in indoor sport and recreation | • sports halls  
• swimming pools  
• indoor bowls  
• indoor tennis  
• community halls | No direct correlation |
In addition to considering the primary purpose of each site, the secondary and tertiary function of each type of open space has also been considered. For example, in some settlements, the sports facility may also function as amenity space for informal recreation.

Although not a type of open space, PPG17 also highlights the importance of evaluating the provision of indoor sports facilities. Sports halls, swimming pools, indoor tennis, indoor bowls and community halls within Hinckley and Bosworth are discussed within Section Nine of this report.

**PPPG 17 – five step process**

The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five-step process for undertaking a local assessment of open space.

The Best Practice Guidance note for the preparation of open space strategies advocates a six stage approach which includes scoping of the document as the first stage and the development of a strategy and action plan.

The key stages that have been followed as part of this assessment are compliant with PPG17 and therefore include:

- Step 1 – identifying local needs
- Step 2 – auditing local provision
- Step 3 – setting provision standards
- Step 4 – applying provision standards
- Step 5 – developing strategy and informing policies

The tasks included within each step are detailed below.

**Step 1 - identifying local needs**

PPG17 states that community consultation is essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision. The guidance relies less on the implementation of national standards and places increased emphasis on local needs. The guide to the preparation of open space strategies further supports the need to identify community aspirations.

A balance of statistical and subjective consultations was carried out in order to ensure that a wide variety of opinions were heard. Subjective consultation provides an opportunity to test the key themes arising from the statistical evidence.

Consultations carried out included:

- Household questionnaires
- Internet survey for children and young people
- A workshop session for stakeholders including external agencies
- Workshop sessions for sports clubs and Parish Councils
- Questionnaires for sports clubs, allotment holders and Friends of Parks groups
- An informal consultation day at Hinckley Market
- One-to-one consultations with Council officers and an online officer consultation survey

The following paragraphs provide more detail on each of the key elements of the consultation.

**Household survey**

The household survey provides an opportunity for randomly selected households to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open spaces as well as to identify their aspirations for future provision.
2.19 5000 questionnaires were distributed to households to capture the views of both users and nonusers of open spaces. Residents were randomly selected from the electoral register.

2.20 Random distribution of questionnaires to a geographically representative sample ensures that representatives from all age groups, ethnic groups and genders were provided with the opportunity to give their views. In order to promote an even response rate that is representative of the population profile, residents with the next birthday in each household were asked to complete the questionnaire. A copy of the household survey and accompanying covering letter can be found in Appendix B.

2.21 474 postal surveys were returned and completed to a satisfactory standard. By obtaining more than 400 responses means that the results are accurate to +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval. This data source therefore provides a reliable evidence base that can be used as the basis for setting standards.

2.22 Surveys were distributed and colour coded to enable identification of the response area. Postcodes of respondents were also recorded. This means that it is possible to identify how views vary according to where people live.

2.23 All responses to the questionnaire are recorded in an Access 2000 Database which will be provided to the Council at the end of the study.

Internet survey for children and young people

2.24 Children are frequent users of open space, sport and recreation facilities so it is important to understand their views.

2.25 Two questionnaires were posted on the internet: one aimed at pupils of a primary school age and one aimed at older children and young people. All schools within the Borough were notified of the website address by post and asked to encourage their pupils to complete the questionnaires.

2.26 102 survey responses were received from children and 2 responses from young people.

Workshops

2.27 Workshops were designed to provide community groups with an opportunity to provide more detailed input into the study and provide their opinions on the current and future provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities across Hinckley and Bosworth.

2.28 The workshops help to test the findings of the statistical consultations and provide further detail on some of the issues arising. Workshop sessions were held at Florence House, Hinckley, on:
   • Monday 26\(^{th}\) October 2009 – 2pm and 6.30pm for Parish Councils
   • Monday 2\(^{nd}\) November 2009 – 6.30 pm for sports clubs
   • Thursday 5\(^{th}\) November 2009 – 10am for external agencies and key stakeholders

2.29 All those unable to attend the workshops were offered the opportunity to participate in the study by completing a questionnaire.

User group surveys - Sports Clubs, Friends Groups and Allotment Holders

2.30 Surveys were distributed to all known sports clubs across the Borough. One survey specifically targeted clubs participating in pitch sports while the other focused on those which use other outdoor and indoor venues. These surveys were also posted online to maximise the response rate and provide clubs with several opportunities to participate.

2.31 22 sports clubs (12 pitch sport and 10 others) returned the questionnaire. Sports clubs were also provided with the opportunity to attend the sports clubs workshop.

2.32 All allotment holders using sites owned and managed by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council were sent a questionnaire. This survey was also available online. A total of 20 responses were received.
Surveys were also distributed to the two friends groups which operate at parks in the Borough. Friends of Hollycroft Park responded.

**Drop-in session – Hinckley Market**

A drop-in session was held on Friday 16th October at Hinckley Market. The session provided members of the public with an opportunity to give their views on open space, sport and recreation facilities and also enabled the views of visitors to the local area to be recorded.

**Internal officers**

Consultations with Council officers were held in order to understand the work, focus and key priorities of the Council and to provide a detailed strategic and practical overview to put the study in context.

In addition, an online survey was circulated to Council officers. This offered the opportunity to express views from both a personal and professional perspective and provides an insight into the views of people who work but perhaps do not live in the area, as well as those who reside within the Borough.

A selection of Council officers from different departments were also invited to the workshop session for external agencies.

**Step 2 - auditing local provision**

PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space, sport and recreation facilities irrespective of ownership. The logic for this is that all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs.

A detailed audit of provision of open space was carried out by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council in line with the typologies summarised earlier in this section. A desk based audit exercise was then undertaken by pmpgenesis to cross check the existing data and identify any omitted sites.

The multi functionality of open space presents a challenge to the auditing process. In order to address this issue, all spaces have been classified by their primary purpose. This ensures that all spaces are counted only once, but does not negate the need to consider the relationships between different types of open space as part of the study.

Where there is a definitive facility within a larger site (for example, a play area or sports pitch within a park) this site has been subdivided to ensure that the various opportunities offered are all considered.

Sites offering more than one type of recreational open space (for example, parks containing natural areas) have been classified under their primary purpose, although the multidimensional nature of the sites will be recognised within the individual sections of this report.

In line with PPG17, grass verges and farmland are excluded from consideration. Private gardens are also excluded.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the audit, it must be noted that the omission of a site does not necessarily mean that it is not considered to be green space and that policies relating to green space are not applicable. Updating the audit will be an ongoing process and the audit will be constantly refined in response to changes in the Borough.

Following the desk based audit, site assessments were carried out at each site to verify the typology. In addition to verifying the audit, it is also important to evaluate the quality of existing sites. Audits of quality are particularly important as they allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.

Sites were evaluated against a matrix enabling comparisons between sites in the same typology and across typologies. Sites were rated against the following attributes:

- Accessibility
- Quality
• Wider benefits

2.47 The site assessment process resulted in an overall quality and accessibility score for each site in addition to ratings for each individual factor. The site assessment sheets used are contained within Appendix C.

Steps 3 and 4 - setting and applying provision standards

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

2.49 Local authorities should use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (stage 1) to set local standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities. In order to ensure that the recommended local standards are directly representative of local needs in Hinckley and Bosworth, standards have been derived directly from the findings of the consultations as well as the analysis of existing provision.

2.50 PPG17 recommends that local standards should include:
• Quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed)
• A qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities)
• Accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility)

2.51 Table 2.3 briefly summarises the process that has been adopted for setting local standards. Standards were set during a workshop that was attended by representatives from a range of Council departments.

Table 2.3 – Standard Setting Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Stage</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National standards</td>
<td>Analysis of any existing national standards for each typology. These are usually provided by national organisations example Fields in Trust for playing pitches. It is important to ensure that national standards are taken into account as part of determination of local standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing local standards</td>
<td>Consideration of existing local standards for each typology that are currently applied by the Council. These include standards set out in local planning documents and in other adopted strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current provision (quantity standards only)</td>
<td>Assessment of the current quantity of provision within the local authority area as a whole and within each of the settlement hierarchies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>Figures detailing local standards set by pmpgenesis for other open space projects to provide a benchmark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation (household survey)</td>
<td>Consideration of the findings of the household survey with regards the provision of each type of open space. This analysis provides a robust indication (at the Borough wide 95% confidence level) of public perception of the existing provision and aspirations for future provision of all different types of open spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation comments</td>
<td>Results from qualitative consultations are used to test the key themes emerging from the statistical evidence base and to determine issues of priority importance to residents. These feed in to the standards set.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
pmpgenesis recommendation

pmpgenesis recommendation of a local standard. The standard is based on an assessment of the local community need and will be in the form of:

- quantity – x hectares per 1000 population
- accessibility – a distance threshold in metres
- quality – a list of essential and desirable features

| Justification | Full justifications for the recommended local standard based on qualitative and quantitative consultations are provided for each typology. |

2.52 A brief explanation of the purpose of setting each type of standard is set out below and overleaf.

**Accessibility**

2.53 Accessibility is a key criterion for open space sites. Without good access, the provision of high quality open space would be of limited value. The overall aim of accessibility standards is to identify:

- How accessible sites are
- How far people are willing to travel to reach open space
- Areas that are deficient in provision (identified through the application of local standards)

2.54 Accessibility standards should be derived from an understanding of community views, particularly with regards to the maximum distance that members of the public are willing to travel.

2.55 Accessibility standards are set in the form of distance thresholds (i.e. the maximum distance that regular users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport). Application of these standards will then facilitate the identification of areas where residents do not have appropriate access to facilities.

**Quantity**

2.56 The open space audit gives an understanding of the quantity of provision for each type of open space in the Borough. This level of detail enables the calculation of the amount (hectares) of each type of open space per 1,000 population.

2.57 Quantity standards are developed in conjunction with accessibility standards. The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:

- Provide an understanding of the adequacy of existing provision for each type of open space
- Establish areas suffering from deficiency of provision of each type of open space
- Provide a guide to developers as to the amount of open space expected in conjunction with new development

2.58 This assessment measures the quantity of provision against the current population. The implications of future population growth are also considered and the likely focus of growth in Barwell and Earl Shilton is taken into account.

**Quality**

2.59 The quality and value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. Two examples of this are:

- A high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Usage is therefore restricted and as a result the value of the site to the public is limited
2.60 The overall aim of a quality assessment should be to identify deficiencies in quality and key quality factors that need to be improved within:

• Different geographical areas
• Specific types of open space

2.61 The quality standards set as part of the study are intended to provide information on the key features of open space that are important to local residents. Sites are then assessed and given a score for a range of factors including:

• Cleanliness and maintenance
• Security and safety
• Vegetation
• Ancillary accommodation

2.62 Each element of quality is rated on a scale of very good (5 points) to poor (1 point) and a total percentage score is then calculated. Where an element of provision (such as toilets) is considered to be not applicable, this will not be taken into account in the calculation of the percentage score.

2.63 Following the calculation of the total scores achieved during site visits, sites can then be benchmarked against each other. The quality of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will be evaluated in the later sections of this report. Appendices E, F, G and H provide information to support the standard setting process.

Application of Local Standards

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

2.65 In accordance with the PPG17 Companion Guide, a strategic framework for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy for the planning, delivery, management and monitoring of open space, sport and recreation facilities should have four basic components, specifically:

• Geographical areas where existing provision is protected - where the existing level of provision is below or the same as the recommended quantity standard, sites should be protected. Sites of high value to the community should also be protected

• Areas where existing provision should be enhanced - there are two discrete instances where existing provision may be in need of enhancement. In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision but no accessibility issues the Council may wish to increase the capacity of existing provision. Alternatively, in areas where facilities or spaces do not meet the relevant quality standards, enhancements will be required. Site assessments will inform qualitative improvements

• Areas where existing provision should be relocated or redesignated - in order to meet local needs more effectively or make better overall use of land it may be necessary to relocate or redesignate some existing sites

• Areas where new provision should be considered - new sites should be located either in areas within the accessibility catchments of existing provision but where there is a quantitative deficiency or in areas outside of catchments. The proposed quantity and location of population growth should be taken into account when determining the most appropriate location for new facilities

2.66 In addition to the above four key components, the potential for disposal of open spaces will be considered. Areas where accessibility improvements are required will also be highlighted.
The findings of this study should also be used to guide the levels of contribution required for each type of open space within new developments.

The recommendations contained within the report are based on the findings of the application of the local standards for each typology and in the specific settlement hierarchies. They should be used to inform future policy and site allocations as well to inform the creation of proactive strategies for the ongoing maintenance and improvement of open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough.

The Geographical Area

Analysis of the open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough has been undertaken both Borough wide and also by settlement hierarchy. The settlement hierarchy used is based on the approach set out within the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy.

Analysis by settlement hierarchy allows examination of data by size of settlement and ensures that differences in views and aspirations across the Borough are understood.

Although settlement hierarchies have been used to guide the standard setting and analysis process, the application of local standards will enable the identification of priorities at settlement level.

Population figures have been extracted from the most up to date and accurate data available at the time of writing. For the urban areas, 2004 ward based populations have been used and for the more rural areas, Parish Populations of the same year have been used (both sourced from Leicestershire Small Area Population and Household Estimates). In order to ascertain the populations within each settlement hierarchy, the same data has been used. Where a Parish contains settlements falling into more than one hierarchy, the population has been assigned to the hierarchy that includes the larger settlement in the Parish.

To project future population growth, the number of additional houses required has been taken directly from the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy. An occupancy of 2.4 for each house has been assumed, enabling an estimate of the likely population in each of the settlement hierarchies by 2026. The resulting population figure is broadly in line with the 2008 Sub National Population Projections. Full population projections are provided in Appendix I.

Table 2.2 details the settlements falling into each level of the settlement hierarchy. Where a site is not associated with a particular settlement, it is within the countryside categorisation. Analysis and application of the accessibility standards will consider the location of sites regardless of which settlement hierarchy they fall into.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Settlements included</th>
<th>Current Population</th>
<th>Future Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Hinckley, Earl Shilton, Barwell, Burbage</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>80,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Rural Centres</td>
<td>Desford, Groby, Ratby, Markfield (all relate to Leicester)</td>
<td>31,110</td>
<td>32,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bagworth, Thornton (all relate to the National Forest)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barlestone, Market Bosworth, Newbold Verdon, Stoke Golding (stand alone)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Villages</td>
<td>Congerstone, Higham on the Hill, Nailstone, Sheepy Magna, Standon under Bardon, Twycross, Witherley</td>
<td>6,260</td>
<td>6,606</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>Outside of any of the above settlements</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3. Strategic Context

Introduction

3.1 This section provides a local strategic context for the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities and outlines the main strategic documents and their links to this open space, sport and recreation facility audit and strategy. It is essential to ensure that local provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities in Hinckley and Bosworth contributes to the wider national, regional and local agendas.

Strategic context

3.2 This strategic review summarises the context for open space, sport and recreation facilities on a national, regional and local basis.

3.3 As indicated, Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and the Companion Guide, ‘Assessing Needs and Opportunities’ are the key overarching documents to shape this study. They reflect a recognition from the Government of the wider benefits derived from the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities, including:

- Supporting an urban renaissance
- Supporting a rural renewal
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
- Health and well being
- Promoting sustainable development

3.4 In addition to PPG17, there are numerous other national documents and agencies that shape the strategic context for open spaces, sport and recreation facilities across the country and as such influence the provision of facilities and the findings of this report.

3.5 Appendix D sets out the national strategic context, including CABE’s Open Space Strategies Best Practice Guidance (2009).

3.6 Table 3.1 overleaf sets out the regional and local context for Hinckley and Bosworth, considering the overarching documents and their relationship to this study. Documents specific to one type of open space will be included within the typology specific sections 4 – 12.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
<th>Key Issues and Priorities</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, sport and recreation provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional and County-Wide Documents</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicestershire and Rutland Sports Facilities Strategic Framework (2010-2013)</td>
<td>A County-wide sports facilities strategic framework has been developed by Leicestershire and Rutland Sport. The study has involved extensive research and consultation to assess existing provision in terms of quantity, quality and access. A key issue for the authority which should be considered going forward is the suggestion that Hinckley &amp; Bosworth has seen the highest drop in satisfaction regarding sporting facilities in the area.</td>
<td>This PPG17 study provides a localised picture of outdoor and indoor sports and supports the sub-regional strategy for the future delivery of sports facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy

The 6Cs Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy is currently being developed to provide a long term vision and strategic framework for delivery of green infrastructure across the 6Cs Growth Point which encapsulates all Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire authorities.

The Strategy will aim to protect, enhance and extend networks of green spaces and natural elements in and around the three cities, connecting with their surrounding towns and villages. The Strategy also aims to facilitate a major step-change in the scale, quality and connectivity of green infrastructure assets across the 6Cs area, to match the scale of new growth proposed and provide a focus for attracting and retaining sustainable development and investment. This will be achieved by protecting and enhancing existing assets and creating extensive new green infrastructure, and finding suitably resourced mechanisms for the long term management of both.

The Strategy is being driven via a partnership of local authorities and environmental organisations called the 6Cs Strategic Green Infrastructure Project Board with support of external consultants, Chris Blandford Associates. The strategic planning framework and action plan is due to be completed and signed off by Spring/Summer 2010.

This PPG17 study draws on the findings of this Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy and provides a more localised picture for Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council. The identified sub regional importance of Green Infrastructure in Hinckley (including Barwell and Earl Shilton SUE’s) means that the findings of this PPG17 study and the key priorities identified are of particular importance across the 6C’s area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
<th>Key Issues and Priorities</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, s</th>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands Biodiversity Strategy</td>
<td>The East Midlands Biodiversity Strategy notes the contribution wildlife and all biodiversity makes to people’s enjoyment of, and interaction with, the environment. The document observes that the levels of biodiversity in the region have greatly reduced and are still declining in many areas in both range of species and quality of habitats. It promotes the creation and inclusion of policies in relevant documents that can mitigate this. The key challenges documented in the plan include the need to put (and keep) wildlife at the forefront, to promote the link between people’s health and happiness through interaction and enjoyment of wildlife, the benefits of increasing economic contribution to biodiversity and being aware and publicising the varieties of wildlife and habits throughout.</td>
<td>The information set out in the PPG17 study will inform where Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council can promote green spaces which may invite biodiversity to spread to new areas. It will also inform the conservation of existing spaces which are already rich in wildlife or that could benefit from improvements which will benefit current habitats that might otherwise be depleted.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sport England Strategy 2008 - 2011</td>
<td>The Sport England Strategy aims to address the fundamental challenges facing sport, and particularly community sport, in England. For Sport England, sport can and does play a major role in achieving wider social and economic benefits—notably on the health front. Sport England believes that working alongside local authorities can help exploit this benefit. The Strategy notes that through the financial contributions made in the planning process, and the uptake of National Indicator 8, both monetary and social investment in sport can boost the performance of sport.</td>
<td>Whilst the Sport England Strategy does not have a direct impact upon the PPG17 study, its commitment to sport and health tie-in with the aspirations for community sport set by England and will be benefitted by the increase in investment in green and recreational spaces that will occur as a result of the information set out in the PPG17 assessment.</td>
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<td>across the country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities</td>
<td>Implications for this assessment of open space, sports and recreation provision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leicestershire &amp; Rutland Strategy for Sport 2009-2013</td>
<td>The purpose of the Strategy for Sport is to work in tandem with other plans to ensure that a safe and equitable environment for sport is created across Leicestershire and Rutland. The document notes that in order for the county to be successful in obtaining success in sport a wide array of partnerships and their plans, including Local Authorities, need to work together.</td>
<td>In order for the county ambitions to be achieved, adequate provision must be provided and this is where the PPG17 study can make an impact. Whilst the sport strategy is dominant to the up and development of sport, without adequate provision success will not be achievable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands Regional Plan (March 2009)</td>
<td>During the production of this Report the Government has announced its intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies. This has been reflected in the emerging Localism Bill which was introduced to Parliament on 13th December 2010. As a result of the Bill it will mean that the East Midlands Regional Plan will be abolished. At the time of writing this report however, the Regional Plan is still a material consideration. The aim of the Regional Plan is to ensure that all development in the area enhances the East Midlands to become a region where communities are sustainable and environmental and where social and economic well-being is evident. The strategy identifies the provision of green infrastructure as an essential element of delivering sustainable communities. The policies set out in the adopted regional plan help to set the context and heavily inform the preparation of Hinckley &amp; Bosworth’s Local Development Framework. The following policies are of key importance: Policy 1 sets out the key core objectives which should be taken into account in order to promote sustainable development. Objectives of specific relevance to green</td>
<td>This PPG17 study will develop standards based on local make recommendations which will contribute to the achieving the objectives of national, regional and local planning documentation.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
infrastructure are to:

• Protect and enhance the environmental quality of urban and rural settlements
• Improve the health and mental, physical and spiritual well being of the Region’s residents through access to health, cultural, leisure and recreation facilities and services
• Protect and enhance the environment
• Achieve a ‘step change’ increase in the level of the Region’s biodiversity
• Reduce the causes of climate change

Policy 26 sets out the principles of protecting and enhancing cultural heritage and reinforces that sustainable development should see the protection, management and enhancement of natural assets.

Policy 27 relates to the protection of the historic environment, stating that growth should promote sensitive change to the historic environment and give regard to green infrastructure and biodiversity.

Policy 28 indicates that local authorities, statutory environmental bodies and developers should work with the voluntary sector, landowners and local communities to ensure the delivery, protection and enhancement of Environmental Infrastructure across the Region. Priorities include:

• Protect and enhance green infrastructure and increase access to green space and ensure that development
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>does not increase pressure on sensitive sites</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Protect national designated sites</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Avoid damage to natural and historic assets or their settings</td>
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<td>• Ensure that unavoidable damage is minimised and clearly justified by a need for development in that location which outweighs the damage that would result</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensure unavoidable damage which cannot be mitigated should be compensated for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensure that there is a net increase in the quality and active management of natural and historic assets across the Region in ways that promote adaptation to climate change and an increase in the quantity of environmental assets generally</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy 29 relates to the need for protecting and enhancing biodiversity, promoting partnership working to protect and enhance biodiversity, including the creation of and protection of networks of natural open space.

Policy 30 relates to maintaining and increasing woodland cover - highlighting that opportunities to increase woodland cover through new development and other mechanisms should be taken.

Policy 41 identifies the regional priority for culture, sport and recreation, identifying the need to have studies which inform Local Development Frameworks and other relevant plans and strategies. Key elements of this include identifying needs for refurbishment, relocation of (and the provision of
### Strategy / Document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues and Priorities</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, sports, and recreation provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>new) facilities, establishing a quality standard and considering possible sources of funding for such works. This policy encourages partnership working with sport and recreation bodies to maximise benefits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Regional Plan’s vision for the Three Cities sub area, which includes the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, emphasises the importance of protection and enhancement of natural and cultural assets. Objectives for the subregional centres highlight the need to ensure that development is accompanied by adequate open space, whilst increasing the sub-area’s stock of strategic environmental and cultural assets. The document supports the provision of green infrastructure for existing and expanding communities, including access to green space that increases biodiversity, promotes healthy lifestyles and can be used for formal and informal recreation and educational purposes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on the value of green assets policy Three Cities SRS 5 – Green Infrastructure and National Forest should also be noted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Local Documents

Leicestershire Sustainable Communities The purpose of the Leicestershire Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) is to outline the things that the people of Leicestershire see as a priority. Priorities of relevance to this study include:

- **Outcome 1.2: Improved quality of life for people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.** This is with the base for the Council’s LDF in addition to particular relevance to the potential benefits for sections of society suffering from poor health, and the
### Key Issues and Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome 3.3: Increased resident satisfaction with the built environment and improved green infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 4.4: An enhanced accessible natural environment with improved protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 6.1: Improved physical health, well-being and community cohesion through enhanced access to sport, recreation and cultural activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 6.9: More people are physically active at a level which makes them healthier, which includes the sub-outcomes to improve more accessible facilities and opportunities for physical activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome 7.1: Access to facilities and services is enhanced across the County. Most importantly, improved access to sport, leisure and recreation is a sub outcome of this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Particular aspirations for the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough with regard to the increased growth that will be occurring through SUEs noted in the SCS, include:**

- **HB1.1:** The image of Hinckley is good - more people live in the Town Centre, there is a good range of shops, including specialist shops, more leisure and cultural and tourism facilities, and people feel safe in the Town Centre at all times

**Implications for this assessment of open space, recreation provision**

relating to green spaces, which will also contribute to the SCS and its aspirations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
<th>Key Issues and Priorities recreation provision</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB1.4: There is access to health facilities, sports facilities and all shops in Barwell</td>
<td>• The HBBC Community Plan sets out the priorities for improvement over a 5-year period and provides a primarily local platform for the implementation of the County Sustainable Communities Strategy in a more focused manner.</td>
<td>• The Hinckley &amp; Bosworth Community Plan provides interpretation of the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy and a partnership between the Borough and County Council with the health services, the police, parish councils, business and voluntary sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB1.8: There are more facilities, activities and meeting places for children and young people</td>
<td>The priorities set out in the HBBC Community Strategy of importance to this study are:</td>
<td>These groups have come together in the Hinckley &amp; Bosworth Local Strategic Partnership to produce the Community Plan. In order to oversee the delivery of the Community Plan. In areas of change, the Council will work directly with the partnership deliverers that change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB2.8: There are more facilities and activities for young people in Desford and the village hall has been improved</td>
<td>• To improve the quality of life in priority neighbourhoods which includes ensuring cleaner and greener neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Given the role of this PPG17 study as a strong evidence base for the Local Development Framework, information contained here will be able to inform both development plan documents and other greenfield development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB3.5: There are more facilities available to the elderly. Young people and young children in the Market Bosworth area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities for recreation provision</td>
<td>Implications for this assessment of open space, space strategies and action plans that are developed to improve the Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council Corporate Plan | Taking its thematic steer from both the Leicestershire Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Hinckley & Bosworth Community Plan, the aims of the Council’s Corporate Plan reflect those highlighted through both community plans and demonstrate consistency in the community improvement and plan making processes. Relevant to the PPG17 study are the following:  
• Cleaner and greener neighbourhoods, and particular commitments to minimising negative impacts on the environment and improving our green spaces and parks  
• Safer and healthier, by providing new and improved facilities for young people and encouraging more physical activity | The role of a Corporate Plan is to ensure that the plans and ambitions of a Local Authority are considered and monitored to check progress and communicate this to the public. The PPG17 study will be applicable in helping the documents that will be responsible for making sure these aims are achieved. Through the LDF, Green Spaces and relevant work of the leisure teams, the aspirations of the Council can be achieved. |
| Children and Young People’s Extended Services Strategy 2009 - 2011 | The role of the Children and Young People Extended Services Strategy is to advise on the changes and development in services required to improve access and outcomes for children and young people.  
This document is informed by a range of documents including community and corporate plans and those strategies which can have an impact on making a difference to how children and young people experience life. | Whilst this document does not offer any additional benefits than that already highlighted in other corporate documents, the focus of the content should not be disregarded. Completion of the PPG17 study and all of those documents subsequently informs will be of relevance to the success of the Extended Services Strategy where space strategies and action plans are provided, or prepared for. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
<th>Key Issues and Priorities recreation provision</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, srecreation provision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hinckley and Bosworth Council PPG17 Study      30</td>
<td>Most relevant to the work undertaken in the PPG17 Study is the aspiration to achieve ‘voice, choice, safety and fulfilment’. As part of this aspiration, the document notes the objective to ‘tackle the needs of teenagers’ by providing them with opportunities to enjoy sporting and recreational activities without fear for their safety or of upsetting others.</td>
<td>specific importance to the younger population in the area is clear that for the Extended Services Strategy it will not be enough to merely provide new (and repair existing) physical open space facilities, but ensure that it is conducted in a secure environment. It is a desire to use such spaces which may invite inappropriate behaviour if they are not appropriately designed. This poses a challenge in itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Regeneration Strategy 2009-2014</td>
<td>Whilst it may not be of obvious relevance to the PPG17 study, the Economic Regeneration Strategy (ERS) sees the economic benefit in leisure and recreation facilities by their contribution to regeneration and community cohesion. Strategic Objective 6 of the ERS is to widely promote the economic, social and environmental opportunities and assets available in the Borough, including tourism development and creative industries.</td>
<td>Successful implementation of strategies and document delivery effective areas of green space, recreation and leisure facilities is a key factor for achieving the objectives and targets of the Economic Regeneration Strategy. By having an abundance of valued green assets and sporting facilities the Borough is not only able to enjoy the economic benefit but also that of visitors and tourists to the borough who are drawn to Hinckley and Bosworth because of high quality assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Strategy</td>
<td>As the central development plan document in the Council’s LDF, the Core Strategy identifies both issues facing the Borough and looks at how the Council will aim to remedy such matters through objectives and policies which will be applied through the planning process. Issues of particular relevance to the PPG17 study are:</td>
<td>As an adopted document, the Council’s Core Strategy is a significant LDF document to hold significant weight in the development of the Borough. The information set out in PPG17 will help inform the implementation of the sports and leisure facilities which relate to ensuring sufficient and quality green space in the Borough, and will also be utilised should any relevant policies take place. The PPG17 study will enable the Core Strategy to deliver on its objectives and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The need to enhance identity and distinctiveness of the built and natural environment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In an attempt to overcome such issues the following spatial objectives are identified:

- **Spatial Objective 7: Healthier Active Communities**
- **Spatial Objective 9: Identity, distinctiveness and Quality of Design, to enhance both settlement identity and the environment which will help develop strong community identity and neighbourhood pride**
- **Spatial Objective 10: Natural Environment and Cultural Assets**
- **Spatial Objective 12: Climate Change & Resource efficient, with particular reference to investment in green infrastructure**

Following on from this, it is intended that through the application of the following policies, the Core Strategy will be successful in making a valuable contribution to the green space, leisure, sport and recreational value in the borough:

- **Policies 1-4, 8, 10, 11-13**: in their commitments to addressing existing deficiencies in the quality of green space and play provision in the respective areas as detailed in the Council’s most up to date relevant strategy and play strategy. Delivery of relevant improvements to quality of sport and recreation facilities identified in a number of settlements is highlighted
- **Policy 1 Development in Hinckley**: To support the development of new leisure facilities and sporting hub

provide solid evidence for implementation.
### Key Issues and Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, recreation provision</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Policy 2 Development in Earl Shilton:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To support the provision of new leisure facilities and sporting hub on land off the A47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To deliver improvements in the quality of the William Bradford/Heathfield/Newlands indoor facilities and Weavers/Townlands outdoor facilities as detailed in the Hinckley &amp; Bosworth Cultural Facilities Audit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Policy 3 Development in Barwell:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- To support the provision of new leisure facilities and sporting hub on land off the A47</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Redesign and rebuild of the primary sporting facilities on Leicester Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Improve associated pitches. Improve outdoor facilities in Boston Way, Dovecote and Kirkby Road</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Policy 6 Hinckley/Barwell/Earl Shilton/Burbage Green Wedge:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses will be encouraged that provide appropriate recreational facilities within easy reach of urban residents to promote the positive management of land to ensure that the green wedge remains or is enhanced as an attractive contribution to the quality of life of nearby residents. The following land uses will be considered acceptable: Agriculture (including allotments), recreation, forestry, footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways; burial grounds and/or use of nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>conservation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Policy 9 Rothley Brook Meadow Green Wedge: Uses will be encouraged that provide appropriate recreational facilities within easy reach of urban residents to promote the positive management of land to ensure that the green wedge remains or is enhanced as an attractive contribution to the quality of life of nearby residents. The following land uses will be considered acceptable: Agriculture (including allotments), recreation, forestry, footpaths, bridleways and cycle ways; burial grounds and/or use of nature conservation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Policy 10 Key rural centres within the National Forest: Encourage these settlements to blend with the National Forest through environmental improvements in line with the National Forest Strategy to give the areas a sense of place as forest settlements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Policy 19 Green Space and Play Provision: This policy will be used in relation to green space and play provision in the borough to ensure all residents have access to sufficient, high quality, accessible green spaces and play areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Policy 20 Green Infrastructure: Delivery of green infrastructure is a key priority for HBBC and the strategic interventions listed in the policy across the borough are supported and encouraged in line with the council's Green Infrastructure Strategy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Policy 21 National Forest: To support the implementation, promotion, retention and growth of the National Forest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play and Open Space Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</strong></td>
<td>The purpose of the SPD is to advise and inform those involved in planning new development in the Borough with primary regard to the provision of play and open space. The provision of play and open space is integral to community welfare and improving the quality of the built environment and the document sets out the Borough’s approach to development that is likely to generate demand for open space and how it will be secured whether it is on-site, offsite or through S106 contributions. As an SPD there are no specific objectives other than the successful delivery of play and open space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Facilities Strategy 2007-2012</strong></td>
<td>The Cultural Strategy sets out the Council’s plans for culture over a five year period. Through this, the Council, working in conjunction with key cultural partners and stakeholders, will work towards a vision. Themes relevant to the environment include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Policy 22 Charnwood Forest: To support the proposals for the Charnwood Regional Park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Strategy 2007-2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

corporate documents work towards common goals.

This Strategy offers a clear framework for play over a five-year period and undertakes an audit of provision for such facilities to set local play standards. The document also details extensive national and regional policy and guidance concerning the importance of providing play facilities for the benefit of the community, in particular children. One document which is directly referenced as being important to the Strategy is the guidance set out in PPG17, which also recognises the need to provide good quality and accessible play spaces.

At the Borough level, the following was highlighted as the main benefit of the document.

“It is essential that the play strategy addresses play at the Borough-wide level, encompassing both urban and rural areas, and ensuring that hard-to-reach groups are not excluded.”

Relevant priorities for this document are as follows:

- Improving the provision and use of community and cultural facilities (high priority)
- Revitalising town centre villages (medium priority)
- Improving physical access to services and reducing congestion (medium priority)
- Protecting and enhancing wildlife, heritage and rural and...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy / Document</th>
<th>Key Issues and Priorities</th>
<th>Implications for this assessment of open space, recreation provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>urban character; (medium priority)</td>
<td>Planning for green infrastructure will inform the development of Hinckley &amp; Bosworth’s local plans and strategies such as Development Framework documents, area action plans. This strategy, in addition, assists the implementation of those plans by contributing baseline evidence and information for policy formulation, project development and delivery. A comprehensive understanding of the typologies of open spaces as set out in PPG17 helps to contribute to an effective GI network for the Borough. Information in this strategy can help the council make plans for and deliver on the aspirations of the council’s GI strategy, helping to link communities and develop effective walking and cycling corridors across the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Infrastructure Strategy 2008</td>
<td>The Play Strategy also sets out the public and Parish Council views on such facilities with regard to quality, access and variety.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Infrastructure Strategy 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given the level of growth directed to the Hinckley and Bosworth area, green infrastructure can play a vital role in minimising the impact of the built environment and provide quality green facilities for current and new residents, both now and in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The GI Strategy looks at existing assets/resources, functions and public benefit assessments in order to effectively map the current state of the boroughs GI and to look at potential opportunities to expand and improve. This Green Infrastructure Strategy is based around three main outcomes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identification of existing natural spaces and corridors within and between the urban areas, other settlements and the surrounding countryside, forming the basis for developing a green infrastructure strategic sites and networks plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identification of policy and deliverability issues, including possible funding, delivery mechanisms and main actions for implementing green infrastructure in the Borough (i.e. the strategy will be grounded in deliverability)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development of an aspirational strategy for the conservation, protection and enhancement of green spaces, corridors and environmental resources of Hinckley &amp; Bosworth, taking growth projections into consideration and setting a clear vision for meeting the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities recreation provision</td>
<td>Implications for this assessment of open space, srecreation provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borough’s needs and opportunities for both development and nature conservation Key drivers of this study revolve around tourism, access and recreation, biodiversity and addressing and establishing potential strategic access routes.</td>
<td>The role of the LDF will be to ensure that the findings and principles of the Biodiversity Assessment are taken into consideration in a planning context and the PPG17 evidence base will be used for protecting and allocating green space over the next fifteen year plan period. The study will enable the Council to make provision for the necessary sport and open space facilities/areas that are sufficient for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinckley &amp; Bosworth Biodiversity Assessment 2009 The Biodiversity Assessment provides a baseline assessment of the biodiversity and nature conservation interest of the Borough. Information included in the assessment includes habitat areas, nature conservation designations and locations of protected and notable species. Regional and national legislation sets out a variety of policies with respect to when and where development will be acceptable in relation to ecological and nature conservation interests, ensuring that these assets are protected, enhanced, or as a last resort, replaced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Allocations &amp; Generic Development Control Policies The Site Allocations and Generic Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) allocates land to deliver housing and other major development needs such as employment, recreation, open space and community uses, to meet the requirements set out in the Core Strategy. In addition, it also includes generic development control policies which apply across the Borough and which will be used when determining planning applications. The Site Allocations and Generic Development Control Policies DPD must be in conformity with the Core Strategy.</td>
<td>The PPG17 study will be a key tool in providing the evidence base for protecting and allocating green space over the next fifteen year plan period. The study will enable the Council to make provision for the necessary sport and open space facilities/areas that are sufficient for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl Shilton and Barwell Area Action Plan The Earl Shilton and Barwell Area Action Plan (AAP) is a masterplan which will be used to guide the Council, developers and others investing in the future of Earl Shilton and Barwell in the period to 2026. It is particularly important in addressing the challenges of providing the additional infrastructure and regeneration the settlements need, it will</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy / Document</td>
<td>Key Issues and Priorities</td>
<td>Implications for this assessment of open space, sport and recreation provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>also set out the site allocations for the settlements.</td>
<td>the needs and future growth of the settlements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary and conclusions

3.7 The provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities contributes to the achievement of wider governmental objectives, such as social and community cohesion, urban renaissance and promoting healthy and enjoyable lifestyles. In addition, the effective provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities will be instrumental in the delivery of local priorities, including those set out in the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

3.8 Any development of open spaces (ie provision of either new or enhancement of existing spaces) should take into account bio-diversity and nature conservation opportunities and develop an increasing environmental awareness, as well as facilitating the increase needed in participation in sport and active recreation. Consideration should also be given to the implications of future changes to the area, including the priorities set out in the East Midlands Regional Plan.

3.9 Points emerging from the strategic review that are integral to the development of this open space, sport and recreation assessment in Hinckley & Bosworth are as follows:

- The natural environment is a key feature of Hinckley & Bosworth, providing many recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The protection and enhancement of the environment is a key aim for the Council and is also important to residents and tourists across the authority.

- Housing developments and geographical allocations driven by national planning policies and employment land allocations will have a direct impact on open space, sport and recreation provision and sustainability. Population growth will place increasing demands on existing open spaces as well as generating higher needs for recreational open space provision.

- The increased focus on improving the health of local residents will raise the profile of open space, sport and recreation facilities. Open space can provide alternative opportunities for physical activity.

3.10 In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the local importance of maintaining and improving open space sites within Hinckley & Bosworth Borough. This local needs study and resulting strategy will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.
4. Formal Parks and Gardens

Introduction and definition

4.1 This type of open space (as defined by PPG17) includes urban parks and formal gardens that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events. This correlates to the District Parks and Green Space, and Neighbourhood Parks and Green Spaces categories in the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy.

4.2 For the purpose of this study, parks and gardens have been divided into two hierarchies: formal parks and country parks. Formal parks include both urban parks and formal gardens, for example, Hollycroft Park (urban park) and The Rock Gardens (formal garden), both in Hinckley.

4.3 Formal parks usually contain a variety of facilities, and may have one or more of the other types of open space within them. Their primary purpose is informal recreation. Country parks are defined as large areas of land offering easy access for countryside recreation. Country parks are Borough wide facilities and serve a large catchment area.

4.4 Country parks have been considered in the context of natural open space due to the similarities between these two typologies.

4.5 Parks provide a sense of place for the local community and help to address social inclusion issues within wider society. According to the Park Life Report (published June 2007), 83% of those questioned feel that parks are a focal point of community life. Parks also provide an important recreational resource. Nearly one in five (18%) respondents to the household survey indicates that they use formal parks more frequently than any other type of open space in the Borough. Residents in the urban areas use parks particularly frequently.

4.6 In addition to the recreational opportunities provided by parks, these large green spaces provide structural and landscaping benefits to the surrounding local area. They also frequently offer ecological benefits, particularly in more urban areas. The provision of parks to break up urban landscapes is becoming increasingly important, particularly in light of growing fears regarding climate change.

4.7 Parks often contain a variety of facilities and amenities, including some that fall within different categories of open space (example children’s play facilities, sport pitches and wildlife areas). For classification purposes, the different open spaces within parks have been separated according to the PPG17 typology under which they most appropriately fall. Large green areas, footpaths, lakes and less dense woodland will provide the park area (total hectares) and the other facilities will be calculated separately under their own typology classification. This ensures that open space sites are not counted twice within this study.

4.8 This section sets out the quality, quantity and accessibility of parks and gardens across Hinckley and Bosworth Borough.

4.9 As well as considering the provision of formal parks across the Borough, it is important the interrelationship of these facilities with other types of open space (in particular those providing opportunities for informal recreation – country parks, natural and semi natural spaces and amenity spaces) is taken into account. In
areas deficient in formal parks, country parks, natural and semi natural open space and amenity green space play a vital role in providing residents with access to informal recreation opportunities.

4.10 As a higher order facility, formal parks in close proximity to the home reduce the need to provide amenity green space. This will be returned to in Section 6.

Context

4.11 Policy 19 of the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy sets out a hierarchy of accessibility standards for public open space, which includes district and neighbourhood parks. While district parks are a strategic facility (within 5 km, neighbourhood parks should be expected more locally (within 600m).

4.12 The strategy emphasises the importance of parks in Hinckley and Bosworth, particularly in terms of attracting tourists, and supports the development of the Green Infrastructure Network to maximise access to parks in the Borough (Policy 20).

4.13 The Leicestershire and Rutland Strategy for Physical Activity recognises the role that green spaces, including parks, and the wider countryside can play in supporting and encouraging increases in physical activity. It suggests that links between open spaces and the built environment should be promoted and developed to encourage more people to be more active. In particular, it is highlighted that there is a need to strengthen planning policies to ensure integration of the natural and built environment and facilitate the promotion of healthy communities.

4.14 The value of parks and gardens in the Borough was also clear through local consultation. Formal parks are the third most popular type of open space in the Borough and 24% of residents indicate that they visit these facilities at least once a week.

4.15 Throughout consultation residents emphasised the benefits of formal parks, both in terms of their recreational use (for walking) and aesthetic value. Parks were generally perceived to be of good quality, with sites identified as being well kept, clean and tidy. Hollycroft Park was identified as a good quality site and recent improvements to this site were commended. It was recognised that there have been significant qualitative improvements to parks across the Borough in recent years. Maintaining and continuing this improvement was perceived to be a key challenge moving forward.

Current Provision

4.16 There are currently 38 formal parks located within the Borough, equating to a total of 87.41 hectares. Formal parks within the Borough vary significantly in terms of their size, function and facilities provided. For example, Barwell Park, Stapleton Road, Barwell, is the largest formal park, providing facilities for both children and young people and serving a predominantly recreational purpose, whereas The Rock Gardens in Hinckley is a formal garden with more aesthetic values, providing residents with an area of relaxation.

4.17 The average size of a formal park within the Borough is 2.30 hectares, however, the size of sites ranges from 0.01 hectares to 10.12 hectares. This serves to further demonstrate the variety of different facilities that are provided.

4.18 The majority of formal parks are owned by Parish Councils, with only 10 of the 38 sites owned by the Borough Council. These 10 parks are predominantly located within the town of Hinckley. The majority of the larger sites are located in the urban areas.

4.19 In addition to the 38 formal parks in Hinckley and Bosworth, there are also four private gardens. These are: Cadeby Hall, Higham Hall, Market Bosworth Hall and Shenton Hall. These sites have been excluded from calculations because there is no public access.

4.20 The quantity of formal parks across the Borough is summarised in Table 4.1.
4.21 The key issues emerging from Table 4.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of formal parks include:

- The current provision of formal parks (excluding private sites) is equivalent to 0.83 hectares per 1000 population

- The majority of respondents to the household survey consider the quantity of formal parks to be sufficient (60%). This view is held in each of the different settlement hierarchies.

- The greatest level of satisfaction with the quantity of formal parks is found in the Urban Areas. It is within this area of the Borough where the highest level of current provision and provision per 1000 population is found.

- Unsurprisingly, given the nature of these settlements, the lowest current provision and provision per 1000 population is located within the Hamlets. There are no formal parks within the countryside.

- A lack of formal parks within their local area was the main reason given by residents who indicated that the provision of formal parks is insufficient. This demonstrates that for those residents who perceive quantity to be an issue, local access to facilities is expected. Despite this, within the rural areas of the Borough (rural villages and hamlets) residents expressed an expectation to travel to formal parks and did not necessarily expect these facilities to be located within the settlement that they live in.

- Other consultation findings generally support the household survey perceptions. The majority of respondents to the officer survey (67%) and Elected Members survey (55%) indicate that the provision of formal parks is sufficient. However, Parish Council respondents in Market Bosworth, Earl Shilton and Markfield stated that the provision of formal parks within their parishes is insufficient. This suggests that although the quantity of formal parks is generally perceived to be sufficient, there may be some localised deficiencies in Hinckley and Bosworth. Although the majority of Parish Council respondents indicated that there are no formal parks within their parish, only Nailstone highlighted demand for this type of open space. This reinforces that residents in the rural areas of the Borough expect to travel to formal parks.

4.22 Full consultation findings are set out in Appendix E.

### Setting quantity standards

4.23 Given the overall value placed on formal parks during consultations, a quantity standard has been set for these sites. In many instances, these sites are strategic facilities and would not be expected as part of new development; however the quantity standard should be used as an indication to determine likely demand for formal parks.
4.24 The recommended local quantity standard has been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and is summarised below. The standard has been set at the existing level of provision and is reflective of the high level of satisfaction with the current provision of formal parks in the Borough. Deficiencies within individual settlements may still be identified when applied at a settlement level later in this section. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix E.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Provision</th>
<th>Recommended Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.83 hectares per 1000 population</td>
<td>0.83 hectares per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Justification**

A high level of satisfaction regarding the quantity of formal parks was emphasised during local consultation. The majority of respondents to the household survey indicate that the provision of formal parks is sufficient (60%) and this perception is supported by findings from other consultations. Reasons given for a lack of formal parks relate to a lack of local access to this type of open space.

In light of the high level of satisfaction with the current quantity of formal parks, the local standard has been set at the existing level of provision. Setting a standard at this level will enable a focus on increasing access to existing formal parks, whilst simultaneously continuing to enhance the quality of formal parks in the Borough. This standard should be treated as the minimum standard of provision.

**Quality**

**Current position**

4.25 The quality of formal parks was assessed through site visits undertaken by pmpgenesis. The quality of formal parks, based on the site visits, is summarised in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 - Quality of formal parks in Hinckley and Bosworth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement hierarchy (As per table 2.2)</th>
<th>Range of Quality scores</th>
<th>Average Quality Score</th>
<th>Highest Quality Site</th>
<th>Lowest Quality Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
<td>45% - 100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Hollycroft Park, Hinckley</td>
<td>Rugby Road, Burbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Centres</td>
<td>64% - 85%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Ferndale Park, Ratby</td>
<td>Dragons Lane, Newbold Verdon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Villages</td>
<td>40% - 95%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Church Road, Nailstone</td>
<td>Brookside Place, Sheepy Magna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlets</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>40% - 100%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Hollycroft Park, Hinckley</td>
<td>Brookside Place, Sheepy Magna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key issues emerging from Table 4.2 and consultations relating to the quality of formal parks are as follows: • Findings from the household survey indicate that the quality of formal parks is generally perceived to be good (56%) and a further 26% view provision to be average. This represents a positive perception overall. Parks were perceived to be one of the highest quality types of open space. Responses within the settlement hierarchies support the overall findings and some general comments within the household survey acknowledge that the quality of formal parks has improved significantly in recent years

• Other consultation findings reinforce this positive perception regarding the quality of formal parks, with respondents to the officer survey, Elected Member’s survey, Children’s survey and Parish Council survey stating that the quality of formal parks is good or very good. The significant improvements that have been undertaken in recent years were also recognised at drop in sessions, as well as in many of the other questionnaires

• Site assessments support the household survey perceptions with the quality of formal parks generally rated as good and the average score of a site being 74%. Based on the average quality score of a site, formal parks are the highest quality type of open space in the Borough

• Although there is a high average score, the quality of formal parks is varied, with scores ranging from 40% to 100%. This indicates that while there are some high quality sites, there are still some parks where improvement is still required. The average quality score within each of the settlement hierarchies is generally consistent, indicating that this range exists in all sizes of settlement

• Site visits highlight that ancillary accommodation, such as bins and benches, is the main area for improvement at formal parks in Hinckley and Bosworth. Many formal parks were identified as lacking in these facilities

• Cleanliness and maintenance of the parks and open spaces in the Borough was generally good at the time of site visits, with the majority of parks found to be clean, tidy and well maintained. Similarly, maintenance at formal parks was not identified as a problem by frequent users of this type of open space during consultations

• The need to improve the functionality of formal parks was identified as the key priority during site visits. A number of formal parks were perceived to contain large grass areas that had little functionality. Incorporating natural open space or other forms of open space within formal parks was highlighted as a potential solution to this problem. This will be returned to later in this section

All consultation findings relating to the quality of parks is found in Appendix E.

Setting quality standards

The recommended local quality standard for formal parks is summarised overleaf. Full justifications and consultation for the local standard is provided within Appendix E.

The quality standard summarises the features that residents consider to be an important determinant of the quality of provision. The target quality score is set at 80%, the score achieved by a site that scores ‘good’ on all four quality factors outlined in the site assessment matrix (Appendix C).
Quality Standard (see Appendix E)

Recommended Quality Standard

Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the vision for formal parks should incorporate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean and litter free</td>
<td>Footpaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well kept grass</td>
<td>Toilets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowers, trees and shrubs</td>
<td>Green infrastructure linkages – to and within sites (for example, footpaths etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accessibility

4.30 Consultation demonstrates that access to parks and open spaces and proximity to the home is a key determinant of the level of usage of spaces in Hinckley and Bosworth. A lack of local access to facilities was the key reason given by those respondents to the household survey who felt that the quantity of parks in the Borough is insufficient.

4.31 The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.

4.32 Current users of formal parks walk to access a site (80%) with travel times split between less than 5 minutes (39%) and 5 – 9 minutes (25%). This demonstrates that most regular users of formal parks are using facilities in close proximity to their home.

4.33 Consistent with the preferred travel mode portrayed by current users, the majority of respondents to the household survey would expect to walk to formal parks (57%). However, when looking at findings within the settlements hierarchies a difference in the travel mode expected by residents in the Urban Areas and rural settlement hierarchies is clear, with the majority of respondents in the Hamlets (50%) and Rural Villages (72%) indicating that they expect to drive to access a formal park. This suggests that residents in the smaller settlements do not necessarily expect to find a park within the settlement in which they live. This means that increasing access to formal parks in close proximity to the rural settlements will be important.

4.34 Site assessments indicate that access to formal parks is generally good. However, information and signage was highlighted as a key area for improvement. A number of site entrances were difficult to find and a lack of signage was regularly noted.
Setting accessibility standards

4.35 The recommended local accessibility standard for formal parks is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix E.

Accessibility Standard (see Appendix E)

### Recommended Accessibility Standard

600m (equivalent to circa 12 minutes walk)

#### Justification

Current and expected travel patterns indicate that the majority of residents expect to walk to access formal parks. A standard which encourages local access to parks has therefore been set.

According to the household survey, the average expected travel time was 12 minutes. This average is reflective of the most commonly expressed travel time and first quartile figure (which is in line with 75% of residents’ expectations) of 10 minutes. The standard has therefore been set at a 600m walk (circa 12 minutes walk time) to reflect the average opinion. It is also supported by the key findings of other more subjective consultations.

The recommended local accessibility standard is in line with resident’s expectations and also ensures deliverability. Application of the quantity standard will enable the determination of settlements which are sufficiently large to sustain a park. Outside of these areas (in the smaller villages and hamlets) effective linkages will be vital if this standard is to be delivered.

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Applying provision standards

4.36 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards provides an understanding of the existing distribution of formal parks. Table 4.3 summarises the application of the quantity standard by settlement hierarchy demonstrating current and future shortfall/surplus. The ‘Future Shortfall/Surplus when measured against local standard’ column is based on the housing requirements set out in the Core Strategy which covers the period up to 2026. Table 4.3 – Application of the quantity standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement hierarchy (As per table 2.2)</th>
<th>Current Shortfall/Surplus when measured against local standard hectares</th>
<th>Future Shortfall/Surplus when measured against local standard hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>-4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Centres</td>
<td>-5.21</td>
<td>-6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Villages</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
<td>-1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlets</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-13.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.37 Table 4.3 indicates the following: • There is currently a minor shortfall of formal parks across the Borough as a whole (0.12 hectares). However, based on future population increases this shortfall will increase significantly to 13.78 hectares. This suggests that more parks will be required in the future to meet the demands of the growing population

• The greatest current shortfall of formal parks is located within the Rural Centres – equivalent to 5.21 hectares in total

• As a result of projected population growth, there will be a deficiency of formal parks within all settlement hierarchies in Hinckley and Bosworth by 2026. Even in the urban areas where provision is currently above the minimum standards, given that the majority of population growth will be in these parts, new provision will be particularly important (as highlighted by the deficiency of 4.60 hectares). There will also be a need for new provision in the Rural Centres

• Although the overall level of provision within the urban areas is sufficient at the current time, there are shortfalls within Burbage and Earl Shilton. This will be returned to later in this section (page 55 onwards).

4.38 Application of the standard at a settlement / Parish level alongside use of minimum size criteria will enable calculations relating to the size of settlements in which a park would be expected. While there is a cumulative shortfall of provision in the rural villages, new provision may not be required. Settlement by settlement analysis is set out at the end of this section on page 55 onwards.

4.39 When applying the recommended local quantity standard within the individual settlements and Parishes in the Borough only Barwell, Groby, Stanton Under Bardon, Hinckley and Higham on the Hill have sufficient formal parks to meet the minimum standards. The largest quantitative shortfalls are located in the following settlements:

• Markfield – 2.34 hectares
• Bagworth – 1.85 hectares
• Desford – 1.51 hectares
• Market Bosworth – 1.56 hectares
• Burbage – 1.09 hectares.

4.40 Based on future population increases, deficiencies in all settlements will increase.

Accessibility

4.41 The application of the accessibility standard for formal parks is outlined in Map 4.1 overleaf.
Map 4.1 – Formal parks in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough
Map 4.1 indicates that formal parks are well distributed across the Borough. The majority of residents in the larger settlements have access to a formal park within the recommended 600m catchment. However, key areas of deficiency are evident in Market Bosworth, Thornton and Bagworth. These will be returned to later in this section (page 56). A full list of all sites is provided at the end of this section and in Appendix G.

Quality

The quality scores for all formal parks across the Borough, based on site assessments, have been divided into quartiles, for ease of analysis. Map 4.2 overleaf therefore illustrates the quality of formal parks in Hinckley and Bosworth, providing a visual analysis of the distribution of low quality and high quality sites.

Map 4.2 demonstrates that there are clusters of poor quality sites located within the urban areas. Improvements will therefore be of particular importance in this area.

Key site specific priorities for qualitative improvement will be discussed later in this section on page 51 onwards.
Map 4.2 – Quality of Formal Parks in Hinckley and Bosworth
Priorities for Future Delivery

4.46 This section considers the Borough wide issues that need to be addressed. These issues arise through the application of the local quality, quantity and accessibility standards. Consideration is also given to issues in specific settlements / Parishes where appropriate.

4.47 In line with the principals of PPG17, the priorities are set out under the headings of:

- Quality enhancements
- Environmental role of parks
- Sustainability of parks
- Protection of existing provision
- Disposal
- New provision
- Redesignation
- Enhancing access routes

Quality Enhancements

4.48 While the quality of sites is perceived positively in the Borough, consultation, as well as the application of local standards, indicates that in most areas of the Borough the priority remains the ongoing maintenance and improvement of these facilities.

4.49 The local quality standard indicates good maintenance/variety of flowers, trees and shrubs are essential features of a formal park. Basic ancillary provision, such as seating, is also an essential component of a functional formal park. Focus should therefore be placed on enhancing these features to provide high quality sites. Potential improvements at individual sites were identified during site assessments and these should also be used to guide future improvements. Those sites identified with the greatest room for potential improvement were Rugby Road, Tilton Drive, Britannia Road Recreation Ground and Clarendon Park.

4.50 A key target of the corporate priority is to obtain Green Flag or Green Pennant awards. Therefore, in addition to enhancing the quality of poor quality sites it will be important to continue to improve high quality sites if the Council is to achieve its aim of obtaining five Green Flag or Green Pennant awards.

4.51 The ongoing maintenance and improvement of parks and open spaces across the Borough has been identified as a key challenge, particularly as significant investment has been placed into these facilities in recent years. The forthcoming green space delivery plan should address this issue and ensure that priorities and improvements planned contribute towards the provision of an overall network of sustainable parks across the borough.

4.52 Parks achieving lower quality scores, particularly those serving large centres of population, should be prioritised for improvement.
4.53 The key quality issues within the settlement hierarchies, where relevant, are outlined below.

Urban Areas

4.54 Site assessments reveal that Hollycroft Park, Hinckley and Pughes Paddock, Burbage (both 100%) are the highest quality formal parks in the Borough and achieved quality scores that exceed the target quality score of 80%. Maintenance at these sites was considered to be excellent and an abundance of ancillary accommodation was noted. In addition to these sites, a further nine sites achieved a quality score in line with or above the target quality score. Britannia Road Recreation Ground, near Burbage is also a high quality formal park located in the urban areas.

4.55 The Friends Group at Hollycroft Park have been central to the improvements that have taken place at this site in recent years.

4.56 Although there are some high quality formal parks in the urban areas there are a number of lower quality sites in the settlement hierarchy, highlighting the need for qualitative enhancements. These sites are outlined in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 – Lowest Scoring Formal Parks in the Urban Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Quality Score</th>
<th>Site Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rugby Road, Burbage</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>This site was poorly maintained. Significant litter and dog fouling was evident and the site boundaries were in poor condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilton Drive, Burbage</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>There was some evidence of litter and dog fouling at this site. No lighting was found on site and a lack of ancillary accommodation, specifically footpaths, benches and bins was highlighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver Springs Recreational Ground, Earl Shilton</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>A lack of lighting and ancillary accommodation was noted at this site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granville Road Recreation Ground, Hinckley</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>There was some evidence of litter at this site and a lack of lighting was noted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rural Centres

4.57 Ferndale Park, Ratby (85%), Bosworth Road, Barlestone and Quarry Park, Groby (both 80%) are the only formal parks within the rural centres that achieved a quality score in line with the quality score target.

4.58 There are no significantly low scoring sites in the rural centres and the poorest site achieved a score of 64%. The lowest scoring formal parks in the settlement hierarchy are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Quality Score</th>
<th>Site Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
• Dragons Lane, Newbold Verdon (64%) – no specific issues were raised. However, the need for increased ancillary accommodation was noted;

• Kirby Road Playing Fields, Desford (70%) – would benefit from more planted areas;

• Pleasure Grounds, Desford (72%) – it was felt that lighting would be particularly beneficial;

• Mayflower Court, Markfield (75%) – some litter was located on this site and the need for increased ancillary accommodation was identified.

Rural Villages

4.59 Church Road, Nailstone (95%) is the third highest scoring formal park in the Borough and achieved a quality score that exceeds the target of 80%. King George’s Playing Fields, Higham on the Hill (80%) is also a high quality formal park that achieved a score in line with the target score.

4.60 In contrast, Brookside Place, Sheepy Magna (40%) and Stanton Under Bardon Recreation Ground, Stanton Under Bardon, (65%) are the lowest scoring formal parks in the rural villages. Brookside Place is the lowest scoring formal park in the Borough and was considered to be in need of improved vegetation, such as flowers, trees and shrubs. There is no ancillary accommodation at Stanton Under Bardon Recreation Ground, reducing the functionality of this site.

Sustainability of Parks

4.61 The long term sustainability of parks is a key issue in Hinckley and Bosworth. Making best use of the available assets at parks and incorporating sustainable management practices is essential in securing the future of this type of open space and ensuring that improvements to these sites can continue.

4.62 Friends Groups can play an important role in ensuring the long term sustainability of parks by providing invaluable volunteer support and increasing revenue, by holding events at parks, for example. Friends groups also often contribute to the maintenance of the site and provide a day to day interface with users.

4.63 Friends of Hollycroft Park are a prominent friends group within Hinckley and Bosworth that aims to improve the parkland, the events and sense of community in Hollycroft Park, Hinckley. Friends of Hollycroft Park operates as an independent group, predominantly focusing on organising events in the park, providing refreshments for bands who perform in the park and supporting other groups who organise events. They are a very proactive group who have stimulated the improvement of the park.

4.64 The need to engage with children and young people through the provision of events and activities in parks and open spaces was raised during both the drop in session and at the stakeholder workshop. As proven by the Friends of Hollycroft Park, friends groups can play a key role in providing such activities.

4.65 The Council should work with other providers of open space, such as Parish Councils, to initiate the creation of friends groups at other parks in the Borough and support established groups within Hinckley and Bosworth. This will contribute significantly to the long term sustainability of parks and ensure that the identified recent improvements can continue.

| PG2 | Work with providers of open space to initiate the creation of friends groups at parks and support existing friends groups established at parks in the Borough. |
Environmental Role of Parks

4.66 As well as functioning as a recreational resource, parks have an important environmental role. Parks provide people with the opportunity to experience the natural environment and they play an important role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity.

4.67 The Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies the important role that parks play in contributing to the wider green infrastructure network. Using the Green Infrastructure Network to enhance biodiversity and provide a healthy living environment is a key principle behind the strategy.

4.68 The Council and providers of parks should seek to incorporate sustainable management practices, (such as not cutting grass in certain areas to create natural areas), to promote biodiversity and create a healthy ecosystem at parks in the Borough. The creation of management plans at parks may be important in the achievement of this aim.

| PG3 | Work with providers of open space to incorporate sustainable management techniques to promote biodiversity and create a healthy ecosystem at parks in the Borough. |

Protection of Existing Provision

4.69 The value of parks and gardens was emphasised throughout local consultation. Formal parks are the third most frequently used type of open space and both the recreational and aesthetic value of formal parks was frequently highlighted by residents. Local access was a key determinant of use.

4.70 Formal parks are well distributed across the Borough and the majority of sites, particularly in the rural settlements, serve unique catchments. This means that these parks provide local recreational opportunities.

4.71 In consideration of the importance of formal parks and the value of sites from both a recreational and biodiversity perspective, these sites should be protected from residential development. The protection of formal parks will also be important in mitigating the impact of climate change in the larger settlements.

| PG4 | In light of the importance of formal parks, seek to protect all existing sites from residential development through the Local Development Framework. Formal parks should only be lost to development where it can be proven that there is no demand for the facility, or that improvements to another site will be of greater value to residents in the immediate catchment of the park to be lost. |

Disposal of Facilities

4.72 There are no recommendations for the disposal of existing formal parks. There is however potential to expand the functionality of some sites to include other types of open space, for example, the incorporation of natural and semi natural open space within parks. This will be returned to later in this section.

New provision

4.73 Application of the quantity standard revealed that based on current provision, there are only small overall shortfalls in parks across the Borough, although there are locational deficiencies. To provide a clear indication as to whether new provision is required, and where it is required, it is essential to take an accessibility led approach.
4.74 Application of the local quantity standard suggests that future population increases will generate significant demand for more formal parks. Whilst there is currently a good distribution of formal parks, and the majority of residents in the larger settlements have access to a site, the capacity of existing parks may be insufficient to accommodate future population growth. The provision of formal parks should therefore be considered as part of new development.

4.75 The local quantity standard as well as the accessibility standard, should be used to inform decisions relating to the impact of new development.

| PG5 | Ensure that new housing developments contribute towards (or provide on site where they are large enough to be reasonably expected to do so) the provision of new, or enhancement of existing formal parks where possible and appropriate. Where the supply of formal parks in the surrounding area is sufficient, policy should ensure that contributions are required for qualitative improvements. |

4.76 The key priorities for new provision are set out by settlement hierarchy in the sections that follow.

Urban Areas

4.77 Application of the quantity standard indicates that the current provision of formal parks is sufficient to meet demand. However, based on future population projections, there will be an expected shortfall of 4.60 hectares within the settlement hierarchy. This suggests that future growth may be sufficient to warrant increased provision of formal parks.

4.78 Despite the overall level of provision of parks in the urban areas, application of the standards at a settlement by settlement level indicates that provision in Burbage and Earl Shilton falls below the recommended minimum standard.

4.79 Despite this (and supporting the application of the quantity standard for the urban areas as a whole), accessibility mapping (Map 4.1) reveals that nearly all residents have access to a formal park within the recommended 600m catchment. This suggests that additional parks are not required at this time.

4.80 As previously highlighted, the projected population growth will generate a shortfall of formal parks within the Urban Areas (4.60 hectares) by 2026. This suggests that increased provision may be required in the longer term.

4.81 The greatest projected shortfall within the individual settlements is found in Burbage. There are also deficiencies in Earl Shilton, and new provision may therefore be required in this settlement. Demand for formal parks within the Urban Areas should therefore be monitored and new facilities provided if demand is sufficient.

4.82 While provision in Hinckley and Barwell exceeds the minimum quantity standards both now and in the event of population growth, the accessibility led approach means that new provision may be required, particularly in the event of extensions to the urban areas.

Rural Centres

4.83 Application of the accessibility standard indicates that residents within Market Bosworth and Bagworth and Thornton are outside the recommended 600m catchment of a formal park (figures 4.1 – 4.2). All residents within the other Rural Centres have access to a formal park, although there are a few residents to the north west of Ratby that are also outside of the catchment.
Figure 4.1 – Deficiencies in Market Bosworth
Figure 4.2 – Deficiencies in Bagworth and Thornton
4.84 Application of the quantity standard reinforces the gaps in access to parks within the rural centres, revealing that the highest shortfall of formal parks is found in the rural centres, equating to 5.21 hectares. Based on projected future population increases, this shortfall is expected to increase to 6.70 hectares.

4.85 This indicates that new provision may be required in the Rural Centres. With the exception of Groby, all of the rural centres contain less than the recommended minimum standard of provision. Only in Markfield, Market Bosworth, Bagworth and Desford do deficiencies exceed 1ha (at the current time). This suggests that gaps in other areas are of more limited significance.

4.86 Although residents in Market Bosworth and Bagworth are outside the catchment of a formal park, they do have access to other forms of informal open space. More importantly however, residents in Market Bosworth have access to Market Bosworth Country Park and a number of residents in Bagworth and Thornton have access to Bagworth Heath Country Park and Thornton Reservoir, in addition to an abundance of natural open space.

4.87 Addressing quantitative deficiencies in Market Bosworth and in Bagworth and Thornton is therefore not a key priority. However, in light of the quantitative shortfalls in the rural centres and increasing demand for formal parks generated by future population growth, demand for increased provision should be monitored and a new provision provided if demand is sufficient. This is particularly important in Desford and Markfield, where shortfalls of provision are evident against the quantity standard, although there are few accessibility deficiencies at the current time.

Rural Villages

4.88 The current quantity of formal parks is below the recommended minimum standard, with there being a cumulative shortfall of 1.50 hectares. Only in Higham on the Hill and Stanton Under Bardon does provision fall above the minimum standard. There are shortfalls in all other areas, although application of the recommended quantity standard indicates that only in Witherley Parish is the deficiency over 1ha in size. While the overall shortfall in provision in the rural villages settlement hierarchy is quite high, in each Parish the impact overall is therefore quite low.

4.89 Despite the shortfalls in quantitative terms, accessibility mapping indicates that there is a good distribution of formal parks with only residents in Twycross (within Twycross Parish) and Congerstone (within Shackerstone Parish) and Witherley outside the catchment of a site.

4.90 Throughout consultation, residents within the Rural Villages indicated a willingness to travel further to access a formal park, with the majority of residents in these areas stating that they would expect to drive to a formal park and do not anticipate having such parks in close proximity to their home.

4.91 In addition to this, all residents have access to an amenity green space or country park within the recommended accessibility catchments, which means that there is good access to multifunctional open space. The provision of a new formal park within these areas is therefore not a priority.

4.92 Application of the recommended local standard (0.83ha) suggests that 0.83 hectares of parkland should be provided per 1000 residents. Assuming a minimum size of 0.4 ha for a park, a park would therefore not be required until the size of a settlement exceeds 482 residents. This should be used as a basis for establishing whether parks are required in an area/settlement.
Hamlets and Countryside

4.93 Application of the quantity standard to the hamlets indicates that there is a current shortfall of – 0.70 hectares of formal parks. Given that population is likely to remain relatively static in the hamlets, this shortfall is unlikely to rise significantly. These shortfalls are cumulative across all hamlets. The size of the population in each individual settlement means that these shortfalls are of limited or no significance.

4.94 Accessibility mapping reinforces the quantitative shortfall with residents in the majority of hamlets outside the catchment of a formal park. The only park is located in Fenny Drayton (Witherley Parish).

4.95 Like those residents in the rural villages, residents in the hamlets indicated that they do not expect to find a formal park within their settlement and the significant majority of respondents would expect to drive to access a formal park.

4.96 Furthermore, nearly all residents in the Hamlets have access to some form of informal open space, largely amenity green space. Provision of this type of open space is more realistic than the provision of a park in each settlement. Based on this, there is no requirement for new provision within the hamlets.

4.97 There are no formal parks in the countryside and no expectation that any will be provided.

Monitor demand for increased provision of formal parks within:

- Urban areas, particularly Burbage
- Rural centres

PG6

Should demand be sufficient, consider increasing the provision of formal parks within these areas.

Use the local standard, and minimum size criteria, to determine whether parks are required in the rural villages. Villages should contain a minimum of 482 residents before parks are considered.

Redesignation

4.98 Nearly all formal parks within the rural settlements serve unique catchments and are therefore valuable local facilities. However, there are a large number of overlapping catchments within settlements which are evident, particularly within the south of Hinckley, Burbage and south of Earl Shilton (illustrated on the maps in figures 4.3 – 4.5). This means that existing formal parks in these settlements are serving some of the same residents and therefore may not be required in their current guise.
Figure 4.3 – Overlapping catchments in the south of Hinckley
Figure 4.4– Overlapping catchments in Burbage
Figure 4.5 – Overlapping catchments in the south of Earl Shilton
Although there are some overlapping catchments in Hinckley, consultation demonstrates that parks are particularly well used open spaces, suggesting that these sites are highly valued by residents. Furthermore, while there is currently sufficient provision, population growth will see these shortfalls reduce significantly. A similar situation is evident in Burbage, where provision is only marginally below minimum standards at the current time.

In Earl Shilton, when considering access to other types of informal open space (natural and natural open space and amenity green space) access to amenity green space is generally good. However, there are clear access deficiencies to natural open space in Earl Shilton. In light of formal parks in this area serving similar catchments and the lack of access to natural open space, consideration should be given to the redesignation of a formal park as a natural open space, or the provision of natural open space within existing formal parks.

Consider the redesignation of an existing formal park with overlapping catchments for the purpose of natural or semi natural open space, or the provision of natural or semi natural open space within the existing formal parks to alleviate access deficiencies to natural open space and semi natural open space. This would be of particular benefit in Earl Shilton. This links with recommendation PG3/PG4.

Good access to parks and gardens is as important as the provision of high quality sites, as without effective access routes; sites will be underused and consequently undervalued. Effective access to parks for residents in rural settlements, where provision is unlikely to be found in close proximity to the home is essential. Increasing access to existing parks in areas of deficiency identified earlier will also be important.

The Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies the importance of developing the Green Infrastructure Network within the Borough. A number of recommended improvements to the network are specified and these are supported within the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy, where implementation of the Green Infrastructure Network is identified as a priority. Reflecting this, Policy 19 seeks to ensure that new green spaces are provided as the population grows.

Enhancing green linkages to existing formal parks for residents in the Rural Villages and Hamlets will be particularly important, as provision is limited in these settlements. The creation of an effective network of footpaths will be central to this. Additionally, where possible, it should be ensured that formal parks in the Borough are accessible by public transport from some of the smaller rural villages and hamlets, to provide these residents with choice and opportunity.

Seek to increase access to existing formal parks through the development of the Green Infrastructure Network and enhancement of existing infrastructure for example footpaths. Ensure that where possible, formal parks are located on public transport routes.
4.104 Formal parks are a highly valued type of open space in the Borough. They are frequently used by local residents and are generally perceived to be of high quality. This type of open space is considered to offer significant recreational and aesthetic benefits to residents.

4.105 There is a variety of formal parks that serve a number of purposes. There is a mixture of larger formal parks that contain a variety of facilities and are important for recreation and smaller parks and formal gardens that provide residents with an area for relaxation. Formal Parks can play an important role in increasing levels of physical activity and improving health and this was exemplified during local consultation, with a number of residents indicating that they regularly use formal parks for walking. The benefits of parks are wide reaching and these sites are as valuable for the habitats they offer as the recreational opportunities that they provide.

4.106 Formal parks were perceived to be well maintained and recent improvements to a number of sites were commended. Site assessments reveal that the quality of formal parks is higher than that of many other types of open space. The need for increased ancillary accommodation was identified as the main area for improvement at formal parks.

4.107 Quantitative analysis indicates that there is currently a minor shortfall of formal parks within the Borough (0.12 hectares). Based on future population increases there will be an expected shortfall of 13.78 hectares by the year 2026. This indicates that more parks may be required to accommodate future increased demand.

4.108 There is a good distribution of formal parks across the Borough with the majority of residents in the larger settlements within a 600m catchment of a site.

4.109 It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision of formal parks in Hinckley and Bosworth through the Local Development Framework (LDF) and / or other mechanisms are:

- Ensure that the LDF contains policies that protect formal parks from development
- Drive a strategic programme of qualitative improvements through the implementation of an updated Green Space Delivery Plan. The plan should address how the sustainable network of open space, sport and recreation facilities can be maintained;
- Monitor demand for formal parks within the urban areas and rural centres, particularly within areas of high population growth, and consider increasing provision should demand be sufficient
- Consider the inclusion of natural and semi natural open space within parks, in particular in Earl Shilton where access to natural open space is limited, to ensure that these sites are valuable for biodiversity as well as recreation
- Increase access to existing formal parks through the development of the Green Infrastructure Network and enhancement of existing infrastructure

4.110 The key priorities and recommendations for formal parks and a list of sites classified within the formal parks typology are provided overleaf.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation number</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PG1</td>
<td>Continue to develop and enhance the quality of existing formal parks. Drive a structured programme of improvements with clearly defined outputs to create an overall network of sustainable parks. This may include the production of parks management plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG2</td>
<td>Work with providers of open space to initiate the creation of friends groups at parks and support existing friends groups established at parks in the Borough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG3</td>
<td>Work with providers of open space to incorporate sustainable management techniques to promote biodiversity and create a healthy ecosystem at parks in the Borough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG4</td>
<td>In light of the importance of formal parks, seek to protect all existing sites from residential development through the Local Development Framework. Formal parks should only be lost to development where it can be proven that there is no demand for the facility, or that improvements to another site will be of greater value to residents in the immediate catchment of the park to be lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG5</td>
<td>Ensure that new housing developments contribute towards (or provide on site where they are large enough to be reasonably expected to do so) the provision of new, or enhancement of existing formal parks where possible and appropriate. Where the supply of formal parks in the surrounding area is sufficient, policy should ensure that contributions are required for qualitative improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG6</td>
<td>Monitor demand for increased provision of formal parks within:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Urban areas, particularly Burbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rural centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should demand be sufficient, consider increasing the provision of formal parks within these areas. Use the local standard, and minimum size criteria, to determine whether parks are required in the rural villages. Villages should contain a minimum of 482 residents before parks are considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG7</td>
<td>Consider the redesignation of an existing formal park with overlapping catchments for the purpose of natural or semi natural open space, or the provision of natural or semi natural open space within the existing formal parks to alleviate access deficiencies to natural open space and semi natural open space. This would be of particular benefit in Earl Shilton. This links with recommendation PG3/PG4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG8</td>
<td>Seek to increase access to existing formal parks through the development of the Green Infrastructure Network and enhancement of existing infrastructure example footpaths. Ensure that where possible, formal parks are located on public transport routes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# FORMAL PARKS AND GARDENS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ID</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Quality Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Rock Gardens</td>
<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kirkby Road</td>
<td>Barwell</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Common</td>
<td>Barwell</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Barwell Park</td>
<td>Barwell</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wood Street Community Park</td>
<td>Earl Shilton</td>
<td>68</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hall Fields</td>
<td>Earl Shilton</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Stapleton Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Stapleton</td>
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<td>Church Road</td>
<td>Nailstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Higham Hall</td>
<td>Higham on the Hill</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Argents Mead and the Memorial Gardens</td>
<td>Hinckley Town Centre</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>Quality Score (%)</td>
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<td>King George's Playing Fields</td>
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<td>Brookside Place</td>
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<td>Bosworth Road</td>
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<td>Kirkby Road Playing Field</td>
<td>Desford</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Pleasure Grounds</td>
<td>Desford</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>Marina Park</td>
<td>Groby</td>
<td>Site not accessible at time of site visit (private)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Quarry Park</td>
<td>Groby</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Mayflower Court</td>
<td>Markfield &amp; Field Head</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Stanton under Bardon Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Stanton under Bardon</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ferndale Park</td>
<td>Ratby</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Britannia Road Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Tilton Drive</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Hinckley Road Recreation Ground</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>War Memorial Garden</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Pughes Paddock</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>Church Lane</td>
<td>Fenny Drayton</td>
<td>Site not accessible at time of site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255</td>
<td>The Horsepool</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360</td>
<td>Weaver Springs Recreational Ground</td>
<td>Earl Shilton</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Natural and Semi Natural Open Space

Introduction and definition

5.1 This type of open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrubland, grasslands (for example, downlands, commons and meadows), wetlands, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Such sites within Hinckley and Bosworth include Burbage Common (Burbage) and Thornton Reservoir (Thornton). This typology correlates with the Accessible Natural Open Space typology in the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Core Strategy.

5.2 Natural and semi natural open space is frequently found within other types of open space, such as parks, and in some instances there may be some sites classified as amenity green space or parks that have a secondary function as natural and semi natural open space. This serves to highlight the overlap between typologies. Natural open spaces also frequently fulfil similar roles to parks, as highlighted in Section 4.

5.3 The Wildlife Trust highlights the importance of natural and semi natural open space in terms of adapting to climate change. The use of this type of open space for flood defence and shading / absorption of CO₂ is emphasised.

5.4 Although natural and semi natural open space plays a key role in wildlife conservation, biodiversity and climate change, the recreational opportunities provided by these spaces are also important. It is essential that an appropriate balance between recreational use, biodiversity and conservation is achieved.

5.5 Burbage Common and Woods (Burbage) is a particularly important natural open space within Hinckley and Bosworth (although part of the site falls out of the Borough). This site is a Local Nature Reserve and is the Borough Council’s largest countryside site. Burbage Common and Woods contain a mix of semi natural and unspoilt grassland, picnic areas, horse riding trails and public footpaths. The site is of specific ecological interest and contains various species and wildflowers. It is also a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is adjacent to Aston Firs SSSI. The Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008) identifies Burbage Common as a key priority for future improvements, as well as investment around the access routes, both to and within the site. Many natural and semi natural open spaces are located within the countryside, just outside settlement boundaries. Access routes to these sites are therefore of particular importance.

5.6 Country parks are larger sites also often located outside of settlement boundaries. They offer a less structured environment than formal parks and act as a gateway to the wider countryside. They enable residents to experience countryside and natural open space and for the purposes of this study, country parks have been considered alongside natural and semi natural open space.

5.7 Within the Borough there are three country parks, specifically Bosworth Battlefield (nr Ambion Hill, south of Market Bosworth), Bagworth Heath Country Park (located between
Bagworth and Thornton) and Market Bosworth Country Park (Market Bosworth). These sites are particularly valuable, both in terms of providing access to informal countryside recreation opportunities for local residents and visitors and promoting biodiversity and nature conservation. Consultation suggests
that these sites are often used by visitors from outside of the Borough, as well as by residents of Hinckley and Bosworth.

5.8 In addition to the above types of site, the Green Wedges (Hinckley/Earl Shilton/Barwell/Burbage Green Wedge and Rothley Brook Meadows Green Wedge) are also viewed as strategic green assets. While these spaces do not necessarily provide recreational opportunities in their current form, there is potential to increase the role that they play. Policy 6 of the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy highlights the role of the urban Green Wedge and it’s overall contribution to the Borough. Policy 9 outlines the role of the Rothley Brook Meadow Green Wedge.

5.9 This section outlines the context and key consultation findings relating to natural and semi natural open space and country parks across Hinckley and Bosworth, and the recommended local standards. These local standards are then applied in order to understand local issues and priorities.

Context

5.10 Policy 19 of the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy highlights the importance of providing accessible natural green space as part of new development while Policy 20 outlines the importance of the green infrastructure network, which is a key priority of the Council. Improvements to and linkages between natural and semi natural open spaces are a key feature of this. The importance of the retention of the Hinckley/Earl Shilton/Barwell/Burbage Green Wedge and the Rothley Brook Meadows Green Wedge (and the potential to increase recreational opportunities and access for residents to these areas) is also highlighted (Policies 6 and 9).

5.11 The Core Strategy also references the role of country parks, highlighting that these are key tourist attractions as well as a resource for local residents.

5.12 A key outcome of the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy is an enhanced accessible natural environment with improved protection. This highlights the importance of natural open space at a regional level. The importance of increasing access to natural and semi natural open space is also emphasised in the Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy, which outlines a number of key priorities relating to increased access to important natural open spaces, such as Burbage Common and Woods and Thornton Reservoir.

5.13 Natural and semi natural open space and country parks are the two most popular types of open spaces within the Borough with many residents stating that they frequently visit these types of open spaces. The importance of country parks in Hinckley and Bosworth was emphasised throughout local consultation. Residents viewed country parks as Borough wide facilities that contribute significantly to the character of Hinckley and Bosworth. Sites such as Bosworth Battlefield were perceived to be important in attracting visitors to the area.

Current Position

5.14 There is an abundance of natural and semi natural open space within Hinckley and Bosworth. This provision is supported by large areas of local countryside, some of which is accessible to residents. The total amount of accessible natural and semi natural open space within or in close proximity to settlement boundaries is 668.48
hectares. In addition to this provision, Normanton Wood, owned and managed by the Woodland Trust and located to the east of Earl Shilton, falls just outside the Borough boundary but serves residents within the Borough.

5.15 There are four sites of over 40 hectares within the Borough. These sites are: Martinshaw Wood (between Groby and Ratby) (106 hectares), Burbage Common (Burbage) (82 hectares) (not all of this site is located within Hinckley and Bosworth), Markfield Lane (near Thornton) and Field Head (57 hectares) and Broad Lane (near Stanton Under Bardon) (43 hectares). Excluding these larger sites, the total provision within the Borough equates to 378.75 hectares. This serves to demonstrate the valuable role that these large sites play.

5.16 In addition to the recreational function that natural and semi natural open spaces offer for residents there are numerous sites of particular importance for their nature conservation and wildlife value, specifically:

- Sheepy Fields, Sheepy Parva (SSSI)
- Ashby Canal (SSSI)
- Kendalls Meadow, Dadlington (SSSI)
- Burbage Wood (SSSI), Burbage
- Cliffe Hill Quarry (SSSI) nr Stanton Under Bardon
- Botcheston Bog (SSSI) Botcheson
- Groby Pool (SSSI) Groby
- Ancient semi natural woodland at Markfield (Site of County and Local Nature Conservation Significance) Markfield
- Gopsall Wood (Site of County and Local Nature Conservation Significance) Gopsall
- Bosworth Battlefield Site (Site of County and Local Nature Conservation Significance)
- Stoke Golding Heritage Group (Site of County and Local Nature Conservation Significance) Stoke Golding
- Burbage Common and Burbage Wood (Site of County and Local Nature Conservation Significance) Burbage

5.17 In addition to the natural and semi natural open space highlighted above, 229.27 hectares is dedicated to country parks. These sites are located just outside of the main urban areas, although Market Bosworth Country Park in particular functions to an extent as a formal park within the Borough.

5.18 Table 5.1 summarises the distribution of natural and semi natural open space across Hinckley and Bosworth.

Table 5.1 – Provision of natural and semi natural open space across Hinckley and
Bosworth (excluding sites over 40 hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement hierarchy (As per table 2.2)</th>
<th>Current provision (hectares)</th>
<th>Number of sites</th>
<th>Smallest Site (hectares)</th>
<th>Largest Site (hectares)</th>
<th>Current population</th>
<th>Proportion per 1000 population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>0.0650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Centres</td>
<td>112.22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>34.05</td>
<td>31,110</td>
<td>3.6072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Villages</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>6,260</td>
<td>0.0671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlets</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,070</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>261.82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>38.49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>378.75</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>38.49</td>
<td>105,440</td>
<td>3.5921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.19 The key issues emerging from Table 5.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of natural and semi natural open space include:

- There is an abundance of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. The current provision equates to 3.6 hectares per 1000 population. Most of the natural open space is located outside of the larger urban areas in the countryside. Provision in the rural centres is higher than in the villages and hamlets.

- The majority of respondents to the household survey consider the provision of natural and semi natural open space to be sufficient. However, 39% of respondents state that the quantity of natural and semi natural open space is insufficient. Findings within the different sized settlements support the overall response, and perhaps unsurprisingly (given the character of the area, although there are fewer natural and semi natural spaces associated with the settlements) the highest level of satisfaction is found in the more rural villages.

- Other surveys demonstrate an overall difference in opinion regarding the quantity of natural and semi natural open space. This was highlighted by responses from Parish Councils, Council officers and Elected Members. The Parish Council survey response relating to natural and semi natural open space is the most negative response relating to all the informal types of open space meaning that it is a key issue for Parishes; Markfield and Barlestone Parish Councils identified that there is a need for additional natural and semi natural open space in their Parish.
Unsurprisingly, given the urban nature of the area, the highest level of dissatisfaction is found in Urban Areas. There are only 4.29 hectares of natural and semi natural open space across all of the urban towns.

The importance of protecting natural and semi natural open space from development was emphasised during local consultation and recent loss of this type of open space was given as the main reason by residents who indicate that the provision of natural and semi natural open space is insufficient. This issue was reflected in both the household survey and in many of the other workshops and surveys.

In addition to considering the quantity of natural and semi natural open space for recreational purposes, at the stakeholder workshop it was stated that there is fairly good provision for wildlife and biodiversity in the Borough. It was highlighted that there is a network of designated Local Wildlife Sites such as Burbage Common and Woods (Burbage) and Thornton Reservoir (Thornton) and that part of the National Forest falls within the Borough boundary.

Increasing the quantity of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough was viewed as important by residents.

5.20 The significant majority of respondents to the household survey consider the quantity of country parks to be sufficient (63%). Other consultation findings reinforce this perception and no Parish Council identified increasing the quantity of country parks as a top priority. At the stakeholder workshop, priority was given to improving the quality of provision and access to existing sites rather than the creation of new country parks.

5.21 Of those residents who indicate that the provision of this type of open space is insufficient, a lack of access to country parks was identified as the main reason for their response. This means that increasing access to country parks rather than increasing the quantity of this type of open space is important to residents. This reflects discussions during the stakeholder workshop.

5.22 Full consultation findings are set out in Appendix E.

Setting quantity standards

5.23 The quantity of existing natural and semi-natural open space varies significantly across Hinckley and Bosworth as is to be expected given the contrast in character between the rural and urban areas of the Borough. The abundance of natural and semi natural open space in the rural areas means that the quantity of provision in the Borough as a whole is particularly high, at 3.6ha per 1000 population.

5.24 Consultation however highlighted the importance of natural open space to local residents. These spaces were perceived to define the character of the area and their roles in terms of both recreation and biodiversity are recognised.

5.25 Natural England Nature Nearby (March 2010) indicates that the Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) standard remains a relevant way of measuring access to nature today. It indicates that there is a need to set both an accessibility and quantity standard - to ensure equitable provision both close to home and within sustainable transport distances. The ANGSt standard recommends that wherever you live, there should be access to an accessible green space:

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

5.26 Given the significant variations in the distribution of provision, as well as the high levels of existing provision, a Borough wide standard has been set with the intention of providing enough accessible natural space to meet Natural England standards. This standard will be applied to new development only and should not be applied to identify existing shortfalls or deficiencies. In order to preserve the quantity of natural space across the Borough, existing space will be protected.

5.27 The recommended local quantity standard for natural and semi natural open space is summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix E. It should be noted, that while the typologies of open space identified in PPG17 are not necessarily directly comparable with the Angst standard, this provides a good indication of requirements.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Provision</th>
<th>Recommended Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.60 hectares per 1000 population</td>
<td>2ha per 1000 population for new residential developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing provision to be protected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Justification**

A level of dissatisfaction with the current provision of natural and semi natural open space is evident from local consultation. Although the majority of respondents to the household survey consider the quantity of this type of open space to be sufficient (54%), 39% of residents state that the provision of natural and semi natural open space is insufficient. Other consultations highlight a difference in opinion, reinforcing a level of dissatisfaction with the quantity of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough.

As well as highlighted dissatisfaction with the level of provision, the need to protect existing natural open space from development was also highlighted. Natural open spaces were viewed as important spaces by residents of Hinckley and Bosworth.

A standard of 2ha per 1000 population has been set to enable the Council to meet with Natural England ANGst Standards. While this standard of provision is below the level of existing provision, it ensures that the quantity of natural open space required as part of new development is realistic and deliverable. This standard should be applied to new development only and should not be used to identify existing deficiencies or surpluses. All existing natural open spaces will be protected from development.

**Country Parks**

5.28 In light of the nature of country parks, and in order to ensure that the local standards are realistic, no quantity standard has been set. This will ensure future priority is given to improvements to the quality and access routes to existing sites rather than to the creation of new facilities.

5.29 The rationale behind this is summarised overleaf. Further detail is provided in Appendix E.
Quantity Standard (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification and worksheet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Provision</th>
<th>Recommended Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.24 hectares per 1000 population</td>
<td>No local standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Justification

Consultation demonstrates that there is overall satisfaction with the quantity of country parks, with 63% of respondents indicating that the quantity of provision is sufficient. Furthermore, comments made during qualitative consultations suggest that priorities lie in the ongoing improvement and maintenance of country parks and the improvement of access routes to these facilities.

The nature of these facilities means that the creation of new sites is challenging and is not required in the Borough at the current time. Given these issues, no quantity standard has been set for country parks. Instead, focus should be placed on improving the quality of existing facilities and maximising access to these sites.

Quality

Current position

5.30 The quality of natural and semi natural open space and country parks was assessed through site visits undertaken by pmpgenesis.

5.31 The quality of natural and semi natural open space, based on the site visits, is summarised in Table 5.2 overleaf.

Table 5.2 - Quality of natural and semi natural open space in Hinckley and Bosworth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement hierarchy (As per table 2.2)</th>
<th>Range/Quality scores</th>
<th>Average Quality Score</th>
<th>Highest Quality Site</th>
<th>Lowest Quality Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Areas</td>
<td>35% - 70%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>Clarendon Park Nature Walk, Hinckley</td>
<td>Station Nature Gardens, Burbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Centres</td>
<td>35% - 90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Martinshaw Wood, Groby</td>
<td>Station Road, Bagworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Villages</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamlets</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside</td>
<td>35% - 90%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Groby Pool Nature Reserve</td>
<td>The Coppice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The key issues emerging from Table 5.2 and consultations relating to the quality of natural and semi natural open space are as follows:

- The majority of respondents to the household survey consider the quality of natural and semi natural open space to be good (51%). However, 30% of residents indicate that the quality of this type of open space is average. This suggests that overall, there is a positive perception of this type of open space.

- A positive perception regarding the quality of natural and semi natural open space was also evident from other consultations - 41% of officers feel that the quality of natural open space is good and an additional 20% feel that the quality is excellent. More than half of all Parish Councils, as well as 40% of elected Members indicated that the quality of natural and semi natural open space is good.

- Site assessments reveal that the quality of natural and semi natural open space is average, with the average quality score of a site being 65%.

- The quality of natural and semi natural open space in the urban areas is significantly lower than in other areas of the Borough with the average quality score of a site being just 53%. The quality of natural spaces in the rural centres is particularly high in comparison to other settlement hierarchies.

- Litter, dog fouling, vandalism and graffiti were identified as minor problems experienced by frequent users of natural and semi natural open space during consultation. Site assessments supported this to an extent, as litter was found on some natural and semi natural open space sites and a number of natural open spaces were identified as being well used for dog walking.

- A clean and litter free site, footpaths and nature features were identified by residents as essential features of natural and semi natural open space. A range of vegetation, car parking facilities and dog walking facilities were viewed as desirable features of this type of open space.

- There was perceived to be a good mixture of woodland and other vegetation at natural and semi natural open space during site assessments. Site assessments found that cleanliness, maintenance and ancillary accommodation are the main factors requiring improvement at natural and semi natural open space.

- Although the quality of natural and semi natural open space was generally considered to be good from a user / recreational perspective, the Wildlife Trust indicated that there is currently inappropriate management of wildlife sites and more sympathetic management is needed. This serves to highlight the importance of balancing biodiversity with recreation. Bagworth Heath and Woods (Bagworth) and Thornton Reservoir (Thornton) were identified as two sites that have received investment, though funding for biodiversity/wildlife on these and other sites is insufficient. While there is some high quality Local Wildlife Sites in the area, it was identified that there are some sites that are poorly managed.

Very positive perceptions regarding the quality of country parks were portrayed during local consultation. Over half (54%) of respondents to the household survey consider the quality of this type of open space to be good and a quarter of residents state that the quality of country parks is excellent. This places country parks as one of the most highly rated types of open space in the Borough.

Other consultations support the findings from the household survey. Indeed, respondents to the
officer survey rate the quality of country parks more highly than any other type of open space. General comments from residents highlight the value of country parks and sites were identified as being well kept and tidy.

5.35 Market Bosworth Country Park has achieved a Green Flag award, a symbol of the high quality of the site. At workshops the ranger service, disabled access and provision of toilets were perceived to be key determinants of the quality of provision. A clean and litter free site, parking facilities and toilets were identified by residents as essential features of country parks. A range of vegetation and nature features, footpaths and ranger services were highlighted as desirable features.

Setting quality standards

5.36 The recommended local quality standards for natural and semi natural open space and country parks are summarised overleaf. Full justifications and consultation for the local standards are provided within Appendix E.

5.37 The quality standards summarise the features that residents consider to be important determinants of the quality of provision. The target quality score for natural and semi natural open space is set at 80%, the score achieved by a site that scores ‘good’ on all four quality factors outlined in the site assessment matrix.

5.38 No target quality score has been set for country parks due to the lack of sites within the Borough.

Quality Standard (see Appendix E)

Natural and Semi Natural Open Space

Recommended Quality Standard

Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the vision for natural and semi natural space should incorporate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean and litter free</td>
<td>Flowers, trees and shrubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths</td>
<td>Parking facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature features</td>
<td>Dog walking facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green infrastructure linkages – to and within sites (for example, footpaths etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Country Parks

Recommended Quality Standard

Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the vision for country parks should incorporate:
Accessibility

Natural and Semi Natural Open Space

5.39 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage. Country parks in particular are well used by both residents and visitors and access to these facilities is of particular importance. Access to natural open spaces was identified as a key priority in the Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy (2008). The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.

5.40 Two thirds of current users of natural and semi natural open space walk to access a site with the travel times experienced by users split between less than 5 minutes (29%) and 5 – 9 minutes (29%). This suggests that residents are using natural and semi natural spaces that are relatively local to them.

5.41 Similar to the findings portrayed by current users, the significant majority of respondents would expect to walk to a natural or semi natural open space (60%). The remaining 40% of residents would expect to drive to natural and semi natural open space. This suggests that, dependant on the size and opportunities provided by sites, residents are prepared to travel to access certain sites, although a large proportion of the population of the Borough wish to use local facilities. These findings are similar across all sizes of settlement.

5.42 The average travel time expected by those residents who prefer to walk is 14 minutes and the most commonly expressed travel time is 10 minutes. Expectations range from 3 – 60 minutes.

5.43 Site assessments reveal that information and signage require the most improvement with regards to the accessibility of natural and semi natural open space. Disabled access to natural and semi natural open space was also perceived to be poor with poor entrances and a lack of paths identified being the main reasons for this.

5.44 The need for a balance between recreational access and wildlife protection was emphasised by the Wildlife Trust. The Wildlife Trust stated that in order to prevent wildlife disturbance or damage some areas of natural open space may need to be inaccessible to the public.
Country Parks

5.45 Nearly two thirds of current users of country parks drive to access a site (65%). Travel times experienced by users are split, with equal proportions of users travelling less than five minutes, (19%), between 5 – 9 minutes (26%), 10 – 14 minutes (20%) and 15 – 19 minutes (23%).

5.46 Consistent with the travel mode portrayed by current users, 69% of respondents expect to drive to access a Country Park. The average expected travel time is 18 minutes and the most common response is broadly in line with this at 20 minutes.

5.47 Access to country parks was identified as a key issue during consultation. This is reflective of the location of existing provision.

Setting accessibility standards

5.48 The recommended local accessibility standards for natural and semi natural open space and country parks are summarised overleaf. Full justification for these local standards is provided within Appendix E.

Accessibility Standard (see Appendix E)

Natural and Semi Natural Open Space and Country Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Accessibility Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>700m (equivalent to circa 14 minutes walk) for sites under 10 hectares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Accessibility Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 minute drive time for sites over 10 hectares (encompassing country parks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Justification

60% of respondents to the household survey expect to walk to a natural or semi natural open space and 40% of residents prefer to drive to access a site. It appears that the expected mode of travel is dependent upon the size of the site and type of facilities offered. In contrast, the significant majority of respondents to the household survey expect to drive to a country park (69%). This indicates that residents expect to have access to local natural and semi natural open space, but are also prepared to travel further to access larger natural open spaces and country parks.

Based on the above, both walk and drive time standards have been set. For sites less than 10 hectares in size the local standard has been set at a 700m walk (circa 14 minutes walk). This is reflective of the average expected travel time and achievement of this standard will ensure that residents in the Borough have access to local natural or semi natural open space.

For sites over 10 hectares in size, the recommended standard is set at an 18 minute drive. This is based upon the average travel time expected by residents when accessing a country park and reflects the expectation of residents to travel further to access large natural or semi natural open spaces and country parks. In order to encourage sustainable transport, it will be important to promote access to country parks by public transport and other means (such as cycling and walking).

Applying provision standards
5.49 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards provides an understanding of the existing distribution of natural and semi natural open space and country parks.

**Natural and Semi Natural Open Space**

5.50 In light of the high levels of provision and uneven distribution of natural and semi natural open space across Hinckley and Bosworth, the recommended quantity standard is to be applied to new provision only. It is therefore inappropriate to state areas of existing deficiency when measured against the recommended 2ha per 1000 population.

**Country Parks**

5.51 Given that no quantity standard has been set for country parks, it is not appropriate to state areas of deficiency.

**Accessibility**

5.52 The application of the accessibility standard for natural and semi natural open space and country parks is outlined in Maps 5.1 - 5.3 respectively (overleaf). A full list of all sites is provided in Appendix G.
Map S.1 – Natural and semi natural open space in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough (Sites under 10 hectares)
Map 5.2 – Natural and Semi Natural Open Space (Sites over 10 hectares) and Country Parks in Hinckley
Map 5.3 - Natural and Semi Natural Open Space in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough
5.53 Map 5.1 indicates that natural and semi natural open space below 10 hectares in size is unevenly distributed across the Borough, with the majority of provision located in the north east and south east of the Borough, near to Bagworth, Thornton and Markfield. This means that the majority of residents in other parts of the Borough are outside the recommended 700m catchment of a natural or semi natural open space. There are clear gaps in provision in Earl Shilton, Desford, Newbold Verdon, Barlestone and Stoke Golding. Many of these issues were highlighted in the Parish Council and elected members surveys.

5.54 Map 5.2 illustrates that all residents, except those located in Orton-on-the Hill, have access to either a natural or semi natural open space over 10 hectares in size or a country park within the recommended 18 minute drive time.

5.55 Map 5.3 further illustrates the uneven distribution of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. However, Burbage Common is a particularly valuable site, providing access to natural open space for residents in Hinckley, Burbage, Earl Shilton and Barwell.

5.56 The location of larger natural open spaces and country parks in areas deficient in natural open space under 10 hectares may offset the need for smaller sites. For example, although residents in Ratby are outside the recommended 700m catchment of a natural open space under 10 hectares, they do have access to Martinshaw Wood (106.08 hectares) within a 700m catchment, which negates the need for smaller sites.

Quality

5.57 The quality scores for natural and semi natural open space across the Borough, based on site assessments, have been divided into quartiles for ease of analysis. Map 5.3 illustrates the quality of natural and semi natural open space in Hinckley and Bosworth, identifying low quality and high quality sites.

5.58 Map 5.4 serves to further accentuate the uneven distribution of facilities and illustrates that there is no clear pattern of the quality of facilities, although the majority of higher quality sites are located on the edge of the boundary in close proximity to the authorities of Blaby and Leicester.
Map 5.4 – Quality of Natural and Semi Natural Open Space in Hinckley and Bosworth
Priorities for Future Delivery

Borough Wide Issues

5.59 This section considers the Borough wide issues that need to be addressed. Consideration is then given to issues within specific settlements / Parishes.

5.60 In line with the principles of PPG17, the priorities are set out under the headings of:

• Quality enhancements;
• Protection of existing provision;
• Increasing provision;
• Redesignation;
• Disposal of facilities; and
• Enhancing access routes.

Quality Enhancements

5.61 Throughout consultation, country parks were identified as one of the most highly rated types of open space in the Borough. Site assessments support these perceptions, with the quality of country parks in Hinckley and Bosworth rated as excellent. The high standard of country parks is exemplified by Market Bosworth Country Park (Market Bosworth), which has been awarded a Green Flag.

5.62 In addition to maintaining and managing country parks for recreational use, like natural and semi natural open spaces, country parks are important for biodiversity and nature conservation. For example, Market Bosworth Country Park contains a variety of trees, wildflowers and exotic plants. In light of the importance of this type of open space for nature conservation and biodiversity, sympathetic management of sites should be incorporated within any future management programme.

Seek to maintain and enhance the quality of country parks in NSN1 Hinckley and Bosworth. Sympathetic management techniques should be practiced at sites of importance for nature conservation and biodiversity.

5.63 Although the protection of natural and semi natural open space was identified as a key theme during consultation, the quality of this type of open space was also identified as important. Residents regard the quality of natural and semi natural open space highly.

5.64 The recommended quality vision, based upon local consultation, identifies a well maintained site and seating as essential features of a high quality natural or semi natural open space. Site assessments found that cleanliness and maintenance and ancillary accommodation are the main factors requiring improvement at natural open spaces.
5.65 In addition to maintaining natural and semi natural open space for recreational purposes it is also important to consider the management of this type of open space for wildlife and biodiversity. During the stakeholder workshop The Wildlife Trust indicated that more sympathetic management of wildlife sites is needed. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council have already completed a phase one habitat survey as part of the Biodiversity Study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.66</th>
<th>The key quality issues relating to natural and semi natural open spaces within each of the settlement hierarchies are outlined below.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Urban Areas**

5.67 No natural or semi natural open spaces within the urban areas meet the target quality score of 80%. However, Clarendon Park Nature Walk (Hinckley) (70%) is the highest scoring site and offers numerous benefits to residents. This site is a small nature trail within Clarendon Park and site assessments indicate that it was well maintained and inviting and offered adequate ancillary accommodation.

5.68 Station Nature Gardens, Burbage (35%) and Harwood Drive, Hinckley (40%) are the poorest sites in the urban areas. Maintenance at Station Nature Gardens was identified as poor. There was evidence of litter and access to the site was obstructed by overgrown nettles. Litter was also evident at Harwood Drive. There was a lack of ancillary accommodation and the site was considered to be unsafe.

5.69 Burbage Common, which falls just outside of the settlement boundary of Burbage, is a high quality site from both a wildlife and recreational perspective.

**Rural Centres**

5.70 Four sites within the rural centres achieved quality scores that exceed the target score of 80%. These sites are as follows:

- Martinshaw Wood, Ratby (85%);
- Altar Stones, Markfield (80%); Hill Hole Quarry, Markfield (80%); and
- Thornton Reservoir (Thornton) (80%).

5.71 Although there are a number of high quality natural open spaces in the rural centres, there are also some examples of poorer quality facilities. Station Road, Bagworth (35%) is the lowest scoring natural open space in the Borough. Maintenance at this site was particularly poor and the need for improved management of vegetation was highlighted. Laurel Farm Wood, Bagworth (60%) and Station Road (Market Bosworth) are also poor quality sites. Litter and a lack of ancillary accommodation at Laurel Farm Wood were identified as two key issues from site assessments.
Rural Villages

5.72 There is only one site within the rural villages. Brookside Place Woodland (Sheepy Magna) achieved a score of 70%, below the target quality score.

Hamlets and Countryside

5.73 There are no natural and semi natural open spaces within the hamlets. More than half of all natural and semi natural open space within the Borough is however located within the countryside.

5.74 Groby Pool Nature Reserve (90%) is the highest quality site and achieved a quality score in line with the recommended target of 80%. Pear Tree Wood, Ratby (80%) Centenary Wood and Royal Tigers, Bagworth, Burroughs Wood (Ratby) and Burbage Common (Burbage) (all 75%) are also high quality sites.

5.75 Although there are some high quality sites the quality of sites is varied. The lowest scoring sites in the countryside are outlined in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4 – Lowest Scoring Sites in the Hamlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Quality Score</th>
<th>Site Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polebrook &amp; Crow, near Thornton</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>The footpaths at this site were unclear. A lack of ancillary accommodation was also noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Coppice, near Thornton</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Vegetation at this site was perceived to be slightly overgrown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billa Barra Hill, Stanton Under Bardon</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>Evidence of vandalism was found on this site. The need for more seating and bins was identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Woodlands Farm, near Desford</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>This site was generally rated as average. No specific quality issues were highlighted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Protection of Existing Provision

5.76 The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan emphasises the importance of protecting natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. The Hinckley and Bosworth Play Strategy further reinforces the need to protect this type of open space, stating that unequipped play space (which includes amenity green space and natural open space) should be protected. The Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy also emphasises the importance of these spaces (including Policies 4, 6 and 9).

5.77 The importance of protecting this type of open space was also emphasised throughout consultation. A number of residents indicated that natural open space had recently been lost to residential development and this was given as one of the main reasons why provision was perceived to be insufficient.

5.78 Natural and semi natural open spaces are valuable not just from a recreational perspective, but also in terms of conservation and biodiversity. The protection of these sites will also be a key component of the strategy to reduce climate change and promote urban cooling.

5.79 Application of The Woodland Trust Accessibility standard reinforces the need to protect existing natural and semi natural open space. Table 5.4 summarises the implications of the application of the Woodland Trust Access to Woodlands Standards. While the woodland cover within 4km of the home is significantly above
the county average, it can be seen that new provision is still required to meet the recommended Woodland Trust standards for local provision and indeed, fewer residents have access to a wood of 2ha or more within 500m of the home than in Leicestershire as a whole.

5.80 It must be noted that these standards are set by the Woodland Trust and provide an indication as to the amount of desirable woodland in each area. They are however difficult to achieve in an urban area but are provided for illustrative and comparative purposes.

Table 5.4 – Application of the Woodland Trust Accessibility Standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Hinckley and Bosworth</th>
<th>Leicestershire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Woods</td>
<td>% population with access to 2ha+ wood within 500m</td>
<td>7.26%</td>
<td>8.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% population with access to 20ha+ wood within 4km</td>
<td>88.11%</td>
<td>42.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccessible Woods</td>
<td>% extra population with access to 2ha+ wood within 500m if existing woods opened</td>
<td>11.67%</td>
<td>16.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extra population with access to 20ha+ wood within 4km if existing woods opened</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>16.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Creation</td>
<td>% population requiring new woodland creation for access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m</td>
<td>81.07%</td>
<td>75.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% population requiring new woodland creation for access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km</td>
<td>4.56%</td>
<td>40.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum area of new woodland required for 2ha+ woods within 500m</td>
<td>166 ha</td>
<td>1,013 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum area of new woodland required for 20ha+ woods within 4km</td>
<td>60ha</td>
<td>430ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In light of the importance of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough all sites should be protected through policies in the Local Development Framework. Natural open space should only be lost to development if certain exception criteria (set out in policy) are met.

5.81 While no quantity standard has been set for country parks, it remains important to protect these...
sites from residential development. Country parks are Borough wide facilities that serve a large catchment. The value of this type of open space was emphasised during local consultation. This type of open space is the most frequently used in the Borough and the importance of country parks for both local residents and visitors was highlighted throughout consultation.

In light of the importance of country parks in the Borough all sites NSN4 should be protected through policies in the Local Development Framework.

Increasing Provision

5.82 Consultation identified a high level of satisfaction with the current provision of country parks. In light of the nature of country parks, it is unrealistic for a new site to be created. There are therefore no recommendations for increasing the number of country parks.

5.83 Variations on opinions on the quantity of natural and semi natural open space were evident throughout consultation. However, increasing the provision of natural and semi natural open space within the Borough was identified as important by residents. As well as proactive improvements to the overall provision of natural and semi natural open space, the implementation of the recommended local standard (2ha per 1000 population) as part of new development will ensure that the natural character of the Borough is retained.

Urban Areas

5.84 The majority of natural and semi natural open space is located within the rural areas of the Borough, or on the periphery of the urban settlements in the countryside. Residents in the urban areas exhibited the highest levels of dissatisfaction.

5.85 Despite this, reflecting the large quantity of space on the periphery of the urban areas, all residents, have access to a natural open space or country park within the recommended 18 minute drive time.

5.86 However, when considering local access to natural open space under 10 hectares in size, it can be seen that there are some deficiencies. In particular, all residents in Earl Shilton are outside the recommended 700m minute catchment of a natural open space (figure 5.1). This issue was also raised in the elected members survey, where it was suggested that both access to and the quantity of natural and semi natural open space in Earl Shilton is poor. This issue was also alluded to during the stakeholder workshop.

5.87 Although these residents are outside of the local catchment area, Normanton Wood, a site owned and managed by the Woodland Trust (6ha) is located circa 1km to the east of the town, just outside of Hinckley Borough Council boundaries. This site is accessible to residents within Earl Shilton, although it is further than the recommended 700m catchment.
Figure 5.1 – Deficiencies in Earl Shilton
5.88 While there are gaps in natural and semi natural open space in Earl Shilton, all residents have access to either a formal park or amenity green space within the recommended catchment. This means that residents have access to at least one type of multifunctional open space.

5.89 The presence of formal parks in Earl Shilton provides the opportunity for natural open space to be incorporated into these sites. Like Earl Shilton, residents in Barwell have limited access to local natural and semi natural space, and are not within close proximity of any of the larger sites (which might negate the need for more local provision). This issue was also raised during elected member consultation. This is illustrated in Figure 5.2 overleaf.
Figure 5.2 – Deficiencies in Barwell
The presence of parks and other types of open space in this area provides the opportunity to integrate areas of natural open space within other facilities.

Application of accessibility standards suggests that there are some parts of Hinckley and Burbage where residents are outside of the catchment for natural open space. Gaps in access in Burbage are of lower significance, given the location of Burbage Common, just to the east of the main settlement. The gaps in access do however emphasise the importance of the schemes highlighted within the Hinckley and Bosworth Green Infrastructure Strategy, which seek to increase access to Burbage Common and improve the role and function of this open space. Some of these schemes are also referenced in the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy Policy 20. Furthermore, there is potential to provide improved access to natural and semi natural open space for residents in Hinckley, Burbage, Earl Shilton and Barwell through the creation of recreational opportunities on the existing Green Wedge in line with Policy 6 of the Core Strategy.

The importance of providing natural and semi natural open space, particularly in Hinckley, was emphasised during consultation.

The provision of new spaces as part of new development will be essential in maintaining the levels of access to natural open space. In some instances, where the location of natural and semi natural open space on site is not possible, given the importance of natural and semi natural space, it will be important to provide appropriate linkages to areas of nearby natural open space.

Rural Centres

The majority of rural centres are well served in terms of natural open space. In addition, there are numerous other sites located on the periphery of the rural centres.

Application of the accessibility standards indicates that whilst all residents have access to larger natural open spaces (over 10 hectares) and country parks within the recommended drive time, access to natural or semi natural open space sites below 10 hectares is more limited.

All residents in Barlestone, Desford, Newbold Verdon and Stoke Golding settlements are outside the recommended 700m catchment of a site (figures 5.3 – 5.5). Despite this, Parish Councils considered access to natural open space to be average or better. This may reflect the overlap between this type of space and accessible countryside.
Figure 5.3 – Deficiencies in Barlestone
Figure 5.4 – Deficiencies in Desford
Figure 5.5 – Deficiencies in Newbold Verdon
Figure 5.5 – Deficiencies in Stoke Golding
In addition to the settlements identified previously where all residents are outside of the catchment of a natural open space under 10ha, there are also some residents in Ratby and Groby who live further than 700m from a natural and semi natural open space. All residents within the Rural Centres however have access to either a formal park, country park or amenity green space within the recommended accessibility catchments. Furthermore, country parks are located in close proximity to those settlements outside the catchment of natural and semi natural open space. This means that residents within the Rural Centres have good access to multifunctional open space.

Although residents in Barlestone, Desford, Newbold Verdon and Stoke Golding have good access to multifunctional space and are within the recommended drive time of larger natural open spaces (over 10 hectares) and country parks, this does not negate the need for local natural open space. Therefore, opportunities to increase the provision of natural and semi natural open space within areas of deficiency should be considered. The location of amenity green space and formal parks within these areas of deficiency provides the opportunity for natural open space to be provided within these sites to alleviate deficiencies.

Rural Villages

Application of the accessibility standard illustrates that the majority of residents within the Rural Villages are outside the 700m catchment of a natural or semi natural open space below 10 hectares in size. However, all residents have access to a large natural open space or country park within an 18 minute drive.

When considering the provision of other multifunctional open space within the Rural Villages all residents have access to either a formal park, country park or amenity green space. This means that whilst local access to natural open space is limited, there is good access to other forms of multifunctional open space for residents in most settlements. There is also an abundance of local countryside. The size of these settlements means that local natural space may not always be necessary.

In consideration of this, demand for natural and semi natural open space within the Rural Villages should be monitored and new spaces provided if demand is sufficient. Alternatively, where there are parks or other types of open space in the villages, areas of these sites could be dedicated to natural open space and wildlife areas.

Hamlets and Countryside

A large proportion of the natural open space in Hinckley and Bosworth is located outside of the urban conurbations in the countryside surrounding the hamlets. Accessibility mapping illustrates this, with all residents, except those in Orton on-the-Hill, able to access a natural or semi natural open space within an 18 minute drive time.

Although local access to natural open space below 10 hectares in size is limited, the small population of settlements and access to local countryside means that there is no requirement to increase the provision of natural or semi natural open space in these areas. Instead, it will be essential to maximise linkages to such spaces from other parts of the Borough.
Identify opportunities for the creation of new accessible natural and semi natural open spaces in the Borough, focusing particularly on areas which are shown as deficient. This may involve creating new spaces, incorporating natural areas into parks, and improving access to sites that are currently inaccessible. In particular, access to natural and semi natural open space is more limited in Earl Shilton, Barwell and Hinckley as well as in several of the rural centres (Desford, Newbold Verdon, Barlestone and Stoke Golding).

Redesignation

5.104 Nearly all natural and semi natural open spaces within the Borough serve a unique catchment and therefore provide a valuable local resource both for residents and wildlife. There are no recommendations for the redesignation of existing natural open spaces.

Disposal of Facilities

5.105 There are no recommendations for the disposal of existing natural or semi natural open space.

Increasing Access

5.106 Application of the accessibility standard for natural and semi natural open space indicates that local access to natural or semi natural open space below 10 hectares in size is limited, particularly within the urban areas of the Borough.

5.107 Providing new natural or semi natural open space within densely populated urban settlements is particularly challenging. Therefore, increasing access to existing natural and semi natural open space in the Borough is a priority. The Green Infrastructure Strategy emphasises the importance of increasing access to natural and semi natural open space through a number of strategic interventions including the provision of additional cycle routes and green routes, both between and within settlements and evidence suggests that these are key priorities. These are illustrated further in Section 12.

5.108 A lack of access to natural and semi natural open space was highlighted during local consultation. A number of residents stated that there are a large number of private sites that are inaccessible to the public and this was one of the main reasons why residents indicated that there is insufficient provision of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. Access routes to natural open spaces and the nearby countryside are particularly important for residents in the more urban areas of the Borough, which includes Earl Shilton, Hinckley, Burbage and Barwell.

5.109 In particular, there is potential to provide improved access to natural and semi natural open space for residents in Hinckley, Barwell and Earl Shilton through the creation of recreational opportunities on the existing Green Wedge in line with Policy 6 of the Core Strategy.

Seek to increase access to existing natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. Developing the Green Infrastructure network through the provision of additional cycle routes and footpaths.

5.110 As well as maximising access between and within settlements on foot, appropriate public transport links are also essential to maximise usage of larger strategic sites.
5.111 Country Parks in particular are predominantly located within the centre of the Borough, and not many residents are within walking distance. It is therefore essential to ensure that effective public transport routes serve these sites.

Seek to increase access to strategic natural and semi natural open
country parks by ensuring that such sites are on public transport routes.

Summary

5.112 Natural and semi natural open space and country parks are the most popular types of open space within the Borough, with more residents visiting them regularly than any other type.

5.113 The need to protect natural and semi natural open space from development was a key theme throughout consultation and this was emphasised in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan. The importance of country parks in the Borough was also evident during consultations.

5.114 While recreational opportunities should be encouraged at natural and semi natural open space and country parks, this should be balanced with conserving and promoting biodiversity.

5.115 Natural and semi natural open space is poorly distributed across the Borough, with the majority of provision located in the north east and south east of Hinckley and Bosworth. Whilst nearly all residents have access to large natural and semi natural open space sites and country parks, local access to natural open space (below 10 hectares) is limited. Key areas of deficiency are found in Earl Shilton, Barwell, Desford, Newbold Verdon, Barlestone and Stoke Golding. Opportunities to increase the provision of natural and semi natural open space in these settlements should be considered. Due to a lack of opportunities for new provision within the urban settlements, the incorporation of natural open space within formal parks or other types of open space may be required to alleviate deficiencies and ensure that natural open space is accessible for both wildlife and humans. In order to maintain the overall character of the Borough, it will be essential to ensure that new developments contribute towards the provision of natural and semi natural open space in line with the quantity and accessibility standards.

5.116 As well as improving the quality of existing natural and semi natural spaces from both a recreational and biodiversity perspective, increasing access to natural and semi natural open space and country parks through the development of footpaths and cycle routes within and between settlements and public transport routes will be a priority.

5.117 It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision of natural and semi natural open space and country parks that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework and/or other delivery mechanisms are to:

- Incorporate a policy protecting existing natural and semi natural open space and country parks within the Local Development Framework
- Ensure that ongoing improvements to biodiversity and conservation management are encouraged, and that recreational use of sites is balanced with biodiversity and the maintenance of habitats
- Identify opportunities for improving the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces, both in terms of the wildlife and habitat values of the site, but also for recreational purposes
- Maintain and enhance the quality of country parks within the Borough and incorporate sympathetic management techniques at sites of importance for nature conservation and biodiversity. This may include the development of country park management plans
- Seek to increase the provision of natural and semi natural open space, particularly in areas of deficiency, by either promoting new sites or encouraging the provision of natural and semi natural areas within other larger sites, such as parks
5.118 The key priorities and recommendations for natural and semi natural open space and a list of sites classified within the natural and semi natural open space typology are provided overleaf.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation number</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSN1</td>
<td>Seek to maintain and enhance the quality of country parks in Hinckley and Bosworth. Sympathetic management techniques should be practiced at sites of importance for nature conservation and biodiversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| NSN2                  | Seek to enhance and develop the quality of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. Drive a structured programme of improvements with clearly defined outputs using the site assessments and quality vision as a basis.  
Seek to incorporate sympathetic management techniques at wildlife sites and sites of importance for biodiversity in the Borough drawing on the findings of the biodiversity study. |
<p>| NSN3                  | In light of the importance of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough all sites should be protected through policies in the Local Development Framework. Natural open space should only be lost to development if certain exception criteria (set out in policy) are met. |
| NSN4                  | In light of the importance of country parks in the Borough all sites should be protected through policies in the Local Development Framework. |
| NSN5                  | Identify opportunities for the creation of new accessible natural and semi natural open spaces in the Borough, focusing particularly on areas which are shown as deficient. This may involve creating new spaces, incorporating natural areas into parks, and improving access to sites which are currently inaccessible. In particular, access to natural and semi natural open space is more limited deficiencies exist in Earl Shilton, Barwell and Hinckley as well as in several of the rural centres (Desford, Newbold Verdon, Barlestone and Stoke Golding). |
| NSN6                  | Seek to increase access to existing natural and semi natural open space in the Borough. Developing the Green Infrastructure network through the provision of additional cycle routes and footpaths. |
| NSN7                  | Seek to increase access to strategic natural and semi natural open spaces and country parks by ensuring that such sites are on public transport routes. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site ID</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Quality Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Burbage Common</td>
<td>Hinckley and Burbage</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Harwood Drive</td>
<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Hill Hole Quarry</td>
<td>Markfield and Field Head</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Billa Barra Hill</td>
<td>Stanton under Bardon</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Groby Pool Nature Area</td>
<td>Groby</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Martinshaw Wood</td>
<td>Ratby and Groby</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Burroughs Wood (Ratby)</td>
<td>Ratby</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Polebrook &amp; Crow</td>
<td>Nr Botcheston</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Laurel Farm Wood</td>
<td>Bagworth</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Centenary Wood and Royal Tigers</td>
<td>Bagworth</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Normanton Wood</td>
<td>Barwell and Earl Shilton</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Brookside Place Woodland</td>
<td>Sheepy Magna</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Manor Farm</td>
<td>Bagworth</td>
<td>Site not accessible at time of site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Station Nature Gardens</td>
<td>Burbage</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>The Paddock</td>
<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Basin Bridge</td>
<td>Higham on the Hill</td>
<td>Site not accessible at time of site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Groby Pool</td>
<td>Bradgate Hill and Groby</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Hollow Oak Wood</td>
<td>Bagworth Parish</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Thornton Reservoir</td>
<td>Thornton</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>The Partings Wood</td>
<td>Thornton</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Broad Lane</td>
<td>Near Stanton Under Bardon/Thornton/Markfield</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site ID</td>
<td>Site Name</td>
<td>Settlement (or Parish where falling outside settlement boundaries)</td>
<td>Quality Score (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>Altar Stones</td>
<td>Markfield and Field Head</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Station Road</td>
<td>Market Bosworth</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hinckley</td>
<td>Site not accessible at time of site visit</td>
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<td>The Coppice</td>
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<td>Thornton Plantation</td>
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