

## **2. Undertaking the study**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 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 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 different size settlements in Charnwood.



### **Types of open space**

- 2.5 The overall definition of open space within the government planning guidance is:  
*“all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”.*
- 2.6 PPG17 identifies ten typologies including nine types of green space and one category of urban open space. It states that local authorities when preparing assessments of needs and audits of existing open space and recreation facilities should use these typologies, or variations of it.

## SECTION 2 – UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

- 2.7 In order to best reflect the types of provision in Charnwood, slight changes were made to the typologies detailed in PPG17, specifically:
- provision for children and young people was subdivided into provision for children (up to 12) and provision for young people (over 12) in order to reflect that the presence of a facility for children does not necessarily negate the need for a facility for teenagers
  - additional typologies of village greens and historic spaces were included. Village greens and historic spaces are considered alongside civic spaces in Section 13 and are also referenced within the amenity green spaces typology.
- 2.8 Table 2.1 sets out the types of open space included within this study. The categorisation of each open space into the typologies in Table 2.1 was carried out by Charnwood Borough Council as part of the site visit process.

**Table 2.1 - Typologies of open space, sport and recreation facilities**

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
<b>Parks and gardens</b>	These range from major parks to small memorial gardens – often used for informal recreation and community events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• informal recreation</li> <li>• community events</li> </ul>
<b>Natural and semi-natural green spaces</b>	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wildlife conservation</li> <li>• biodiversity</li> <li>• environmental education and awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Amenity green space</b>	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• informal activities close to home or work</li> <li>• children's play</li> <li>• enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas</li> </ul>
<b>Provision for children</b>	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below aged 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed as equipped play facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children's play</li> </ul>

<p><b>Provision for young people</b></p>	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teenage shelters</li> <li>• skateboard parks</li> <li>• BMX tracks</li> <li>• Multi Use Games Areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities or meeting places for young people</li> </ul>
<p><b>Outdoor sports facilities</b></p>	<p>Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outdoor sports pitches</li> <li>• tennis courts</li> <li>• bowls greens</li> <li>• golf courses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilities for formal sports participation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Allotments</b></p>	<p>Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. This typology does not include private gardens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growing vegetable, fruit and flowers (drop root crops)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cemeteries &amp; churchyards</b></p>	<p>Cemeteries and churchyards including closed churchyards and other burial grounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• burial of the dead</li> <li>• quiet contemplation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Green corridors</b></p>	<p>Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• walking, cycling or horse riding</li> <li>• leisure purposes or travel</li> <li>• opportunities for wildlife migration</li> </ul>
<p><b>Civic spaces &amp; village greens</b></p>	<p>Formal areas for pedestrians such as civic squares and market squares – often used for community events and settings for civic buildings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community events</li> <li>• setting for civic buildings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Historic spaces</b></p>	<p>Sites of historic value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• informal recreation</li> <li>• community events</li> </ul>

- 2.9 As well as evaluating outdoor open space, sport and recreation facilities, in line with PPG17, indoor built facilities have also been considered. This typology includes sports halls, swimming pools, indoor bowls and health and fitness facilities.

### **PPG17 – five step process**

- 2.10 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five-step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space, specifically;
- Step 1 – identifying local needs
  - Step 2 – auditing local provision
  - Step 3 – setting provision standards
  - Step 4 – applying provision standards
  - Step 5 – drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.
- 2.11 The tasks included within each step are detailed below.

### ***Playing Pitch Strategy***

- 2.12 The playing pitch strategy has been developed following the methodology set out in '*Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the production of a playing pitch strategy*'. Further information on the methodology used is provided in Section 9 of this report. Some phases of the PPG17 assessment also inform the Playing Pitch Strategy, specifically the consultation and the audit of existing provision.

### ***Step 1 - identifying local needs***

- 2.13 PPG17 states that community consultations are essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision and understand local expectations for additional or improved provision. The guidance relies less on the implementation of national standards and places increased emphasis on local needs.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 The key stages of the local needs assessment are summarised below.

### **Desk research**

- 2.16 Desk research was undertaken comprising:
- analysis of the population profile to inform the identification of existing and potential future needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities in Charnwood
  - a strategic review of relevant background policy documents (*national, regional and local*) that provide an indication of local needs and the priorities for the Borough.
- 2.17 A summary of the key findings from this desk research are set out in section three of this report.

### **Household survey**

- 2.18 5,000 questionnaires were distributed to households across the Borough to capture the views of both users and non-users of open spaces during May 2009. Residents were randomly selected using the Council's electoral register to ensure that a wide range of residents were given the opportunity to participate. A copy of the household survey and accompanying covering letter can be found in Appendix B.
- 2.19 517 completed postal questionnaires were returned during the survey period. A sample of around 500 responses provides results that are accurate to circa +/- 4.4% at the 95% confidence interval. This means for example, that if 70% of the survey sample had said that they think that the quality of parks is good, we can be 95% confident that had we interviewed all residents, the results would lie between 65.6% and 74.4%.

### **Geographical analysis**

- 2.20 To assist with interpretation of views across the Borough, the analysis has been undertaken both on a Borough wide basis and also by the three settlement hierarchies set out in section one of this report.
- 2.21 Key questions included on the household survey were cross-tabulated against responses from residents living in each of the three settlement hierarchies to allow examination of the data at a more detailed local level. This provides an indication of how views vary according to the size of settlement in which people live.

### **Internet survey for children and young people**

- 2.22 Consultation with young people and children is traditionally difficult, however, it is important to understand the views of this large sector of the community, as children and young people are important users of open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- 2.23 To reflect their importance, two questionnaires were posted on the internet during May 2009. One questionnaire was intended for pupils of a primary school age (referred to as children in this report) and one for young people of secondary school age (referred to as young people). All schools within the Council boundary were notified of the website address and asked to encourage their pupils to complete the questionnaires.
- 2.24 In total, 147 completed questionnaires were returned during the survey period from primary school aged children and 145 from secondary school aged children/young people.

### **Officer and On-line surveys**

- 2.25 Two further questionnaires were posted on the internet to provide residents with an additional opportunity to give their views and also to allow Council Officers to provide feedback via an on-line self-completion questionnaire.
- 2.26 The availability of these surveys was promoted via the local media, however, responses were relatively low, at just 51 Officer questionnaires and 16 on-line questionnaires from residents.

### **Sports club survey**

- 2.27 A postal questionnaire was sent to all sports clubs included on a club database provided by the Council in order to obtain the views of local clubs and organisations on the adequacy of sports facility provision. Two questionnaires were sent out; one for pitch sport clubs (football, rugby, cricket and hockey) and one for non pitch sport clubs. 31 general sports clubs returned completed questionnaires and 24 pitch sports clubs did so.

### **Discussion groups/workshops**

- 2.28 Discussion groups/workshop sessions were held with a wide range of key stakeholders, including two discussion groups with Parish Council representatives and one workshop session with key stakeholders (including representatives from Charnwood Borough Council, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Sport, South Charnwood School Sports Partnership and Loughborough University). In addition further consultation meetings were held with key Officers from the Council to explore issues in more detail.
- 2.29 A summary of the findings of all consultations undertaken can be found in Appendix C.

### **Step 2 - auditing local provision**

- 2.30 PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space and 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 was compiled by Charnwood Borough Council.
- 2.31 As well as considering the quantity of open space, sport and recreation provision, it is also important to evaluate the quality of existing sites and therefore, site assessments were carried out at all open spaces identified in the audit by the Borough Council.
- 2.32 Site assessments recorded:
- the facilities available at each site
  - wildlife and habitats that were evident
  - additional details such as opening hours, financial performance and level of access where known.
- 2.33 In addition, each site was rated in terms of a number of qualitative features, specifically, main entrance, site boundaries, roads/ path/ access, fencing/walls/ railings, planted areas, grass areas, play equipment, security and safety, litter/bins, seats, toilets, parking, lighting, signage, information, cleanliness and changing rooms. For each of these factors, sites were awarded a score of 1 – 5 where one is poor and 5 is very good.
- 2.34 In order to enable comparisons between sites and across typologies, site scores were then converted into percentages by evaluating the total score achieved, against the maximum possible score for that site. The criteria that each site was measured against was defined by the factors included in the local quality standard for that typology. This is expanded upon further later in this section (under the explanation of the local quality standards).

## **SECTION 2 – UNDERTAKING THE STUDY**

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- 2.35 Audits of children and young people sites were carried out using Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) play value judging criteria. RoSPA sets out scoring thresholds to allow children and young people's sites to be classified into one of the following: poor, below average, average, good or excellent. Junior, toddlers and teenagers have separate scoring thresholds which are appropriate to each age group.
- 2.36 In practice many play areas have elements of toddler play and junior play. Where this is the case the play area has been classified according to the predominant age group.
- 2.37 RoSPA states: "The assessments 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Average' etc, are based on what RoSPA considers acceptable. In practice 'Average' will be in excess of the national average for existing play areas." RoSPA therefore recognises that their standards are particularly stringent.
- 2.38 The RoSPA play value score was then converted into the scoring system used in the rest of the PPG17 audit ranging from very good to very poor.
- 2.39 Indoor sports facilities were not included within the open space site assessment programme as a county wide study to produce a sports facilities strategic framework was being undertaken simultaneously. This study also involved undertaking site assessments to indoor sports facilities in Charnwood and therefore, the findings from this study were used to provide information on the quality/access of indoor sports facilities. Quality scores assigned to each site, and the site assessment matrix used are set out in Appendix D.

### **Steps 3 and 4 - setting and applying provision standards**

- 2.40 PPG17 states that open space standards should be set locally and recommends that national standards should not be used to assess local circumstances.
- 2.41 Local authorities 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 Charnwood, standards have been derived from the findings of the consultations and the analysis of existing provision.
- 2.42 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).
- 2.43 Table 2.2 overleaf 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. Standards have been set according to the three hierarchies outlined in section one of this report, specifically large settlements, service centres and smaller settlements.

**Table 2.2 – The setting standards process**

<b>Process Stage</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<b>National standards</b>	Analysis of any existing national standards for each typology. These are usually provided by national organisations (eg 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.
<b>Existing local standards</b>	Consideration of existing local standards for each typology that are currently applied by the Council. These include standards set out in the Local Plan and in other adopted strategies.
<b>Current provision (quantity standards only)</b>	Assessment of the current quantity of provision within the local authority area as a whole and within each of the settlement hierarchies.
<b>Benchmarking</b>	Figures detailing local standards set by PMP for other open space projects to provide a benchmark.
<b>Consultation (household survey)</b>	Consideration of the results of the survey findings with regards the provision of each type of open space. This analysis provides a robust indication (at each hierarchy level) of public perception of the existing provision and aspirations for future provision of all different types of open spaces.
<b>Consultation comments</b>	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.
<b>Analysis of existing provision</b>	Analysis of the existing provision including the quality of facilities and distribution of sites
<b>PMP recommendation</b>	PMP recommendation of a local standard. The standard is based on an assessment of the local community need and will be in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quantity – x hectares per 1000 population</li> <li>• accessibility – a distance threshold in metres</li> <li>• quality – a list of essential and desirable features.</li> </ul>
<b>PMP justification</b>	Full justifications for the recommended local standard based on qualitative and quantitative consultations are provided for each typology.

2.44 A brief explanation of the purpose of setting each type of standard is set out below. Full justification for each standard set is provided in Appendix E and F.

**Quantity**

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

- 2.46 The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:
- provide an understanding of the adequacy of existing provision for each type of open space
  - 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.
- 2.47 This assessment measures the quantity of provision against the current population as well as projecting forward to anticipate the potential implications of future population growth. For the purposes of summary in this report, quantity standards are applied by settlement hierarchy. Quantity standards can be applied to any given population in order to determine the adequacy of provision.
- 2.48 2004 Sub National Population Projections have been used to evaluate the impact of population growth. These projections indicate that by 2026, population will increase by 11%. Detailed distribution of this population growth is unavailable and it has therefore been assumed that population growth will occur across the Borough in proportion to the existing population. i.e. in areas of higher existing population growth, population growth will be higher.

### ***Accessibility***

- 2.49 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).
- 2.50 Similar to quantity standards, accessibility standards should be derived from an understanding of community views, particularly with regards to the maximum distance that members of the public are willing to travel.
- 2.51 Accessibility standards are set in the form of distance thresholds (ie the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport). Application of these standards will then facilitate the identification of areas where residents do not have appropriate access to facilities. PPG17 suggests that open spaces should be accessible by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- 2.52 A straight line distance has been used to illustrate the accessibility catchment of each open space. The distances used to represent the local standard (expressed in minutes) have been taken from a study undertaken by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA, now Fields in Trust, FIT). This study evaluated the impact of the natural pattern of roads on the distance that can be travelled. These distances are set out in Appendix E, standard setting.

2.53 While this analysis at boroughwide level provides an overall indication of accessibility, detailed site by site decision making should take into account localised accessibility issues such as territorialism and the presence of large roads.

### **Quality**

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

- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Usage is therefore restricted and as a result the value of the site to the public is limited
- a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have significant wider benefits such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a high value despite qualitative issues.

2.55 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 settlement hierarchies
- specific types of open space.

2.56 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. For each type of open space, features that are essential in the provision of a high quality facility are listed and desirable features are also recorded. These are derived from good practice as well as local consultation.

2.57 As highlighted earlier in this section, the agreed quality standards defined the criteria against which each typology was assessed. Sites were only therefore evaluated against the criteria which were considered to be essential and desirable for each type of open space. These criteria are explained in each section (4 – 12) under the head of quality standard. Scores were then translated into a percentage.

2.58 The percentage scores achieved were then measured against the local standard to define the overall quality rating.

2.59 Where a site did not achieve a score of average or above for all of the essential criteria, the maximum possible rating is average. A site not achieving average or above for all essential and desirable criteria cannot be awarded an excellent score.

2.60 Table 2.3 summarises the scores required to fall into each category.

**Table 2.3 – Quality Scores**

	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
Excellent	All Essential Criteria 3 or above All Desirable Criteria 3 or above	80%
Very good	All Essential Criteria 3 or above	70% to 79.9%
Good	All Essential Criteria 3 or above	60% to 69.9%
Average		50 to 59.9%
Poor		Below 50%

**Step 5 – drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities**

- 2.61 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.
- 2.62 In accordance with the PPG17 Companion Guide, an Open Space, Sport and Recreation study 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 re-designate 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. More generally, the Council should deliver a plan led approach to significant housing growth and open space and should test potential housing locations against the findings of the open space, sport and recreation study. The findings of this study should also be used to guide the levels of contribution required for each type of open space and within the SUEs.

## SECTION 2 – UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

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- 2.63 The recommendations contained within the report are based on the findings of the application of the local standards. They highlight the key issues in relation to open space across the Borough. An example is provided below:

<b>PG1</b>	Given the low number of sites within the town centre, all park and garden sites should be afforded protection from development.
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- 2.64 The recommendations and key issues raised will inform the direction of the Local Development Framework as well as other strategic documents relating to open space, sport and recreation facilities. All recommendations made in this study are set out in Appendix G. The recommendations highlight issues only and do not represent a strategy for the future delivery of open space or formal policy relating to open space. Instead, these recommendations should inform the development of a green space strategy which will identify priority issues as well as resources, opportunities and funding. They also highlight issues that should be considered as part of policy.
- 2.65 Appendix H provides an example as to how local standards should be applied to determine surpluses and deficiencies.