

4.6 Borough Council Group Meetings¹

Two group meetings were held to gain a Borough Council perspective on local needs and issues, one with council members, the other with officers.

4.6.1 Council Members Focus Group

This group looked in turn at the strengths/good aspects about provision; the weaknesses and problem areas; and finally aimed at identifying some short-term priorities for making improvements.

Strengths/Good points

- Good range of things to do.
- The historic buildings, churches, museums.
- Opportunities in neighbouring local authorities (e.g. Leicester City, Harborough).
- Good footpath network.
- The canal.
- Sence Valley Walk.
- Many schools with good facilities.
- The University facilities.
- Some sports clubs have a good community spirit and do a lot of work with children (e.g. certain rugby clubs, and junior football clubs).
- The Borough Council's facilities located in Countesthorpe (in Oadby & Wigston Borough).
- The existing allotments.
- Nice parks.
- Awards received ('Pride of Borough, Green Flag etc).
- The cemeteries and churchyards.

'Room for improvement'

- The poor quality of some provision (including pavilions and lack of youth provision).
- Conflict between users of parks.
- Ancillary buildings (like changing rooms) often not 'Fit for Purpose'.
- Better use could often be made of what exists. A feeling that there may be some surplus open space that could be put to better use.
- A lack of volunteers to help run clubs and activities.
- Lack of clarity about the way that developer contributions are used within the Borough.
- A feeling that some schools have reduced 'community access' to their facilities (although there remain examples of 'good practice').

¹ This section is provided primarily for internal information but could be included in the final public document if revised appropriately.

- Lack of information on ‘who uses facilities’- this situation is better for the leisure centres, but not for the parks and open spaces, which have open access.
- The catering at Brocks Hill Country Park is good but the cafeteria shuts at 4pm on Saturdays in the summer.
- Lack of knowledge of where and when things are available. (Issues with updating of paper material and the Council’s website).
- Roundabouts- many are sponsored, but the maintenance can be poor.
- Some of the highway verges are poorly maintained considering the money received by the County Council from Borough ratepayers for this purpose.
- Access to some key facilities is difficult from parts of the Borough (e.g. Brocks Hill Country Park)- poor bus service.
- Not enough allotments- long waiting lists.
- Need better and safer cycle routes, but constraints imposed by 19th century, narrow roads.
- Not enough youth facilities, and school facilities should be better used to this end.
- Need to provide things to do for young people who don’t want to join clubs.
- The Green Gym concept works well in the Borough but needs more GP referrals to support it when the grant funding runs out soon.
- Government ‘red tape’ stopping volunteers from coming forward, although recognition that there may be other cultural, social, and demographic reasons involved.
- Need to develop a pool of volunteers- a few volunteers currently ‘do everything’.

Priorities/quick hits

- Better information and dissemination on facilities and opportunities (including leaflets and web based sources) - e.g. leaflets for walks.
- Better use of notice boards- many recently refurbished but not well used.
- More secure parks with gates to lock at night.
- Introduce some ‘Park keepers’
- More space for allotments
- Local allotment societies should be introduced to help devolve management.
- Need to clearly identify why the council is in the business of providing open space, sport and recreation facilities, and for whom.

4.6.2 Council Officers Group Meeting

The group looked at issues concerning the various aspects of sport, recreation and open space categories of relevance to PPG17. A summary of issues raised is provided below:

General

- Transport problems between South Wigston and Oadby e.g. access to Brocks Hill
- Common view that “others” in the Borough get most resources (South Wigston, Wigston, Oadby)

- Residents involved in management of many areas e.g. Hill Way, Cameron Close, Coombe Park Community Orchard, Brocks Hill

Parks

- Vandalism and anti-social behaviour problems on some parks
- Queries about the extent of “No ball games” rules on some areas of open space - conflict between needs of children and concerns of some nearby residents. Some sites governed by restrictive by-laws.
- Sometimes only perception of anti-social behaviour rather than reality - teenagers simply “hanging out”.
- Limited resources to maintain at the standard some would like. Of recent years S106 funds of £2,000 per new dwelling has helped!
- Brocks Hill - excellent Country Park - Millennium Project
- Peace Memorial Park also excellent - green flag award
- Blaby Road Park - master plan for development - should improve park
- Good skate park provision at Willow Park
- Problems with skate provision at Uplands Park - had to be removed due to some local residents objecting

Outdoor Sports

- Oadby Owls - ambitious growing football club - have indicated need for more pitches. Issues over “control” of new pavilion. Possible need for more parking but objections from some residents. Also use some school pitches.
- Horse Well Lane pitches - poor changing facilities. Pitches damaged by unofficial training.
- Bowls - Peace Memorial Park - excellent facility. New pavilion for wider community use - not just bowls - but issues around “equal shares”.
- Municipal Golf Course. Golf club has sole use of part of pavilion. 42 year lease (up to 2014). Relatively cheap in comparison to private club (£64 p/a membership in comparison to £1,000+ for private).
- Seems to be high local demand for BMX and skateboarding facilities - few in Borough
- Reported shortage of basketball facilities
- Problems on some sites re misuse e.g. cars and motorbikes joy riding
- Some schools have synthetic turf pitches - but not suitable for competitive hockey

Youth and Play

- Big demand for BMX and skate facilities from children and young people - but often nimby attitude observed when sites identified e.g. Uplands Park
- Youth Bus project seems popular
- Oadby & Wigston Road - youth club using pavilion
- Parks used for youth activities (8-14 mainly but also for 14+).
- Many events and activities at Brocks Hill
- Complains re anti-social behaviour and vandalism on parks - sometimes helped by “defensive” planting and landscaping

- Misuse of some green space by motorised scooters
- Good range of formal play areas - 16 across Borough. Capital programme for improvements but only enough for 1 site per year
- New natural play area (BIG) planned for Brocks Hill
- Potential for homezone type child friendly streets?

Allotments

- Poor relation in terms of resources - infrastructure poor
- Shortage of sites, particularly in South Wigston - historic
- Long waiting list
- Green Gym initiative started on allotments - wider concept e.g. GP referrals to sport and physical activity

Indoor provision

- Leisure Connection responsible for management (up to 2014). Supply capital re improvements. 30 free events per year. £500 per month for community use. GP referral scheme.
- Karate Club - hire charge complaint - £8.80 up to £15
- Pavilion charges also found a bit expensive by some
- Charges all approved by Council - vary between commercial and community hire
- Wigston Pool - large but a bit “past its best”
- Oadby - refurbished in '98 - Design and Build - “a bit tired” but well used
- Programming of pools - swimming club have off peak use - difficult for children. Some equipment is old.
- Difficult to change programme
- Subsidy for 50+ Free for disabled but still less than neighbours such as Leicester City (free swims for 60+).
- Parklands Leisure Centre - excellent dry side facility - 8 court hall, fitness, dance studio etc
- Small Halls include:
 - The park pavilions (changing and meeting rooms)
 - Poplars
 - Church Halls
 - Bassett Centre
- University and schools also provide halls

Nature, Countryside etc

- Fishing - reported shortage of carp fishery
- Brocks Hill, Lucas Marsh, Fludes Lane Woodland, Oadby Grange Country Park, Pochins Bridge - by canal (which is also important re conservation and recreation) - all important sites.
- Need to balance conservation with recreation
- Potential for more natural management of green space areas e.g. some parts of parks are managed as hay meadows
- Nature Conservation Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan etc are available

- Potential for more development of cycleways, footpath routes etc
- Wigston - Glen Gorse - some complaints re motorbikes on paths

Civic Spaces, Churchyards etc

- Churchyards etc - places where kids hang out - not always appreciated by residents!
- Cemeteries - some problems with criminal damage and anti-social behaviour
- Some complaints re maintenance
- Currently all are close mowed but potential for more diverse management e.g. to encourage biodiversity
- Need for new cemetery - potential for more diversity e.g. green woodland burial

Borough Council Observations

- In many areas the concerns and observations of council members and officers reflect the findings of the community consultation exercises
- Need for better publicity and promotion of what is already available
- Limitations in public transport makes access to some facilities difficult without a car
- Need to improve safety and security in relation to public open space e.g. consider the potential for introducing park wardens
- Need for additional facilities for teenagers
- Need for additional allotment space in parts of the Borough where provision is currently poor (and improvements to facilities at existing sites)
- Need to review policy on “no balls games” areas to enable a more balanced assessment re specific sites.
- Need for additional sports pitches to meet demand (and in some cases for improved ancillary facilities such as changing).
- Need to review pricing and subsidy arrangements at indoor leisure centres and pools to enable access by low-income households
- Potential for more natural management of green space areas e.g. some parts of parks are managed as hay meadows
- Fishing - reported shortage of carp fishery in the Borough
- Need for a new cemetery - potential for more diversity e.g. green woodland burial

4.7 Concluding Remarks

The consultation has highlighted a very wide range of interesting points and issues of value both to this study as well as the future sports strategy. However, in terms of this particular study, the following general points are felt to be important:

- The local appreciation of countryside and environmental recreation facilities, in particular Brocks Hill.
- The local importance attached to provision of parks and gardens.
- The value attached to informal and natural green space for a variety of reasons.
- The relative popularity (usage) of various forms of informal open space in comparison with formal sports facilities though the latter tend to be used by a smaller percentage of the population on a regular basis.
- An appreciation of the value of good levels of maintenance for open spaces in particular, particularly in relation to cleanliness, graffiti, dog fouling etc.
- The importance placed by local people on measures to improve safety and security (including a need for more supervision via wardens).
- The need when planning for all types of recreation opportunity to take into account people's preparedness to travel, and requirement for different types of space. For children and young people this means easy access by foot/cycle.
- Problems faced in accessing facilities and opportunities for people with disabilities and limited mobility.

Other important factors that have been highlighted consistently through the consultation exercise include:

- The need for improved provision for children and young people, in particular for the older age range.
- A degree of dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of sports pitches and ancillary facilities (in particular for football).
- The potential for more and better cycling and footpath links across the Borough (a shortage of bridleways and cyclepaths).
- The need for accessibility in both physical and cost terms.
- The need for improved publicity and promotion of what is available.
- The need for more affordable access to indoor facilities for low-income households
- The potential for greater community use of school facilities

4.8 Specific Comments from the Surveys

OTHER COMMENTS MADE ON COMMUNITY SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.

Think more about the elderly residents - so much is devoted locally for youngsters.	Oadby
There is no bowling area close to Oadby/Wigston.	Oadby
There is a need for more facilities for aged people - meeting places and recreation.	Oadby
There is a lack of safe areas for children 10+ to congregate.	Oadby

The park on Iliffe Ave, Oadby is awful! The council should be ashamed to have neglected it for so long!	Oadby
Some of the play areas are fantastic - Ellis Park, Knighton Park but others such as Coombe Park are outdated and need rebuilding. Coombe Park is a haven for Beauchamp students which leads to all manner of anti-social behaviour.	Oadby
School playing fields should be available to use in the evening and weekends.	Oadby
Safety is a primary concern for older people.	Oadby
Overall facilities in Oadby and Wigston are very good. However, there are a shortage of dog litter bins.	Oadby
Not enough to keep the kids off the streets.	Oadby
My main concern is for teenagers to have a place to go instead of making a nuisance of themselves.	Oadby
More security in Coombe Park, please, so that I can allow my children (11 + 5) to use it!	Oadby
More places like Parklands Environment Centre are needed.	Oadby
More outdoor activities at a low or no price.	Oadby
Many of the questions do not relate to the needs - guidance, access, 1:1 help, transport - of a totally blind person such as myself. I suspect my particular needs are difficult for leisure services to meet.	Oadby
Management of shrubbery in woodlands/parks and walkways to make people feel safe and able to be seen. Maybe by Community Service Offenders like they used to years ago!	Oadby
Local swimming pools are not clean enough to use.	Oadby
Lack of toilet facilities especially in parks curtails use.	Oadby
It would be nice if the whole footpaths are tarmaced to allow for a wider walking area.	Oadby
I would like to see more organised sports for young people and supervision of the proposed improvements to Uplands Park.	Oadby
I feel that due to traffic, it is just so hard to get to a leisure facility.	Oadby
Facilities required for teenagers. Too many youth hanging around the streets - they need more activities.	Oadby
Dogs should be kept off areas where children play. The facilities in Oadby and Wigston compared to other areas in the County are very poor.	Oadby
Better environmentally friendly litter collections from parks and neighbourhoods. Plastic bottles and cans especially as road sweepers spit them out.	Oadby
Beauchamp won't share the tennis and football courts - where are we supposed to play?	Oadby
Any considerations should include the additional parking	Oadby

required.	
Wigston Swimming Pool is old fashioned and not very clean.	South Wigston
Wigston pool could do with being bigger and have more to offer.	South Wigston
Seats in parks.	South Wigston
Nothing for children or adults to do in South Wigston.	South Wigston
None of the questions really apply to a 93 year old with limited mobility.	South Wigston
If paths were clear of dog mess you would get more people walking and enjoying the outdoor life.	South Wigston
I feel that money should be put into activities/drop in centres for teenagers. If there was somewhere for them to go and get off the streets it would lead to less anti-social behaviour.	South Wigston
Cycling on footpaths and pavements.	South Wigston
Oadby & Wigston Road is very good except for the jobs who seem to do what they like. Never see any SPO's or police patrolling at any time especially evenings and Saturdays.	South Wigston
At 83 yrs of age and no car, most of this questionnaire is irrelevant to myself, but the best of luck with it.	South Wigston
As I cannot walk far and do not drive, access for my mobility scooter is important.	South Wigston
Why is there no children's play area on Wigston Harcourt? What happened to Youth Clubs?	Wigston
What about an eco friendly carp pond with paths and cycle tracks and tree planting near Kilby Bridge Canal?	Wigston
There is not much for the average teenager to attend. Need more Youth Clubs.	Wigston
The connection between Leicester Road and the child area is poor with no ideal path/bridge connection.	Wigston
Provide an area within a leisure centre with equipment suitable for wheelchair users.	Wigston
Plenty of walks. Also, better local bus connection with Oadby/Wigston.	Wigston
Please provide more low cost facilities for young people to get them off the streets.	Wigston
Please could there be a children's play area on the Wigston Harcourt estate	Wigston
Not many activities or facilities for older people. Everything is too expensive for us but we still pay our council tax - what for?	Wigston
Not enough info. to Senior Citizens in the Borough of all the concerts - age concern meals, etc.	Wigston
Normally use facilities outside the borough, e.g. Knighton Park, Enderby Leisure Centre	Wigston
More prosecutions for fouling footpaths.	Wigston
More areas/leisure facilities for teenagers, club etc.	Wigston

More activities indoor and outdoor for teenagers e.g., skate board, motorcycle tracks.	Wigston
Little Hill park is not child friendly. Intimidating teenagers, boring equipment. Children prefer to go elsewhere.	Wigston
Leicester has a discount card for over 60's, this would be welcome for Leicestershire.	Wigston
Larger parks in the area would benefit from a portion of the park area being covered with artificial turf so teenagers can kick a ball or whatever during the winter and bad weather.	Wigston
Increasing number of motorised vehicles on roads poses increasing discomfort and risks for cyclists, whilst muddy condition of many public footpaths and tracks discourages their use. Hope the council will implement a policy to improve the surface of footpath	Wigston
If a covered viewing area was provided at the bowling green, it would encourage more people to watch and take up the sport.	Wigston
I appreciate being a member of community activities as provided by schools and churches in O.W.B. I find walking, as exercise, suffices.	Wigston
I am 81, much of this doesn't apply to me.	Wigston
Get the staffing right, with people who care and the facilities will improve. It's the people who make or break anything!	Wigston
Football pitch needs suitable parking - at present, they block drives and churn up the grass verges.	Wigston
Facilities for young people are very poor. Hence high levels of ASB.	Wigston
A very interesting survey, but I fear I am far too old to partake in any of the facilities mentioned.	Wigston

OTHER COMMENTS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE'S SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

They are grouped by School/College.

Make sure that activities are safe for all ages!	Abington High School
More urban fringe parks with trees and grass only.	Abington High School
Need more leaflets/posters advertising Youth Clubs etc. will make more people go to clubs.	Abington High School
Youth Clubs should be given more money to buy nicer stuff.	Abington High School
All youth areas need cleaning up.	Bushloe High School
More areas for older children to hang out.	Bushloe High School
More facilities and clear up the park.	Bushloe High School
More outdoor clubs.	Bushloe High School
More trips with youth groups.	Bushloe High School
Need to be stricter with the kids who mess around.	Bushloe High School
They need to be improved because of smokers and people who drink.	Bushloe High School

I wish there was an adventure playground in Oadby for teenagers.	Gartree High School
More places to chill, bigger more improved area, and more free entry places.	Gartree High School
There are not enough rugby posts.	Gartree High School
There should be better equipment.	Gartree High School
To make Oadby a better place to live in!	Gartree High School
To make Oadby a better place.	Gartree High School
To make Oadby a more safer, exciting place with more swimming facilities.	Gartree High School
To make Oadby a much more exciting place to live in!	Gartree High School
To make Oadby more exciting to play in!	Gartree High School
We need football goalposts at Ellis Park so the ball doesn't always go into the play area.	Gartree High School
Make them appealing to older teenagers.	S Leicestershire College
More skate parks.	S Leicestershire College
More/bigger skateparks.	S Leicestershire College
Local park is often ruined by other older teens.	South Wigston
More adverts around town about facilities.	South Wigston
There should be a local youth club.	South Wigston

OTHER COMMENTS FROM CHILDREN'S SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

They are grouped by School.

I would love to have a better Oadby Grange Park.	Brookside Primary School
More parks	Brookside Primary School
Better park equipment.	Fairfield C.P. School
Fairfield Park to have more stuff to play on for older people.	Fairfield C.P. School
Somewhere can hang out/have fun not worry about dangers.	Fairfield C.P. School
Ice skating clubs.	Fairfield C.P. School
More after school clubs.	Fairfield C.P. School
More parks near our school.	Fairfield C.P. School
More places to go in bad weather with different activities.	Fairfield C.P. School
More playgrounds on Emerly Fields.	Fairfield C.P. School
More playgrounds.	Fairfield C.P. School
More stuff on Fairfield Park for ages 9-15, less graffiti.	Fairfield C.P. School
More swings/slides/fun stuff on Fairfield Park for ages 9-14.	Fairfield C.P. School
Skating, more after school clubs	Fairfield C.P. School
Some more adult stuff on the Fairfield Park.	Fairfield C.P. School
Some more older swings on the park.	Fairfield C.P. School
Tennis, nets so that we can play basketball, a football area.	Fairfield C.P. School
BMX ramps	Glenmere Primary School

Gluthaxton Youth Club is really good and really fun.	Glenmere Primary School
I really enjoy basketball.	Glenmere Primary School
I would like our playground to have a play area.	Glenmere Primary School
It would be good to have an only roller skating area near by.	Glenmere Primary School
More secret den places, maybe in trees or under bridges.	Glenmere Primary School
More shops	Glenmere Primary School
Paintball club, BMX places	Glenmere Primary School
Paintball clubs please.	Glenmere Primary School
Bigger play area in Uplands and Ellis.	Launde Primary School
Maybe cleaner facilities.	Launde Primary School
More skateparks in the city and in parks.	Launde Primary School
More swings and slides plus climbing frames.	Launde Primary School
Oadby Owls Football Club	Launde Primary School
I really want an older play area at the green!	Meadow Primary School
I would like to go to swimming clubs.	Woodland Grange School

5.0 AUDIT OF LOCAL PROVISION (OVERVIEW)

5.1 Introduction

This section considers the existing provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough, it describes the types of open space that have been included within the study (further justification for the typology is included in Section 6). It also provides some additional information on the benefits of open space.

5.2 A practical definition of open space

The existing or potential recreation utility of a site is a function of its:

- Size;
- Location; and,
- Shape, topography and internal site features.

Even very small sites are potentially large enough to accommodate meaningful recreation activity. For example, a site of 0.1 ha is still sufficiently large to accommodate an equipped play area, tennis court, or ‘pocket park’ to name but some possible uses.

The location of a space will have a profound impact on its recreation utility for reasons of safety, accessibility, security, and nuisance (for example.) An unenclosed space immediately adjacent to a very busy road might not be considered to have any practical recreation utility for safety reasons. Similarly, a space adjacent to open plan private gardens (as often occurs in many modern housing estates) might generate concerns from residents and effectively stop it being used actively for this purpose. However, if it were a large site, parts of it may be considered to be a safe distance from the road, or sufficiently remote not to cause actual or perceived nuisance to residents.

A site may in theory be open to use by the public, but in practice might be too heavily vegetated, or sloping, hilly, marshy etc to be used for any recreation purpose. A large site may be of such an awkward shape as to exclude any meaningful recreation use; and, apart from safety issues, much highway land cannot be considered to be open space for such reasons.

In short there can be no hard and fast rules for determining the recreation utility of a site for the community. This has meant that judgements have been made on a site by site basis as to what should be included and excluded for these purposes. In general this has been easy to achieve in a consistent way for the very large majority of sites.

5.3 Typologies of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Generally, this study has looked at the following types of publicly accessible provision:

- Parks and Recreation Grounds.
- Outdoor Sports Space.
- Equipped Children and Young People's Space.
- Informal Open Space.
- Natural Green Space.
- Allotments.
- Churchyards and Cemeteries.
- Routeways and Corridors.

These categories generally reflect the typology of provision identified in PPG17 with some modifications to suit local circumstances. This is further explored and justified in section 6.

Although the above are varied in their nature, a number of simple criteria have been set to establish whether they 'qualify' for assessment, and have therefore been included within the audit, these are:

- they are freely and openly accessible to the community (e.g. recreation grounds),
- they are accessible to the public on a managed access basis (such as with allotments and some kinds of outdoor sports facility.)

Sites have been identified through desk research, consultation with the Borough Council as well as site visits and inspections. A total of 324 open spaces have been audited, this includes different features within a site (e.g. a play area has a separate audit to the park within which it is located). Each identified site has been given a Unique Reference Label.

The following section describes each of the typologies included within the study, and provides a summary of the existing provision of facilities.

5.4 Typologies of open space

The following section defines the various categories of open space considered by this study. Further justification for the use of these categories is outlined in section 6.

<p>Parks and Recreation Grounds</p>	<p>For the purpose of this study all sites including recreation grounds, parks, and formal gardens have been placed under a single classification called Parks and Recreation Grounds. They take on many forms, and may embrace a wide range of functions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal recreation and outdoor sport. • Play space of many kinds (including for sport and children’s play). • Providing attractive walks to work. • Offering landscape and amenity features. • Areas of formal planting. • Providing areas for ‘events’. • Providing habitats for wildlife.
<p>Outdoor Sport Space</p>	<p>These include seasonal and fixed sports spaces that are openly accessible to the public. Facilities include sports pitches, including cricket, football and rugby. They also include fixed sports spaces such as tennis courts, and bowling greens. Very often these facilities are located within Parks or Recreation Grounds, and as such, many of the facilities, especially sports pitches are multi-functional. That is they can be used for sport one day, and for the rest of the week function as a space to walk and play.</p> <p>Outdoor sports space with limited public access (e.g. private sports grounds), have also been recorded and mapped where known.</p>
<p>Informal Open Space</p>	<p>The category is considered to include those spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function such as a park, public playing field or recreation ground; nor managed as a natural or semi-natural habitat. These areas of open space will be of varied size, but are likely to share the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences. • Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass. • Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points (unlike parks). • Unlikely to have planted flower beds or other formal planted layouts, although they may have shrub and tree planting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally no other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as play equipment or ball courts), although there may be items such as litter bins and benches. <p>Examples might include both small and larger informal grassed areas in housing estates and general recreation spaces. They can serve a variety of functions dependent on their size, shape, location and topography. Some may be used for informal recreation activities, whilst others by themselves, or else collectively, contribute to the overall visual amenity of an area.</p>
Children and Young Peoples Space	<p>It is important at the outset to establish the scope of the audit in terms of this kind of space. Children and young people will play/'hang out' in almost all publicly accessible "space" ranging from the street, town centres and squares, parks, playing fields, "amenity" grassed areas etc as well as the more recognisable play and youth facility areas such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks, Multi-use Games Areas etc. Clearly many of the other types of open space covered by this study will therefore provide informal play opportunities.</p> <p>To a child, the whole world is a potential playground: where an adult sees a low wall, a railing, kerb or street bench, a child might see a mini adventure playground or a challenging skateboard obstacle. Play should not be restricted to designated 'reservations' and planning and urban design principles should reflect these considerations.</p> <p>The study has recorded the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipped children's space (for pre-teens) • Provision for teenagers. <p>The former comprises equipped areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to and around 12 years. The latter comprises informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 16/17 age group, and which might include facilities like skateboard parks, basketball courts and 'free access' Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). In practice, there will always be some blurring around the edges in terms of younger children using equipment aimed for older persons and vice versa.</p>
Natural Greenspace	<p>For the purpose of this study (Accessible) Natural Green Space covers a variety of spaces including meadows, river floodplain, woodland and copse all of which share a trait of having natural characteristics and wildlife value, but which are also open to public use and enjoyment. Research elsewhere and (more importantly) the local consultation for this study have identified the value attached to such space for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of 'closeness to nature' with its attendant benefits for people is something that is all too easily lost in urban areas. (Accessible) Natural Green Spaces</p>

	<p>should be viewed as an important a component of community infrastructure in planning for new development as other forms of open space or ‘built’ recreation facilities. (Accessible) Natural Green Spaces can make important contributions towards local Biodiversity Action Plan targets and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.</p> <p>Some sites will have statutory rights or permissive codes allowing the public to wander in these sites. Others may have defined Rights of Way or permissive routes running through them. For the remainder of sites there may be some access on a managed basis. Although many natural spaces may not be ‘accessible’ in the sense that they cannot be entered and used by the general community, they can be appreciated from a distance, and contribute to visual amenity.</p> <p>Natural Greenspace with limited public access (e.g. RSPB reserves) have been mapped where known.</p>
Allotments	<p>Allotments provide areas for people to grow their own produce and plants. It is important to be clear about what is meant by the term ‘Allotment’. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 obliged local authorities to provide sufficient allotments and to let them to persons living in their areas where they considered there was a demand for allotments.</p> <p>The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term ‘allotment garden’ as:</p> <p>“an allotment not exceeding 40 poles in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family” (n.b. 40 Poles equals 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres. A Pole can also be known as a Rod or Perch.)</p> <p>The Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called Statutory Allotment Sites, by the requirement for the need for the approval of Secretary of State in event of sale or disposal. Some allotment sites may not specifically have been acquired for this purpose. Such allotment sites are known as “temporary” (even if they have been in use for decades) and are not protected by the 1925 legislation.</p> <p>In this country an Allotment Garden is generally distinct from a ‘Community Garden’. A Community Garden in the UK tends to be situated in a built-up area and is typically run by an independent non-profit organisation. It is also likely to perform a dual function as an open space or play area: while it may offer plots to individual cultivators the organisation that administers the garden will normally have a great deal of the responsibility for its planting, landscaping and upkeep.</p>

5.5 Issues with auditing open space

In practice it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between certain types of open space:

- Some of the larger local spaces (such as recreation grounds) may clearly serve more than one of the above functions. For example, a large recreation ground may include children's play facilities, sports pitches, natural areas and more. On the other hand, many large spaces may serve predominantly one function.
- It is often difficult to differentiate between various types of informal recreation space, as local people do not necessarily draw distinction between (for example) a 'recreation ground', a park, and a large area of amenity open space; all are capable of meeting local need for informal activity and enjoyment. This demonstrates the need for flexibility in the perception of and planning for open space, which should have implications for the development and application of new local standards for open space.
- Some of the (larger) identified sites have been broken down as appropriate to reflect the above diversity of use. Other sites have not been broken down as such, and they are categorised according to their identified primary use.
- Much of the open space considered in this report is 'free and open to use'. Access is not generally monitored for most sites considered and is often possible from a variety of points and directions. This makes it difficult to quantify with any precision the levels of use of different open spaces. However, as is seen in Section 4, local consultation has identified clearly the desire of residents to have access to such spaces for informal recreation opportunities.

This report and the underlying audit has attempted to address these issues by:

- Breaking large sites down so as to better reflect key elements/uses that would otherwise be overlooked. Equipped play provision (which is often located in larger areas of space) is an example of where this approach is necessary.
- Elsewhere in the report recommending standards, and a revised development plan typology, of open space which better reflect their distinctive recreation values, and the willingness of people to travel to use attractive major spaces.

5.6 Overall open space provision: some general facts and figures

The following figures provide some general indication of overall supply, and demonstrate how provision is dominated by Natural Green Space, followed by Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds, and Informal Green Space.

The above figures do not include large areas of accessible countryside woodland, and other managed sites available for countryside recreation. Such sites are considered elsewhere in this section. The figures also exclude any golf courses identified, as their inclusion would skew the overall picture due to their large size. A summary of provision is shown below:

Figure 4.0 : Quantity of open space

Typology	Ha/1000	Hectares
Parks & Recreation Grounds	0.45	25.6
Outdoor Sport	0.5	14.4
Equipped Play Space	0.03	1.7
Informal Open Space	1.2	67.5
Natural Green Space	1.8	102.5
Allotments	0.28	15.7
Cemeteries & Chruchyards	0.11	6.4
Outdoor Sport (Limited Access)	5.3	297
Natural Green Space (Limited Access)	1.3	76.8

5.7 Built sports facilities

For the purpose of this study ‘built facilities’ includes indoor and outdoor venues that exist to a major or significant extent to accommodate sports and recreational activities for the community. At one end of the spectrum the definition can include large leisure centres, but it will also include smaller community halls that can be used for a variety of recreation and leisure activities.

This study covers:

- Leisure centres (sports halls and swimming pools)
- Synthetic turf pitches
- Community halls.

It has been decided to focus primarily on the above ‘core’ built facilities in terms of detailed analysis and the development of local ‘standards’

5.7.1 Leisure Centres (Sports Halls and Swimming Pools)

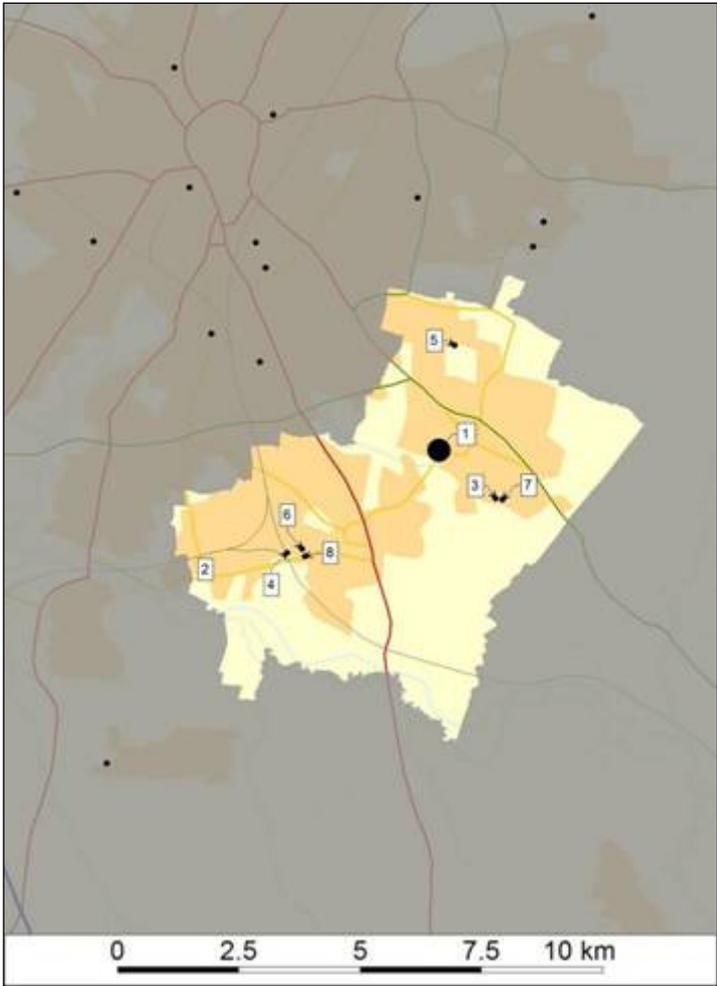
Sports halls host a variety of formal sport and active recreational activities. National research indicates that although they generally attract use by a quite limited section of the population, such use tends to be regular and frequent. Swimming pools attract both casual and competitive activity, and swimming continues to be one of the most popular leisure pursuits. Larger facilities may attract use from residents living outside the study area and vice versa.

The following maps locate existing sports halls and swimming pools within and around the Borough. They can be cross referred to the accompanying tables.

All those facilities identified will have some level of community use, although the extent of use and how it may be encouraged (or discouraged) by formal access

arrangements varies. Community access will be greatest in the Council's supported venues.

Map 3.0 : Sports Halls with some community use in the Borough (and in adjacent areas)



Ref	Name	Access type	Number of courts	Area (m2)	Built	Owner
1	Parklands Leisure Centre	Pay and Play	8	1120	1981	Local Authority
2	South Wigston High School Sports Academy	Pay and Play	4	594	2005	Local Authority
3	Gartree High School	Sports Club/Community Access	4	594	2007	Education
4	Guthlaxton College	Pay and Play	4	594	1984	Education
5	Manor Road (University of Leicester)	Pay and Play	4	594	1987	Education
6	Bushloe College	Pay and Play	4	594	2006	Education
7	Beauchamp Community College	Sports Club/Community Access	8	1221	2005	Education
8	Abington High School	Sports Club/Community Access	4	594	1960	Education

This table directly relates to the map on page 105

5.7.1 Swimming Pools

The main community provision is that owned by the Council. With regard to swimming pools council provision is located at:

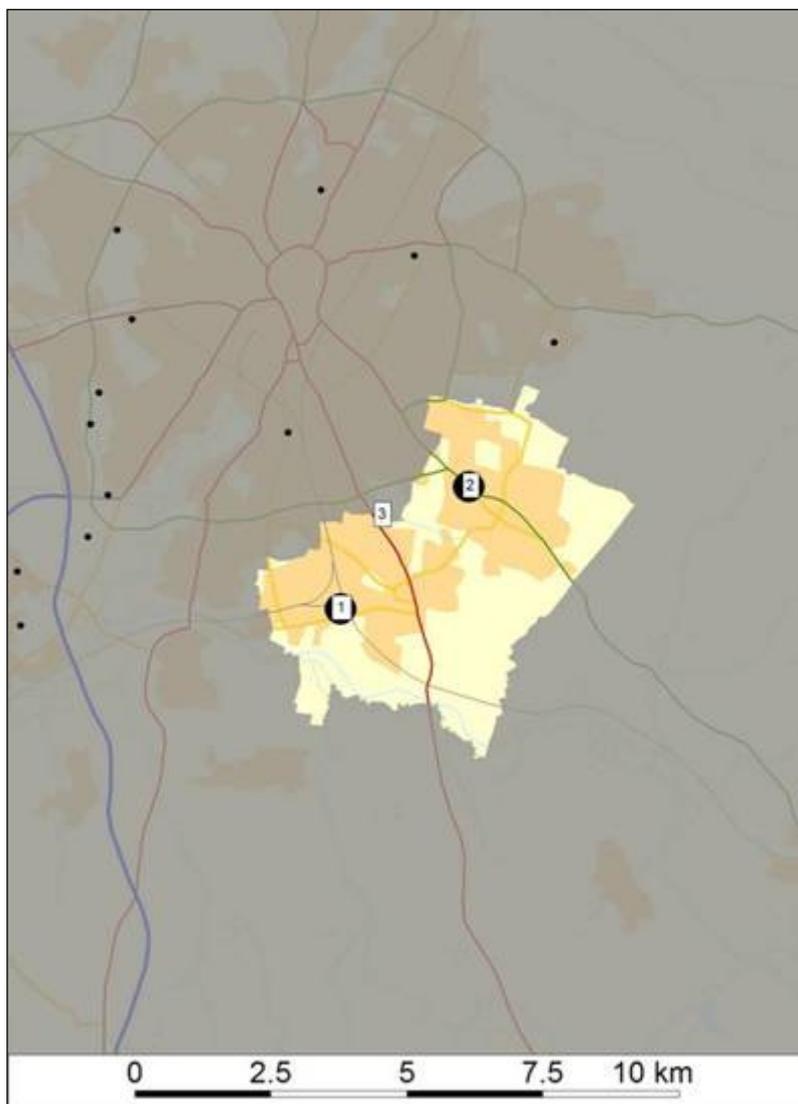
- Oadby Swimming Pool (25 metres)
- Wigston Swimming Pool (33 metres a with deep end for diving)

With regard to sports halls the council provision is located at Parklands Leisure Centre (a venue with a very large 8-court hall and accompanying health and fitness, indoor bowls and other facilities).

There is also commercial leisure provision within the Borough, and local authority controlled facilities in neighbouring council areas. As can be seen, the education sector is also a major provider of built sports facilities and many of these are available for the community to use at various times.

Detailed comments are made elsewhere in this report in respect of the adequacy of provision in relation to 'Quantity', 'Quality', and 'Access'.

Map 3.1 : Indoor Swimming Pools with some community use in the Borough (and in adjacent areas)



Ref	Name	Access type	Number of lanes	Area (m2)	Built	Owner
1	Wigston Swimming Pool	Pay and Play	5	366	1966	Local Authority
2	Oadby Swimming Pool	Pay and Play	5	250	1984	Local Authority
3	Leicester Stage Hotel Leisure Club	Registered Membership Club	0	66	1991	Commercial

5.7.2 Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs)

STPs are required for competitive hockey but are also a very important training resource for football and other sports. Recent technological developments have also produced a ‘tufted’ “3rd Generation” STP that is now accepted by the FA for local competitive play (although this surface is not accepted for competitive hockey).

The following map and accompanying table shows known full-size STPs in the Borough as well as in neighbouring local authorities, which have some degree of community use.

These days, different surfaces are now acceptable for competitive hockey and football, as well as being important training media for many sports.

- Sand-based pitches are required for local competitive hockey, and can be used in training for football and other sports;
- Water-based pitches are required for higher standard hockey; and,
- 3rd Generation pitches (that are designed to replicate grass surfaces) are now popular for football, and acceptable for local league play.

One of the key issues affecting the provision of STPs is the choice of surface. Governing bodies have promoted different technologies for each of their sports with the result that a surface valued for one sport is not deemed appropriate by another. For example, a 3rd Generation pitch can be used for competitive football, but not for competitive hockey; there is a reciprocal lack of accommodation with respect to sand-based pitches for competitive full-sided football.

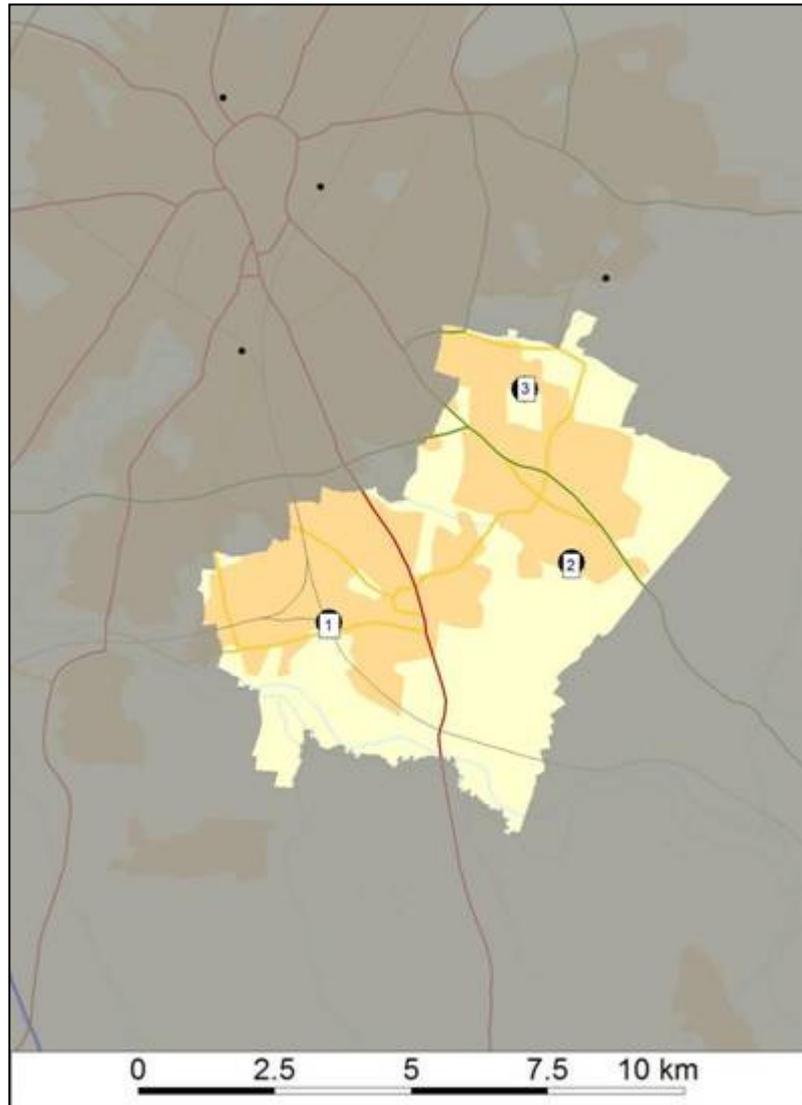
The pursuit of ever refined and bespoke surfaces by sports governing bodies therefore requires thought about the type of activity a new STP is intended to host. The ability to accommodate appropriate pitch dimensions, run off margins, fence surrounds, and floodlighting also greatly influences the overall utility and capacity of a pitch. For example, the dimensions of a hockey pitch are fixed and do not vary between local and international level. Floodlights are essential to enable year round use by all sports, and help with financial viability.

The extent to which local communities can use STPs depends on the nature of the ownership and management regime. ‘Pay and Play’ facilities (generally run by local authorities) tend to be available both to clubs and informal bookings. However, STPs that are run by clubs and community associations can also be easy to use so long as users are happy to become members.

On pitches located on education sites, curricular activity will generally take place during school time, and will not therefore clash heavily with the demands of clubs and other community sport.

Detailed comments are made elsewhere in this report in respect of the adequacy of provision in relation to ‘Quantity’, ‘Quality’, and ‘Access’.

Map 3.2: STPs with some community use in the Borough (and in adjacent areas)



Ref	Name	Access type	Dimensions (m)	Area (m ²)	Built	Owner	Surface	Floodlit?
1	Guthlaxton College	Pay and Play	93x58	5394	1993	Local Authority	3G rubber crumb	Yes
2	Beauchamp Community College	Sports Club/Community Association	110x55	5500	2005	Education	Sand based	Yes
3	Manor Road (University of Leicester)	Pay and Play	102x63	6426	1994	Education	Sand based	Yes

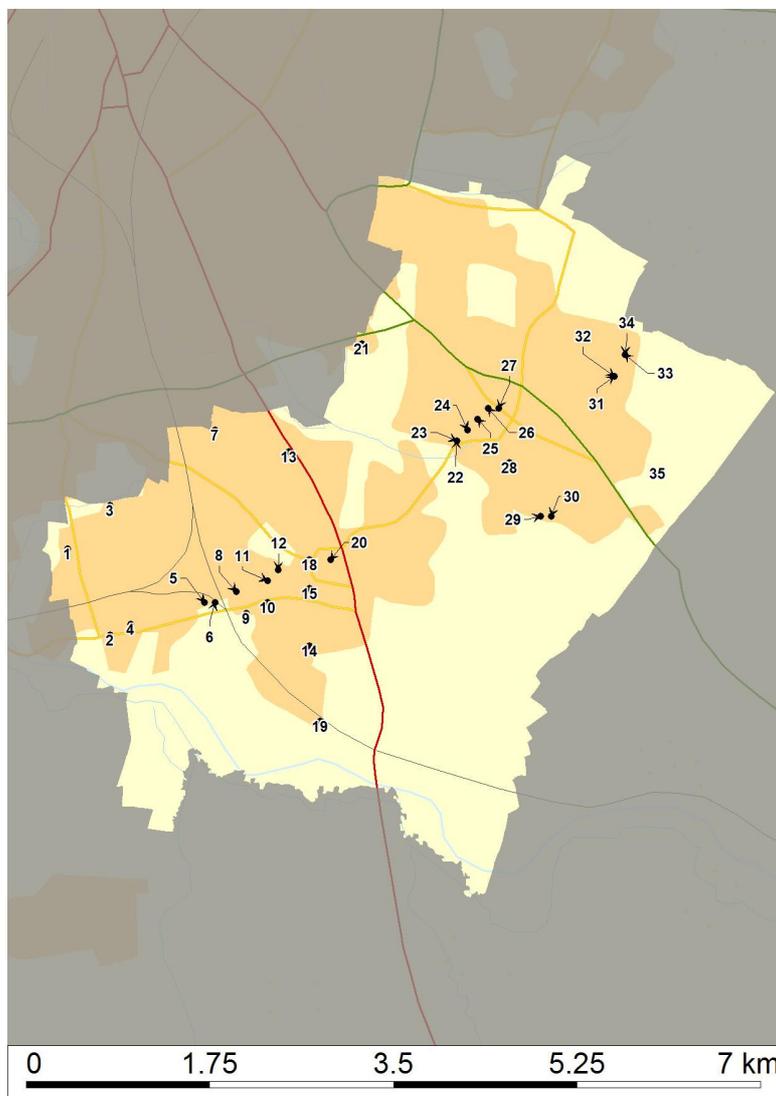
5.7.3 Small Halls and Community Venues

Small halls and community venues host a variety of recreation and social/community activities. These venues come in all shapes and sizes, and whilst they may not all be suited to hosting any formal sports activity, they provide important local venues for social contact, meetings, crèches, keep fit and other activities which help to satisfy community needs.

The study has drawn on existing data sources and field work to identify small halls and community venues within the Borough. The following map and table show those which are known to this study.

Detailed comments are made elsewhere in this report in respect of the adequacy of provision in relation to 'Quantity', 'Quality', and 'Access'.

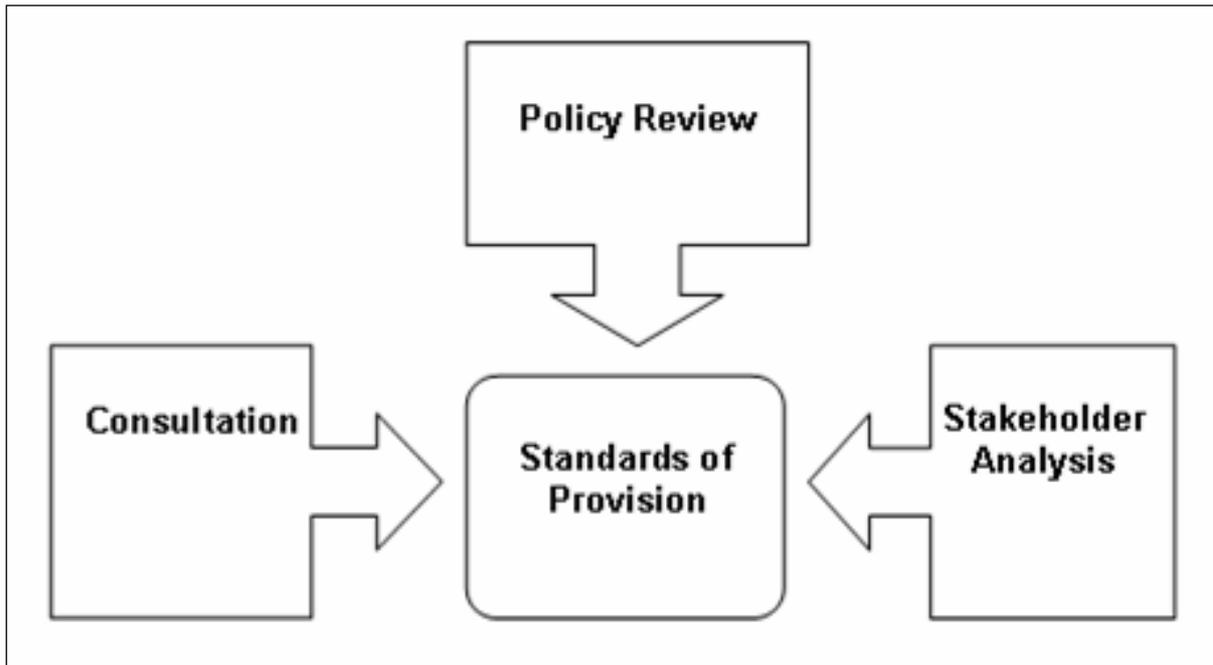
Map 3.3 : Small halls and community venues



Ref	Hall	Facilities (including associated facilities)
1	The Salvation Army	3 separate rooms
2	Bassett Community Centre	4 smaller rooms and a large hall
3	Aylestone Park Football Club	Hall
4	South Wigston Conservative Club	No rooms specifically
5	Wigston Swimming Pool	Meeting room holds 25
6	Guthlaxton College	Various classrooms and halls
7	Water Leys Primary School	Available to Brownies and Weight Watchers only
8	Bushloe High School	Hall and some classrooms
9	Abington High School	Large hall and gym
10	Little Hill Primary School	2 halls
11	Wigston Royal British Legion	Function Room
12	The Den (28th Leicester Scout Den)	1 large hall
13	Wigston Community Centre	Large hall
14	Pavilion In The Park	Large hall
15	United Reformed Church Hall	1 large room - upstairs/1 small room - downstairs
16	Lancaster Bell Community Centre	2 med halls 1 community lounge
17	Sheila Mitchell Pavilion	Medium hall
18	Age Concern (Oadby & Wigston)	1 large lounge and dining area and hall
19	Thythorn Field Primary School	Hall and playing fields
20	The Kings Centre	1 large hall and 2 smaller rooms
21	Leicester Racecourse	2 large rooms and 8 hospitality boxes
22	Oadby Town Football Club	1 room and a lounge bar
23	Parklands Leisure Centre	Sportshall, studio suites, creche, saunas, café
24	Walter Charles Centre	1 large hall
25	Oadby Boys Club	Gym area and 3 small rooms
26	Oadby Royal British Legion Club	2 rooms
27	St. Peter's Centre	3 rooms and 1 hall
28	Oadby United Reformed Church	1 large hall, 1 small hall and a coffee lounge
29	Gartree High School	Sports hall, changing rooms, class rooms
30	Beauchamp College	Sports hall & pitches, classrooms & meeting
31	The Barnabas Centre, StPauls Church	Large hall
32	The Oasis Centre, Oadby Baptist Church	1 large hall & 1 small 'quiet' room
33	Brookside Primary School	4 classrooms and 1 hall
34	Manor High School	Hall, gym and class rooms
35	Woodland Grange Primary School	Hall 200 seated/mobile 25

This table directly relates to the map on 110

5.8 New Standards of Provision



The above information, together with the findings from the policy and stakeholder review, and the information from the community consultation, are considered together to inform the development of standards for open space, sport and recreation provision, which is outlined in Section 6.

6.0 PROPOSED STANDARDS FOR OADBY & WIGSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Following the completion of the assessment of local needs and the audit of provision (the first two stages of this Study), new standards of provision for open space and built facilities are proposed. This section explains how the standards for Oadby have been developed, and provides specific information and justification for each of the typologies.

6.1 The development of Standards

The standards for open space and built facilities have been developed using guidance in the PPG17 companion guide. Standards have been developed for each typology of open space and built facility using the following components:

- **Quantity standards:** These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity provision in the light of community views as to its adequacy and levels of use. Furthermore, it is essential that the quantity standards proposed are achievable.
- **Quality standards:** The standards for each form of provision are derived from the quality audit and from the views of the community and those that use the spaces. Again, quality standards should be achievable and reflect the priorities that emerge through consultation.
- **Accessibility standards:** These reflect the needs of potential users. Spaces and facilities likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and be safe to access. Other facilities which are used less frequently, for example large leisure facilities or country parks, where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent can be further away.

The standards that have been proposed are for minimum levels of provision. Therefore, just because geographical areas may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards does not mean there is surplus provision, as all such provision may be well used.

6.2 Typologies

The typologies of both open space and built facilities have been developed using guidance within the PPG17 companion guide, but allowing for local variation as outlined below. The PPG 17 guidance suggests a list of typologies for open spaces recommended by the Urban Greenspaces Task Force (UGSTF) or a variation of it. The recommended typologies, are as follows:

	PPG17 Typology	Primary purpose
Greenspaces	Parks and gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events
	Natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness
	Green corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration
	Outdoor sports facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports
	Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
	Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters
	Allotments, community gardens and urban farms	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
	Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity
Civic spaces	Civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians	Providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events

The guide acknowledges that the above typologies should be used as guidance, and that local variations can be developed. For the study within Oadby & Wigston, local variations have been developed, and standards proposed for the following types of open space:

- Parks and Recreation Grounds.
- Outdoor Sports Space
- Children and Young People’s Space
- Informal Open Space.
- Natural Green Space.
- Allotments.

The above list closely reflects the UGSTF guidance, with the following local differences:

- **Parks and Recreation Grounds.** This adds recreation grounds to the ‘Parks & Gardens’ typology, as this reflects the local situation, where many of the parks are referred to as recreation grounds. Furthermore, within Oadby & Wigston, almost all of the provision for outdoor sport is located within Parks and Recreation Grounds. Therefore, although the typologies are considered separately, it is important to consider the synergy between the two typologies

throughout the study, in particular in the application of standards. Examples of parks and recreation grounds within Oadby are Willow Park and Ellis Park, both have formal and informal sports spaces which are used in conjunction with other parks users.

- **Green Corridors.** Whilst these have been identified within the study, a quantity standard for provision has not been proposed, as they can be very difficult to quantify, as they are very often made up of footpaths or cycleways.
- **Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds.** These have been identified and mapped where known, however, no standard for provision has been set. This reflects the priorities established through consultation, which identifies the need to provide and improve open spaces. Although churchyards can provide important open space, there is little opportunity to have a strategic influence over them (the ultimate end goal in PPG17). So whilst there may be the opportunity to ‘enhance provision’ (and this has been identified), there is little opportunity to provide ‘new’ or ‘relocated provision’, unless specifically identified as a need in the local plan.
- **Built facilities.** Standards of provision are proposed for sports halls, swimming pools, synthetic turf pitches, and small community halls. These are basic community sports and recreation facilities that currently have no standards for their provision within the existing Local Plan.

6.3 Summary of standards

This section summarises the proposed quantity and access standards for open space and built facilities. Justification for these standards is outlined in the following section.

Table 5.0 : Summary of standards

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Parks and Recreation Grounds	0.5 ha/1000	800 metres (15 minutes straight line walk time)
Outdoor Sports Space	1.0 ha/1000	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)
Children & Young people's Space	0.30 ha/1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Provision - 450m (just under 10 minutes straightline walk time) • Youth Provision - 800 m (15 minutes straightline walk time)
Informal Open Space	0.5 ha/1000	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)
Natural Greenspace	0.8 ha/1000	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)
Allotments	0.5 ha/1000	480m (10 minutes straight line walk time)
Sports Halls	1 x 4-court hall per 13,984 persons	10 minutes drivetime
Swimming Pools	1 x 4-lane (25 metres) per 20,720 persons	10 minutes drivetime
Small halls/community venues	1 per 2,500 persons	10 minutes walktime

6.4 Justification of standards

The standards for open space and built facilities are justified in the following section, each considering the following:

- Existing National and Local Policies.
- General justification for a standard.
- Quantity standard: including the existing average ha/1000 people across the Borough; reference to consultation; and, proposed ha/1000 people.
- Accessibility standard.
- Quality standard.

- Other supporting information where appropriate.

6.5 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.5 ha/1000	800 metres (15 minutes straight line walk time)

6.5.1 Existing National and Local Policies

There are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to these kinds of opportunity. Neither is there Local Plan policies guiding their planning and provision. Local Plan standards refer to provision for Outdoor Sport, which is not necessarily the same.

6.5.2 General justification for a local standard

The audit of provision and the consultation have identified the significance of and importance attached to Parks and Recreation Grounds. It is therefore highly appropriate for local standards of provision to reflect their existing and continued significance through making express provision for these features. The consultation clearly identified a need for additional provision; 45% of respondents thought that the provision was insufficient.

6.5.3 Quantity

The current average level of provision of Parks and Recreation Grounds across the Borough has been calculated as 0.45 hectares per 1000 people. The consultation asked a number of specific questions in relation to satisfaction with the quantities of open space.

The results identified that in relation to Parks and Recreation Grounds, around 55% of respondents felt the quantity of provision of ‘recreation grounds & parks’ was adequate, whilst only around 45% of respondents felt the provision needed to be increased. For ‘Playing Fields’ the comparable response was about 55% stating that the quantity was sufficient, and about 35% suggesting the amount of provision needed to be increased. The remainder either think that provision is average, or else have no opinion.

It is fair to conclude that the provision of ‘Parks & Recreation Grounds’ should be increased, as a significant of respondents felt the existing provision should be increased. Within the Borough, a significant number of Parks and Recreation Grounds contain provision for Outdoor Sport, i.e. sites are multi-functional. So in practice, the two typologies are often provided together, and consideration should be given to the two standards together in terms of a quantity provision standard (see outdoor sport below), particularly for new provision.

Application of the standard for Parks and Recreation Grounds should be in conjunction with that for the Outdoor Sport (see below) and should also be informed by a detailed supply and demand assessment of the needs of pitch sports.

A new minimum standard of **0.5 ha per 1000 people** is proposed as a basis for a contribution from new housing and as a minimum target for provision across the Borough. In applying this standard, it is imperative that provision for outdoor sport is considered at the same time.

6.5.4 Accessibility

A distance of **480 metres (straight line)**, or about **10 minutes walking time** is proposed (so that local people can gain convenient access by foot).

The public consultation identified that around 25% of respondents would be prepared to travel between 6 and 10 minutes to reach a recreation ground or park, with a further 35% willing to walk further and that many of these trips would be by foot. 40% of respondents only wished to travel up to 5 minutes to access a recreation ground or park, but in reality many of them travel a lot further to access their current provision.

It would also be reasonable to adopt a larger drive time catchment, for larger facilities, (such as Country Parks) of 15 minutes. This would be consistent with local people's willingness to travel further to larger facilities as expressed through the community survey. It is possible that vehicular trips may be shared purpose journeys, perhaps combining a visit to a high quality park with shopping and/or other commitments.

6.5.5 Quality

Information related to the quality of Parks and Recreation Grounds was gathered from the consultation and from the quality audit. The findings are outlined below.

Consultation

The consultation asked people their opinion on the quality of different types of open spaces. With regards to Parks and Recreation Grounds, 35% stated they were good, 40% felt they were average, whilst only 15% stated they were poor or very poor. Only 10% of respondents suggested they were very good quality, the remainder expressed no opinion.

Quality audits

The quality audits identified that the provision is very varied across the borough, clearly the major parks have a higher maintenance regime, and this was evident in the quality scores. The smaller parks, with fewer facilities, were clearly poorer in quality. Where user groups were evident, the quality of spaces were generally higher than those without community interaction.

The information from the quality assessments identified a need to significantly improve the quality of this type of provision.

6.6 Outdoor Sports Space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.0 ha/1000	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)

6.6.1 Existing National and Local Policies:

The NPFA’s Six Acre Standard proposes that there should be provision of 1.6 - 1.8 ha of outdoor sports space per 1000 people. The Local Plan policy for the Borough is also based on this guidance.

6.6.2 General justification for a local standard

Outdoor sports space includes provision for seasonal and fixed sports spaces that are openly accessible to the public. Facilities include sports pitches, including cricket, football and rugby. They also include fixed sports spaces such as tennis courts and bowling greens. Very often these facilities are located within Parks or Recreation Grounds, and as such, many of the facilities, especially sports pitches are multi-functional. That is they can be used for sport one day, and for the rest of the week function as a space to walk and play. It is therefore important to reflect the synergy between the standards proposed for Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds and Outdoor Sports Space, as outlined above.

6.6.3 Quantity

The existing level of provision of outdoor sports space is 0.5 ha per 1,000 people, however, there is also an additional 5.3 ha per 1,000 people of sports space with limited access. As part of the consultation, people were asked their views on the existing quantity of open space. The following findings are relevant.

Around 35% of people stated that the quantity of playing fields should be increased, but 55% felt there was adequate provision. The remainder of respondents thought that there should be less playing fields (5%), or else had no opinion.

The findings of the technical assessment on football pitch supply and demand did not conclude there to be a shortfall in terms of space available, but rather a mismatch between the demand from different age groups and the size of pitches marked out. Many junior and youth teams play on surfaces marked out primarily for adult teams. The technical guidance includes pitches within the private sector and controlled pitches, which have limited access.

To safeguard future provision and demand, a minimum level of provision of **1.0 ha per 1000 people** is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also a minimum target for provision in the Borough. In using this standard, the

provision of sport with ‘limited access’ should also be taken into account, as it has a major role in contributing to the provision for sport in the Borough, providing more than twice the quantity of space that is classed as publicly accessible. Application of the standard for Outdoor Sport should be in conjunction with that for the Parks and Recreation Grounds and should also be informed by a detailed supply and demand assessment of the need for sports pitches.

6.6.4 Accessibility

The public consultation suggests a greater expectation for using a car to get to formal playing fields although the most popular trip mode is still suggested to be by foot. People who play formal team sports, such as football, cricket and rugby, particularly at senior level almost always use cars to access facilities. Furthermore, where they place is determined by other factors such as league structures. The demand for fixed sport is for it to be closer to home, but again a willingness to travel further to good quality facilities has been identified.

It is also important to consider the comments received in relation to Parks and Recreation Grounds, within which the majority of outdoor sports space is provided, here people would prefer to have a facility within a ten minute walk of their home. A distance of **480 metres (straightline)**, or about **10 minutes walking time** is therefore proposed (so that local people can gain convenient access by foot). For larger facilities, e.g. ‘hub sites’ with provision for multiple sports, a larger distance is proposed, in line with Sport England guidance i.e. 20 minute drive time.

6.6.6 Quality

Consultation

When asked to comment on the quality of areas provided for outdoor sport, 35% of people stated that they were either good or better, 45% of people stated that they were average, whilst 20% stated that they were poor. *Quality audit*

The quality audits identified that there is considerable variation in the quality of provision across the Borough, with some sites having good quality, well maintained facilities, whilst others in need of significant improvement. The independent review carried out by the consultants identified the quality was significantly better than the views expressed by the user survey.

6.7 Children and Young People’s Provision

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.30 ha/1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Provision - 450m (just under 10 minutes straight line walk time) • Youth Provision - 800 m (15 minutes straight line walk time)

6.7.1 EXISTING NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICIES:

THE EXISTING LOCAL PLAN USES THE NPFA STANDARD FOR THE PROVISION OF EQUIPPED PLAY SPACE FOR CHILDREN, WHICH EQUATES TO 0.3 HA/1000 PEOPLE OF PLAY SPACE, TO COVER EQUIPPED PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OF VARIOUS AGES.

The NPFA guidance has been adopted by many local authorities over the years and its use continues to be widespread. The NPFA standards for equipped children’s play provision have been criticised in recent years because they can result in a proliferation of play areas that can be difficult to maintain, as well as setting unrealistic aspirations in urban areas where insufficient land is available to provide facilities, especially higher density development on brownfield sites. An additional problem is that the current NPFA guidance does not cover the needs of most teenagers specifically within the standard, and it is felt that this is a significant problem in the study area (confirmed by many of the comments and findings of the community consultation).

6.7.2 General justification for a local standard

In light of the ‘unsuitability’ of the NPFA standards and considering the results of community consultation, a new locally derived standard for children and young people’s provision is proposed.

The suggested new standard seeks to achieve a more balanced approach to the needs of children of all ages. It also seeks to be realistic in terms of acknowledging the cost of both providing and maintaining equipped playspace.

6.7.3 Quantity

The existing average level of provision of equipped play space across the Borough is 0.03 ha/1000 people. The consultation asked a number of specific questions in relation to satisfaction with the quantities of open space. The results of the household survey identified the following:

- *Children’s play space.* About 45% of respondents suggested that the current quantity of provision inadequate and more provision was required. Around 40% suggested that it was sufficient, or provision should stay the same, with the remainder suggesting it was average or having no opinion.
- *Young people’s play space.* Over 65% of respondents suggested that the current quantity of provision was insufficient and more provision is required.

Around 30% suggested that the provision was adequate, with the remainder suggesting it was average or having no opinion.

A standard for provision is proposed of **0.30 ha of equipped space** (i.e. excluding any buffer zone space) **per 1000 people**. This standard is proposed as a guide for provision as part of new development, it also provides a guide to a minimum target for provision across the Borough.

The priority in achieving this standard is the provision of space for young people, where there is clearly a need to improve existing quantities.

6.7.4 Accessibility

The consultation asked people how far they were willing to travel to different types of open space, including play facilities. The household survey identified that around 68% of respondents were prepared to travel between 5 and 10 minutes to equipped play areas. However, the same percentage would be prepared to travel further in the case of teenage provision- between 10 and 15 minutes by foot.

The access standards proposed are:

- **450 metres** (straight line), or just under **10 minutes** (often accompanied) walking time for provision aimed at the pre teen age group and also - where possible - the younger teenage band.
- **800 metres** (straight line), or **15 minutes** walking time for older teenagers.

6.7.5 Quality

Information related to the quality of children and young people's play space was gathered from consultation and from the quality audit. Key issues are outlined below:

Consultation

When asked to comment on the quality of equipped play areas for younger children, 45% of respondents to the community survey stated that they were either good or better, 40% of people stated that they were average, whilst 15% stated that they were poor or worse. The remainder expressed no opinion. When asked for similar comment on the quality of teenage provision, 42% of respondents to the community survey people stated that they were either good or better, 40% of people stated that they were average, whilst 18% stated that they were poor or worse. The remainder expressed no opinion.

Quality audit

The quality audit identified a vast range in the quality of play areas across the Borough, with some good examples of areas with a range of facilities for all ages,

however, these are largely in the minority, and the majority of play areas are in need of improvement. There are a number of issues related to quality:

- There are large numbers of small ‘LAP’ type play areas, which are in poor condition, and have limited play value;
- There is a lack of ‘imagination’ with regards to the provision for play, with many facilities consisting of traditional play equipment, much of which is out of date;
- There are issues with the quality of provision in many of the wards, with a big range in the quality of facilities, particularly safety surfacing, and the design and layout of play areas;
- There is a lack of signage at many play areas, with no information on how to contact those responsible for management;

6.8 Informal Open Space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.5 ha/1000	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)

6.8.1 Existing National and Local Policies

There is no national guidance suggesting a standard expressly for the provision of informal green space. The Local Plan adopts the NPFA’s Six Acre Standard which proposes that there should be provision of casual or informal playing space within housing areas as part of the overall standard. This is equivalent to 0.4 - 0.5 ha/1000 of informal space for play.

6.8.2 General justification for a local standard

The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the importance attached by local people to space close to home. The value of Informal Open Space must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise and visual amenity that are almost immediately accessible. On the other hand open space can be expensive to maintain and it is very important to strike the correct balance between having sufficient to meet the needs of the community for accessible and attractive space, and having too much which would be impossible to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that Informal Open Space provided should be capable of use for at least some form of recreation activity by the public. The practical definition of open space given in Section 1 of this report explains the key factors determining recreational utility of space.

6.8.3 Quantity

The existing average level of provision of informal open space across the Borough is 1.2 ha per 1000 people. The consultation asked a number of specific questions in

relation to satisfaction with the quantities of open space. The results identified the following:

About 35% of people stated that there is currently enough informal open space (areas to sit out in or informal play ball games), whilst around 55% felt there should be more provision.

A minimum level of provision of **0.5 ha per 1000 people** is proposed, both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision across the Borough. Although significantly below the current existing standard, much of informal open space throughout the borough is poorly designed and a product of 'SLOAP' (space left over after planning). It will be important to ensure new developments have the appropriate level of open space which is well designed and useable.

6.8.4 Accessibility

The consultation asked people how far they were willing to travel to different types of open space, including 'places to sit or play' and 'paved areas'. Generally speaking small informal spaces such as these are expected to be close to home, and the responses to the consultation confirmed this, with the large majority of respondents suggesting they would be prepared to walk between 5 and 10 minutes to access such areas.

Open space in very close proximity to home may become increasingly important to residents of new high density urban development who may themselves lack access to their own gardens, and would welcome space both for visual relief and to provide opportunities for children to meet and play close to home. This space might also be combined with provision for other types of space and offers scope to be used very flexibly.

A distance of **480 metres** (straightline), or about **10 minutes** walking time is therefore proposed for informal open space, supporting the evidence that such spaces should be within easy reach of home for informal play and recreation opportunities.

6.8.5 Quality

Information related to the quality of informal open space was gathered from both the consultation and the quality audits. The following outlines some general observations and recommendations.

Consultation

Respondents to the consultation were not asked expressly for their views on 'Informal Open Space' as the concept is quite vague. Instead they were asked to comment on the quality of green open spaces, areas for 'sitting or playing' and 'paved areas' for informal recreation. 35% of respondents said they thought quality was good; 35% suggested it to be average; 18% felt it was either poor or worse; and, the remainder expressed no view.

Quality audits

The quality audits of informal open space identified that in general the quality was ‘average’, however, sites where quality was in need of improvement could be improved relatively easily.

6.9 Natural Green Space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.8 ha/1000	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)

6.9.1 Existing National and Local Policies

English Nature has proposed national guidance on an Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt) which suggests that provision should be made of at least 2 ha of accessible greenspace per 1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

- No person should live more than 300 m from an area of natural green space;
- There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km from home;
- There should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km; and,
- There should be one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km.

There are no local standards relating specifically to the provision of Accessible Natural Green Space.

6.9.2 General justification for a local standard

The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the significance of and importance attached to natural green spaces (which might include riverside walks, countryside, woodlands) and it is therefore desirable for local standards of provision to cover these features.

In the absence of an existing local standard it would be appropriate to consider the English Nature ANGSt guidance as a starting point for the development of a local standard. However, it is probably unrealistic to aim for a general minimum level of provision of 2 hectares per 1000 elsewhere within towns, in particular, as it would be largely impossible to find the additional land available to achieve such an objective.

6.9.3 Quantity

The existing average level of provision of accessible natural greenspace across the Borough is 1.8 ha/1000 people, which is one of the largest types of provision within the Borough, which should be expected. The consultation asked a number of specific questions in relation to satisfaction with the quantities of open space.

Natural Green Space in the Borough comes in a variety of forms including woodland areas, nature reserves, country parks, greenways and others. The consultation

suggested that most people considered the quantity provision of these kinds to be at least average, or better.

It is not possible to achieve a uniformly good level of provision throughout the Borough, as it is not feasible to remove large tracts of natural green space in areas which are 'over provided' and similarly it is not feasible to create large tracts of natural greenspace in areas where there is 'under provision'.

The proposed quantity standard for natural greenspace, therefore has much more significance for new provision, and a minimum level of provision of **0.8 ha per 1000 people** is proposed both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision across the Borough. This is considered to be realistic and capable of delivery, through developer contributions.

The space provided should be of an appropriate shape and character to allow for meaningful recreational use, and its possible integration with other types of open space opportunity. (See under 'Quality'). Wherever possible, local provision should be of at least 2 hectares in size. In the longer term there might be value in developing a hierarchy of provision as suggested by the ANGSt guidance, offering a range of smaller and larger opportunities set within a geographical dimension. However, it is felt strongly that the focus should be initially on improving provision and accessibility within easy walking distance.

6.9.4 Accessibility

The consultation asked people how far they were willing to travel to different types of open space, including natural greenspace. The survey identified that 75% of respondents were willing to travel between 15 and 20 minutes to natural greenspace, and a considerable percentage were willing to travel more than 20 minutes.

A distance of **480 metres** (straight line), or between **10 minutes** walking time is therefore proposed for natural greenspace. Whilst this latter figure might be higher than proposed by English Nature/Natural England, it is justified by the local research.

6.9.5 Quality

Information relating to the quality of natural greenspace was drawn from the consultation and the quality audit, whilst specific recommendations are made on an area and site basis, the key issues and recommendations are summarised below.

Consultation

The consultation asked people to comment on the quality of Local Nature Reserves, Country Parks, Riverside/Country Walks, and Countryside/Woodland. The tendency was for respondents to provide score most of these either average or better.

Quality audit

The quality audits of natural greenspace identified that in general the quality was good. General recommendations for improving quality are made in section 7 of this report, and more detailed recommendations made in the area profiles in part 2 of the report.

6.10 Allotments

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.5 ha/1000	480m (10 minutes straight line walk time)

6.10.1 Existing National and Local Policies

There are no existing national or local standards relating specifically to the provision of allotments. Guidance has been provided through the Local Government Association, which does not recommend standards of provision, but rather covers ways in which allotments could be promoted and issues to be considered prior to any disposal.

6.10.2 General justification for a local standard

Relatively few people within the community use allotments. However, it is an activity very much linked to stages in life (as is also the case with sport and children’s play, for example). The local consultation did not suggest that allotments were used as regularly, or were as valued in comparison with, say, play space or informal spaces of various kinds. However, there is currently an interest in reducing food miles, organic growing, slow food, composting and recycling green waste. Other than their conventional function allotments can serve as venues for ‘community gardens’, meeting places, and showcases for recycling. The National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners states that it is seeing an increase in enquiries from people interested in getting an allotment. The majority of allotments within the study area appear to be well used, and cultivated, and therefore standards for provision have been developed.

Furthermore, with the creation of higher density housing in the future occupants lacking private gardens may look increasingly to allotments to meet a desire to garden and grow their own food.

6.10.3 Quantity

A minimum level of provision of **0.50 ha per 1000 people** is proposed, both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also a minimum target for provision across the Borough.

6.10.4 Accessibility

The consultation asked people how far they were willing to travel to different types of open space, including allotments. Very little information was received on travel patterns to allotments. However, evidence does suggest that those who use allotments tend to use ones near to their homes.

A distance of **480 metres** (straightline) or around **10 minutes walktime** is therefore proposed. However, given the need to transport equipment to and from sites it is accepted that users may often need to drive to the site.

6.10.5 Quality

The information gathered in relation to allotments is more difficult to assess in comparison to other types of open space. The reason for this is two fold, firstly, the number of people who actually use allotments is very low compared to the numbers who use other types of open space, and therefore, specific comments related to the quality of allotments are less frequent.

Secondly, the majority of allotments sites are locked, and the quality audit only allows for assessment against key criteria such as the level of cultivation and general maintenance, which is less comprehensive than the assessments of other open space.

Therefore, for allotments, a number of general recommendations are made, as further guidance should be provided by the Council. However, provision should include the following:

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

6.11 Routeways and Corridors

No standards are proposed for Routeways and Corridors. However, the standards for Informal Open Space and Accessible Natural Greenspace can be applied and interpreted flexibly to create or improve existing routes for walking, cycling and riding in both urban and urban fringe areas. For example one hectare of informal open space is sufficient to create a route 10 metres wide and a kilometre long.

In urban and urban fringe locations contribution to both the informal open space, and natural green space standards might be invested in helping to expand, and/or improve parts of the Rights of Way network. In built up areas, contributions might be used to improve links by foot and bike between important destinations such as work places, schools, shopping areas, parks, and leisure facilities. They might also be used to help improve access by foot and bike to the outlying Rights of Way network.

6.12 Large Built facilities

Facility	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Sports Halls	1 x 4-court hall per 13,984 persons or 0.0715 per 1000 persons.	within 10 minutes drivetime
Swimming Pools	1 x 4-lane x 25 metre pool (213 m2) per 20,720 persons (or 10.27 m2 per 1000 persons).	within 10 minutes drivetime
Synthetic Turf Pitches (STP's)	1 x full size STP per 50,000 persons	within 10 minutes drivetime

6.12.1 Existing National and Local Policies

There are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of sports facilities such as sports halls, swimming pools and STPs. National standards have long since been replaced with facility provision based on local need.

6.12.2 General justification for a local standard

Various tools are used to estimate the local need for built sports facilities, provided by Sport England. The most reliable, but which is not available at present, is Active Places Power Plus, which enables a detailed assessment to be made by the use of a sophisticated planning model. However it is still possible to develop local standards based on other available information, including Active Places Power and the Sports Facilities Calculator, and these have been used to devise the recommended standards below.

6.12.3 Quantity

Adopting the guidelines recommended in Sport England’s Sports Facility Calculator, which uses actual participation rates for sport applied to the population structure of the Borough, and other tools, the following level of provision is recommended:

Sports Halls - to meet the theoretical needs of the Borough, there is a requirement for one 4-court sports hall in full community use per 13,984 population. This is significantly higher than existing provision, at least for those currently in full community use.

Swimming pools - the requirement is for one 4-lane 25m pool in full community use per 20,720 population. This is significantly higher than existing provision, at least for those in full community use.

STPs - the requirement is for 1 x full-size floodlit STP per 50,000 population. There are currently three facilities within the Borough, and the suggested standard is not especially high when it is 'benchmarked' against current provision in other local authorities.

6.12.4 Accessibility

The household survey suggests that a large majority of users are prepared to travel around 10 minutes to get to a major built facility such as a sports hall, pool or STP, with most of these trips being by car. Research conducted by Sport England suggests that users of sports halls and swimming pools tend to be prepared to travel up to 20 minutes (mainly by car) to use these facilities on a regular basis, although the majority of trips will take significantly less. Within the urban areas it will often be convenient (and perhaps easier) to walk or cycle to the nearest facility. In fact the Audit Commission has developed Performance Indicators aimed at London Councils and other unitary authorities, suggesting a walk time of 20 minutes as a guide. The accessibility criterion can therefore be at least 10 minutes, but with encouragement for use of non motorised trips and public transport as much as possible.

6.12.5 Quality

Further guidance should be provided by the Council, but should be in accordance with Sport England technical guidance.

In planning and providing for new or improved strategic facilities such as leisure centres it is important, before committing to new facilities, to:

- consider the appropriateness of improving/expanding existing accessible venues within the Borough; and
- take into account existing venues in neighbouring local authorities, and in particular the fringe areas surrounding the Borough.

Sports Halls and Swimming Pools: Further guidance should be provided by the Council, but should be in accordance with Sport England technical guidance. Consideration should also be given to provision of associated facilities that are found within leisure centres including reception areas, refreshment areas, health and fitness suites, and appropriate changing, storage and viewing areas. Where new development or expansion/enhancement is planned attention should be paid to the comments of local groups and organizations and their technical requirements.

Facilities should be available for genuine community use on a largely pay-and-play basis for a minimum of 40 hours a week including times of peak demand for the community (generally weekday evenings and weekends).

STPs: Further guidance should be provided in the Council, but should be in accordance with Sport England technical guidance. The local authorities could

include guidance on the appropriate type of surface and floodlighting as this can vary depending on which sport is anticipated to be the main user.

Facilities should be available for genuine community use on a largely pay-and-play basis for a minimum of 40 hours a week including times of peak demand for the community (generally weekday evenings and weekends).

6.13 SMALL COMMUNITY HALLS

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1 hall per 2500 people	480 metres (10 minutes straight line walk time)

6.13.1 Existing National and Local Policies

There are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of community buildings and halls.

6.13.2 General justification for a local standard

There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to providing community venues. Generally speaking the larger the local population, the bigger and more accommodative a community facility needs to be, as larger populations will tend to generate a greater and more diverse level of activities compared with smaller populations. However, even small populations can sustain simple and attractive venues. For example, even small villages with populations of less than 400 can have well used and managed halls, which can provide for:

- A main hall that can be used for dances, reception, meetings, and sports activities such as carpet bowls and table tennis.
- A small meeting/committee room
- Kitchen
- Storage
- Car parking

6.13.3 Quantity

The current level of provision of community centres in the Borough is close to 1 hall per 2,600 persons, and it is recommended that this forms the basis of a new standard for future provision.

6.13.4 Accessibility

480 metres straight-line distance (or about 10 minute walktime). This is consistent with the results of the public consultation.

6.13.5 Quality

Further guidance should be provided by the Council, but provision should include:

- A hall sufficiently large to be used for a variety of recreation and social activities, of at least 18m x 10m.
- A small meeting/committee room
- Kitchen
- Storage
- Toilets
- Provision for disabled access and use
- Car parking

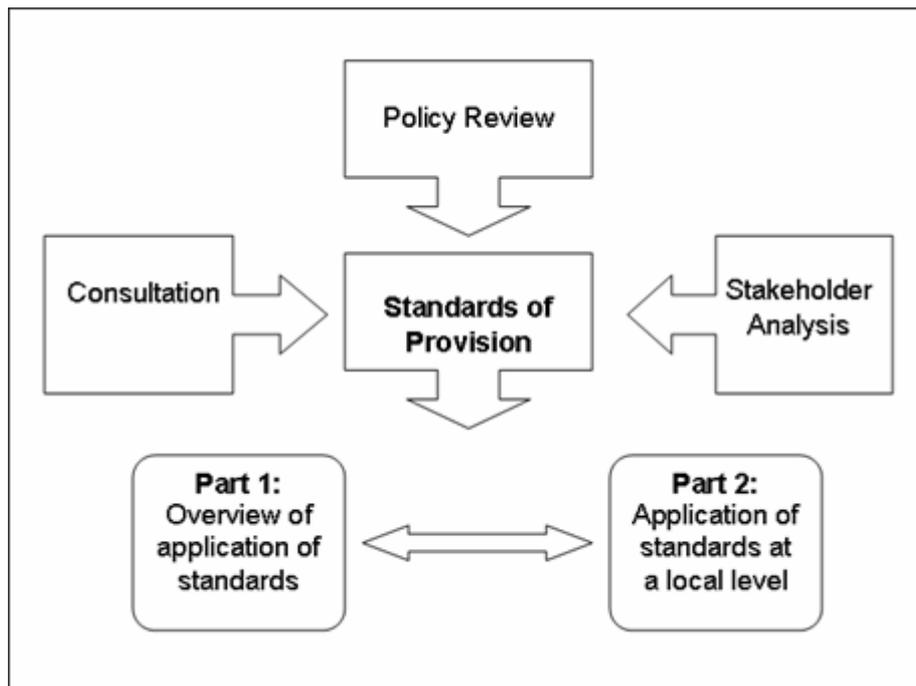
Overall a total net floor space of 500m² could be used as a guide.

As stated at the beginning of this section the standards can be applied and interpreted flexibly to best meet local circumstances. The aim should not be (for example) to create a proliferation of small community venues in areas of growth where fewer larger venues would be more appropriate. Contributions arising from this standard could also be used towards the enlargement/improvement of existing venues where appropriate. However, access is the key factor.

7.0 APPLICATION OF STANDARDS

The standards for open space and built facilities are central to the future planning and provision of facilities. The PPG17 guidance identifies that the standards should be used to identify:

- Deficiencies in accessibility;
- Quality deficiencies; and,
- Areas of quantitative deficiency or surplus.



This part of the report considers the main issues and themes that have emerged from the application of standards. It also provides a summary of the playing pitch analysis, and several 'scenarios' based on the application of the standards. Both parts of the report need to inform each other, and link with the various study stages as shown in the diagram.

7.1 Access to open space and built facilities

For each of the typologies, access standards have been set (as outlined in Section 6). These standards are based on either walk times or drive times, depending on the typology. Part 2 of the report shows maps by sub area with the access standards for each typology applied using catchment zones, which have been created using GIS analysis. Maps are also available by Ward to consider localised issues. The table below summarises access to each typology of open space by Ward.

Table 6.0 : Access to open space and built facilities

	Good Access	Partial Access	No Access			
Ward	Parks, Gardens & Recreation Grounds (800m)	Outdoor Sports Space (800m)	Children & Young People Space (800m)	Informal open space (480m)	Natural green space (480m)	Allotments (800m)
Oadby Brocks Hill	Good access for the majority of the ward, a gap does occur in the South East of the ward.	Good access across the ward when considering both private and public facilities.	Good coverage throughout ward; slight gaps in the North East and the South West.	Complete coverage throughout ward.	Gap in the South of the ward.	No sites within ward, although the West is covered by neighbouring ward.
Oadby Grange	Good coverage across the ward; slight gap in the North West.	Good access across the ward when considering both private and public facilities.	Significant gaps throughout ward; only access in the South.	No sites within ward.	Good access in the North and some access in the South West from neighbouring ward.	No sites within ward.
Oadby Meadow Court	No sites within ward.	No facilities within ward; the West and the North do have some access from neighbouring wards.	Access in the North West of the ward; elsewhere lacking facilities.	Good coverage in the North, a significant gap in the South though.	Majority of the ward has good access; a gap does exist in the East.	No sites within ward.
Oadby Uplands	Good coverage from the facility in the neighbouring ward.	Good access across the ward when considering both private and public facilities; slight gap in the East.	Good access in the West; significant gaps in the North and East of the ward.	Small gap in the North of the ward; otherwise good coverage.	No sites within ward.	No sites within ward.
Ward	Parks, Gardens &	Outdoor Sports Space	Children &	Informal open space	Natural green space	Allotments (800m)

	Recreation Grounds (800m)	(800m)	Young People Space (800m)	(480m)	(480m)	
Oadby St.Peters	Good access throughout ward.	Good coverage across the whole ward of both accessible and limited sports space.	Good access in the east of the ward, lacking facility in the West.	Significant gap in the North and West of the ward.	Access in the North and some access from a neighbouring ward in the South.	Majority of the ward has coverage; gaps exist in the North West and East.
Oadby Woodlands	No sites within ward.	No facilities within ward; the South West does have some access from neighbouring ward.	Gaps in the North and the West of the ward	Overall good coverage; slight gap in the North East of the ward.	Good coverage throughout ward.	No sites within ward.
South Wigston	Good access for the majority of the ward; slight gaps in the North and South.	Good access for the majority of the ward when considering both private and public facilities; a gap does exist in the South.	Fairly good coverage in the North, lacking a facility in the South of the ward.	Central areas have good access; significant gap in the North and a smaller gap in the South of the ward.	Good coverage in the South of the ward; significant gap in the North.	Good coverage on the East side of the ward, gaps occurring in the South and North of the ward.
Wigston All Saints	North of the ward has good access; significant gap in the South.	Good coverage from both public and private facilities; small gap in the South West of the ward.	Significant gaps in the South and the West of the ward.	A gap does exist in the South; elsewhere has good access.	Good coverage throughout ward.	Good coverage in the North; significant gap in the South of the ward.
Wigston Fields	Good access throughout ward; insignificant gap in the North West.	Good access across the ward when considering both private and public facilities.	Good access in the East, no access in the West of the ward.	No sites within ward, the South does have some access from neighbouring ward.	No sites within ward.	A gap in access in the South of the Ward, but good access elsewhere.
Wigston St.Wolstans	Good access for the majority of the ward; a gap does exist in the East.	Good access across the ward when considering both private and public facilities.	Good access for the majority of the ward; although a gap exists in the Central area.	Good coverage; slight gap in the North of the ward.	No sites within ward, although the East does have some access from a neighbouring ward.	No sites within ward, although some access from neighbouring wards.

The access standards and their application at ward level should be used:

- To identify deficiencies/gaps in access to each of the typologies within wards. This information can be used to determine priorities for new provision. It is likely that a Greenspace Strategy would determine how these deficiencies could be met.
- To inform development control planners where open space is required as part of new developments in order to achieve the access standards.
- To help consider how recreational routes, green corridors and other linear features can contribute towards improving access to open space. Again, this should be considered within the Greenspace Strategy and through planning of new development.

7.1.2 Built facilities

The following figure applies the 10-minute drive time to the existing pay-and-play 4-court halls and swimming venues in the Borough and wider area. The drive-times are centred on the Council controlled pay and play/swim provision.

7.2 Quality of open space

The quality of open space is summarised by site in Part 2 of the report which identifies each sites potential to improve, measured against the quality criteria (outlined in section 2.3). This section summarises the findings and makes key recommendations by typology.

7.2.1 Parks and Recreation Grounds

In general, there is a need to improve the quality of these facilities across the borough. The recommendations include:

- Vandalism and anti social behaviour in a number of the boroughs large open spaces is apparent. Securing the open spaces and providing natural surveillance through lighting and maintenance of scrubs and bushes should be prioritised to reduce the risk of vandalism. A targeted investment program for additional youth facilities is also required, a lack of facilities within the major spaces contributes to anti social behaviour through lack of ‘things to do’ or ‘places to go’.
- Effective management plans should be in place for all Oadby’s major open spaces. Examples of good practice include Brocks Hill and Peace Memorial Park. Priority should be given to Blaby Road Park, Willow Park and in particular Uplands Park, where the location of the skate facility has caused it to be removed. Effective planning for facilities is key in ensuring the users and local residents benefit from the provision and encourage use.
- There is an opportunity to provide larger, better quality and more exciting play areas within many of the sites. The provision of play areas should however be considered in context with the rest of the site, as outlined above. It is

recommended that a 'good practice guide' be developed for local communities and developers which is backed up with support from Council Officers.

- There is a lack of signage and information within these open spaces. This has an impact on the welcoming aspect of the space and limits opportunity for community involvement. It is therefore recommended that a 'house style' is developed for signage within Parks and Recreation Grounds, which facilitates a consistent quality. Promotion of sites through on the council's intranet, using the GIS database developed, is essential to encourage greater use and making the users aware the facilities available to them.
- There are significant differences in the quality of maintenance across the borough, with some fundamental issues that do need to be addressed:
 - Safety surfaces within play areas need to be maintained to a higher standard;
 - The maintenance of playing fields, particularly football and cricket pitches needs to be more consistent;
 - Maintenance of buildings, such as sports pavilions, is very varied. Many are in need of investment, which needs to be delivered through a long term programme of replacement.

There is a need to improve the consistency of the design of Parks and Recreation Grounds. This is partly related to the adhoc improvements outlined above, but there is also a need for all new improvements to be subject to a more rigorous design process. It is recommended that this is led by the Council, with resources being made available for officer time to support local communities in delivering improvement programmes.

7.2.2 Outdoor Sports Space

The majority of sports space within the borough is located within Parks and Recreation Grounds. There are also facilities provided within private sports grounds, which obviously have a community benefit, but with limited access. Many of the observations outlined above in relation to Parks and Recreation Grounds are therefore also relevant to Outdoor Sports Space. Of particular note are the observations made in relation to the quality of playing fields and the maintenance of buildings. Poor ancillary facilities are common in the majority of sport spaces and need to be improved to encourage greater use. Horsewell Park is a prime example of a decent facility that is let down by the poor state of the changing rooms.

Security is a major issues for most of the sports and recreation grounds in the borough. Many pitches are clearly damaged through use of motor bikes and unofficial use, securing the boundaries and locking sites where possible should be a priority to protect playing pitches.

There is a clear lack of suitable facilities for training purposes of all outdoor sports, along with a lack of facilities to cater for hockey and basketball. Providing suitable surfaces for training purposes reduces the impact on grass pitches. Reducing the

need to train on grass pitches will improve the quality and carrying capacity of the grass pitches throughout the borough. Consideration for multipurpose training surfaces should be prioritised, which can accommodate the identified shortfall in hockey and basketball.

7.2.3 Children and Young People's Provision

An assessment of play areas was undertaken, it considered factors such as management and maintenance, safety and play value. This should be used to develop an investment strategy for play space on an area basis. The key issues and general recommendations related to play space are outlined below:

Youth Provision

- It is clear that youth provision is a problem throughout the borough, consultation identified issues in quality, quantity and location of facilities. There is a clear link to perceived anti social behaviour, gathering of young people and lack of facilities. The combination of these three factors needs to be addressed as negative feedback aimed at young people was common in both the user group and household consultations.
- Specific schemes aimed at engaging young people, such as a youth bus, should be prioritised.
- Future investment in play facilities should include areas for young people.
- Engaging and involving young people on potential new schemes, and the type of facilities they require should be prioritised to ensure future investment is aimed at right type of provision and located in the right areas. Design of new facilities should be carefully considered to ensure the location does not encourage negative feedback from local residents, but also ensure facilities for young people are in environments that make the user feel safe, secure and not a 'nuisance'.

Children's Play Provision.

- The overall provision is good throughout the borough, access and quality is generally high in most wards. The play equipment is adequate, but new provision should be more challenging for the user, and incorporate greater use of natural play.
- Natural play areas should be introduced to ensure greater diversity for children to play, creating safe accessible areas that offer different, more challenging environments should be prioritised. Adding natural play environments to the existing network of fixed play equipment would provide an economic solution to achieving the minimum standards, whilst offering a wider range of play facilities to the user.

- A significant number of play areas are provided within a larger open space (e.g. a recreation ground), but few of these play areas are ‘integrated’ within the site. That is their location has not been considered in context of the whole site and its wider uses. It is therefore recommended that any investment in play areas is co-ordinated with a wider ‘master plan’ for the whole of the open space.

7.2.4 Informal open space

The following makes some general observations and recommendations regarding informal open space:

- The provision of informal open space varies across the borough with some areas having little more than an area of grass, whilst others have planting and play areas. In general, the quality of informal open space was found to be above average or good, and sites were generally well maintained.
- Informal open space provides a significant opportunity to provide additional facilities. For example, many of the sites are large enough to accommodate facilities for children and young people, particularly in areas where there is a shortfall in provision.
- Where sites have been identified as having the potential to improve, generally, this can be achieved relatively easily and at a reasonable cost (compared to play areas or sports grounds). Simple improvements such as enhanced planting and improved footpath surfacing can significantly improve the overall quality of a site.
- Where sites do have facilities, such as play areas, these often require improved maintenance, and better quality of provision (see under play).

7.2.5 Natural greenspace.

Some key issues and recommendations related to natural greenspace are outlined below:

- The borough is well provided for in terms of natural greenspace, with significant tracts of woodland offering a rich and wide variety of habitats with both biodiversity and recreational value. Brocks Hill, Lucas Marsh, Fludes Lane, Oadby Grange Country Park and Pochins Bridge are key assets that should be maintained and protected.
- The quality of management for biodiversity is good, with appropriate levels of access balanced with areas for biodiversity. Mostly this is achieved as a result of the large size of many of the areas which are large enough to provide for both recreation and biodiversity.

- The provision of information and signage is varied across the Borough (not surprisingly as the sites are under the management of various landowners), but there is a need to improve information provision across many of the sites.
- Information about the footpath and bridleway network is in need of improvement, particularly ‘on the ground’ signage showing routes and links.
- Developing a ‘master plan’ of key green corridors which provide a green infrastructure for movement and amenity through the borough.

7.2.6 Allotments

Consultation clearly showed that the borough’s allotment provision is clearly insufficient. There are lengthy waiting lists and accessibility across the borough is very poor. South Wigston in particular is very poor in terms of accessibility and quantity. The number of people who actually use allotments is very low compared to the numbers who use other types of open space, and therefore, specific comments related to the quality of allotments are less frequent. Also, the majority of allotments sites are locked, and the quality audit only allows for assessment against key criteria such as the level of cultivation and general maintenance, which is less comprehensive than the assessments of other open space. With an increasing consumer trends turning to more environmental forms of production and increasing price rises on day to day goods, an allotments program needs to be introduced to ensure supply meets current and future demands.

7.3 Quantity of open space and built facilities

For each of the typologies, quantity standards have been set (as outlined in section 6), these are expressed as hectares of open space per 1000 population (e.g. 0.5 ha/1000).

7.3.1 Quantity of open space

For each of the typologies, the existing quantity of open space has been assessed using GIS analysis. Table 7.3.1 outlines provision of each typology by sub area and ward, which shows provision as ‘sufficient supply’ or under supply’ compared to the Oadby standard. The maps in Part 2 of the report also show the existing provision and required provision against the standard.

The following observations are made with regards to the quantity of open space across the borough:

- **Parks and Recreation Grounds.** The supply varies from ward to ward, with only Sub Area 1 and 5 having overall sufficient supply. Wigston St.Wolstans, Wigston Meadow Court, Oadby Brocks Hill, Oadby Woodlands do not have any provision, however, the quantity standard for Parks and Recreation grounds must be seen in conjunction with the standard for Outdoor Sport (see section 6.2) as the two typologies are very similar.
- **Outdoor Sports Space.** None of the Sub Areas have sufficient provision to meet the quantity standards set, and only Oadby Brocks Hill ward has sufficient provision. Although none of the wards have sufficient provision of outdoor sports space, all wards and sub areas have a sufficient limited access sports spaces. Much of the provision within the limited access typology is in the form of private sports grounds and school playing fields, many of which have the community access through sports clubs. In planning for new provision it will be important to take into account the level of limited access sports space, and where these venues can open up for full community access.
- **Children and Young People’s Space.** The provision of equipped children’s play space and in particular youth provision is clearly under provided for across the borough. Accessibility to equipped children’s play spaces are reasonably good, but the quantity is poor. Introducing natural play environments would provide a cost effective way of achieving the provision standards, whilst providing a wider range of play environments for users.
- **Informal Open Space.** Only two Sub Areas and five of the ten wards throughout the borough have sufficient informal open space to meet the required standards. Sub area 4 which contains the wards Wigston Fields and Wigston St.Wolstans has the largest deficiency at -0.67, which is marginal.
- **Allotments.** 5 of the wards do not have any provision of allotments, and all 5 Sub Areas are under supplied. Provision for new allotments should be prioritised in the wards that do not have any provision.

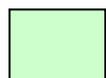
7.3.2 Applying the quantity standards

The quantity standards have been proposed to inform the future provision of open space across the borough, and should be used alongside the standards for access and quality. It is intended that they will replace the current Local Plan standards. The standards will be used to inform a supplementary planning document (SPD) on open space, which is being developed in parallel with this study. The principle use of the quantity standards will be to:

- Seek to achieve a balance of open space across the borough which meets the recommended minimum standard for each typology. This study should form the basis for a Greenspace Strategy, which should identify the options for achieving the standard.
- Provide guidance to planners and developers as the minimum requirement for open space provision as part of new housing development.

Section 7.4 outlines a number of scenarios of how the open space standards could be applied.

Table 7.3.1 Summary of provision of open space by sub area



Sufficient supply



Under Supply

	Allotment	Children & Young People Space	Churchyard & Cemetery	Informal Open Space	Natural Green Space	Outdoor Sport	Outdoor Sport (Limited Access)	Park & Recreation Ground
Sub Area 1	-3.80	-3.95	1.23	-3.71	-4.05	-13.73	110.18	4.82
Oadby Grange	-3.05	-1.51	0.00	-2.91	-0.42	-5.77	29.27	7.24
Oadby Uplands	-2.20	-1.32	0.00	0.60	-3.51	-4.39	5.54	-2.20
Oadby St Peters	1.44	-1.13	1.23	-1.40	-0.11	-3.58	75.37	-0.22
Sub Area 2	-4.24	-2.47	0.00	0.27	38.76	-1.46	60.08	-4.23
Oadby Woodlands	-2.26	-1.33	0.00	1.68	13.80	-4.52	5.54	-2.26
Oadby Brocks Hill	-1.98	-1.14	0.00	-1.41	24.94	3.06	54.54	-1.97
Sub Area 3	-3.20	-1.86	5.77	3.53	37.84	-6.39	44.37	-3.20
Wigston Meadow Court	-3.20	-1.86	5.77	3.53	37.84	-6.39	44.37	-3.20
Sub Area 4	-2.41	-3.77	0.00	-3.59	-10.34	-11.96	45.88	0.01
Wigston Fields	0.75	-1.88	0.00	-3.31	-5.30	-5.65	2.42	3.15
Wigston St.Wolstans	-3.16	-1.89	0.00	-0.28	-5.05	-6.31	43.46	-3.16
Sub Area 5	-5.40	-3.92	5.24	10.85	18.65	-8.13	31.37	5.35
South Wigston	-3.81	-2.24	0.00	12.81	8.25	-6.79	9.15	2.17
Wigston All Saints	-1.59	-1.66	5.24	-1.95	10.40	-1.34	22.22	3.19

7.3.3 Built Facilities

The application of the per capita component of the standard suggests a very large deficiency when compared with existing provision for both pools and sports halls.

The existing situation provides the equivalent of 1x 4-court pay and play venue in full community use per 32,851 persons. The proposed standard based on Sport England analytical tools suggests 1 such venue per 13,984 persons.

In terms of pools the existing situation provides the equivalent of 1x 4-lane x 25m pay and swim venue in full community use per 60,227 persons. The proposed standard based on Sport England analytical tools suggests 1 such venue per 20,720 persons.

Recommendations about the location and number of new/improved sports halls and pools

Developer contributions based on the above standards might be used to fund new provision in appropriate locations. However, before committing to such development, the desirability of using such contributions to fund the expansion, improvement, and ‘opening up’ of venues should be considered. In particular the scope for improving and opening up school based venues to wider community use will be worthy of consideration in comparison to standalone facilities. This might be the optimum solution in the urban fringe parts of the Borough (such as in the south east and south west) where existing community catchments alone might not be sufficient to justify major stand alone venues.

Recommendations about the location and number of new STPs

Developer contributions based on the above standards might be used to fund new provision in appropriate locations. The local authority should seek to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between the provision of different surfaces, especially in terms of sand-based pitches and 3rd Generation pitches. At the basic level of community provision (on which this study is largely focused) it is important that facilities should be available to and suitable for a wide range of activities, unless compelling reasons for providing ‘specialist’ surfaces exist. It is important that dialogue takes place between the proponents of possible schemes to ensure that facilities complement rather than compete.

Given anticipated growth in population, within the next few years the Borough might be expected to sustain two such facilities and general locations serving the north and the south halves of the Borough could be identified.

Recommendations about the location and number of new small halls and community venues

In areas of housing growth there may need to be a presumption in favour of new provision unless it can be demonstrated that existing facilities are sufficiently accessible to residents, and are of sufficient size and quality (or can be improved on this basis).

7.4 Scenarios

The following are examples to demonstrate how the proposed standards could be applied in three different development scenarios

7.4.1 Scenario A

Application of a range of standards to a large development of 250 houses of mixed house types and densities.

It is determined that a proposed planning application for the above development, would lead to a projected net increase in population of 575 within the locality.

The Council confirms that the type of housing proposed requires provision/contributions.

Some play local play provision and informal open space is initially proposed on site, with a financial commitment by the developer to new or improved outdoor sports provision off site. The new residents are likely to place significant additional demands on existing local provision within the area, justifying detailed consideration of a) what should be provided within the site; and b) how contributions should be provided to provision elsewhere within reasonable access of the development.

Amongst other things, the immediate area has the following:

- Existing education outdoor sports provision which currently has no formally established public use. Even without the additional demands placed upon existing provision by new development, there is already an identified shortage of outdoor public sports provision in the immediate area.
- Good access to Rights of Way in the immediate urban fringe/open countryside, accessible woodlands and a country park (the latter by car).

There are no allotments or youth provision within easy reach.

The following amount of provision could be raised through developer contributions.

Provision	Standard	Required provision: standard x population / 1000
Parks & Recreation Grounds	0.5 ha per 1000 persons	$0.5 \times 575/1000 = 0.29$ ha
Outdoor Sports Space	1.0 ha per 1000 persons	$1.0 \times 575/1000 = 0.58$ ha
Children and Young People's Space	0.3 ha per 1000 persons	$0.3 \text{ ha} \times 575/1000 = 0.17$ ha
Informal Open Space	0.5 ha per 1000 persons	$0.5 \text{ ha} \times 575/1000 = 0.29$ ha

Provision	Standard	Required provision: standard x population / 1000
Natural Green Space	1.0 ha per 1000 persons	1.0 ha x 575/1000 = 0.58 ha
Allotments	0.30 ha per 1000 persons	0.3 ha x 575/1000 = 0.17 ha

The above calculations confirm that the demands generated by the new residents would justify new provision either on or off site, and significant contributions which might go towards improving existing provision within easy reach.

Discussion with relevant parties suggests the following programme of action:

Opportunity	Action
Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds	The existing education playing fields are improved in respect of drainage in return for the school entering into a community use agreement. However, it is felt that the major new development will merit a new local park to serve as a community focal point. A contribution is also agreed towards improvements to nearby accessible woodland in this regard.
Informal Green Space	Beyond the informal space already proposed local consultation suggests a view that the contribution could go towards improving Rights of Way close to the development. A contribution is also agreed towards improving the identified accessible woodlands.
Natural Green Space	
Children and Young People's Space	Existing and planned provision for junior and pre-school children is generally of good quality. However, there is a clear need for new and better youth facilities which are planned and designed into revised layouts. Beyond this conventional provision, it is determined that contributions could be made towards natural play features on nearby recreation grounds.
Allotments	A small site is proposed near to the local school, which can then also be used by pupils.

7.4.2 Scenario B

Application of a range of standards to a medium size, high density development (60 houses) on a 'brownfield' site.

It is determined that a proposed planning application for the above development, would lead to a projected net increase in population of 138 within the locality. No open space or recreation provision is currently proposed on site, other than incidental space.

The immediate area already has a very good range of provision, including a well equipped and large recreation ground (with both children and young people's space).

The following amount of provision could be raised through developer contributions.

Provision	Standard	Required provision: standard x population / 1000
Parks & Recreation Grounds	0.5 ha per 1000 persons	$0.5 \times 138/1000 = 0.07$ ha
Outdoor Sports Space	1.0 ha per 1000 persons	$1.0 \times 138/1000 = 0.14$ ha
Children and Young People's Space	0.3 ha per 1000 persons	$0.3 \text{ ha} \times 138/1000 = 0.04$ ha
Informal Open Space	0.5 ha per 1000 persons	$0.5 \text{ ha} \times 138/1000 = 0.07$ ha
Natural Green Space	1.0 ha per 1000 persons	$1.0 \text{ ha} \times 138/1000 = 0.14$ ha
Allotments	0.30 ha per 1000 persons	$0.3 \text{ ha} \times 138/1000 = 0.04$ ha

The general feeling is that although the new development would generate additional demands, these can largely be met by existing local provision. The main problem is that access to most of the existing outdoor local facilities from this site can be difficult by foot due to poor signage and inadequate road crossing points.

Discussion with relevant parties suggests the following programme of action:

Opportunity	Action
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Because the existing local recreation ground is large and of high quality, the contributions generated by these three standards are used instead to improve access by foot and bike to this facility. A package of signing, and 'greening' of a local route is agreed, which includes identifying and marking road crossing points.
Informal Open Space	
Natural Green Space	
Children and Young People's Space	Contributions are made towards the maintenance and repair of children and young people's provision at the recreation ground. However, it is also agreed that the developer should provide a small toddler play and sitting area within the housing site, as a doorstep play opportunity for very young children.
Allotments and Community Gardens	Contributions are used to purchase a 'compost toilet' at the local allotment.

7.4.3 Scenario C

Application of a range of standards to a small development of family houses within a village (5 houses).

It is determined that a proposed planning application for the above development, would lead to a projected net increase in population of 11.5 people within a village.

The Council confirms that the type of housing proposed requires provision/contributions.

No provision for open space and/or recreation is currently proposed on site.

The village already has the following:

- A recreation ground (providing for sport and informal recreation) only 10 minutes walk from the development.
- No identified Informal or Natural Green Space within the limits of the village.
- A well maintained children's play ground, but nothing for older children.
- A well used football pitch (on the recreation ground).
- A local allotment site only 10 minutes walk from the development.

The following amount of provision could be raised through developer contributions:

Provision	Standard	Required provision: standard x population / 1000
Parks & Recreation Grounds	0.5 ha per 1000 persons	$0.5 \times 11.5/1000 = 0.006$ ha
Outdoor Sports Space	1.0 ha per 1000 persons	$1.0 \times 11.5/1000 = 0.01$ ha
Children and Young People's Space	0.3 ha per 1000 persons	$0.3 \text{ ha} \times 11.5/1000 = 0.004$ ha
Informal Open Space	0.5 ha per 1000 persons	$0.5 \text{ ha} \times 11.5/1000 = 0.006$ ha
Natural Green Space	1.0 ha per 1000 persons	$1.0 \text{ ha} \times 11.5/1000 = 0.01$ ha
Allotments	0.30 ha per 1000 persons	$0.3 \text{ ha} \times 11.5/1000 = 0.004$ ha

The above calculations confirm that the demands generated by the new residents would make it very difficult to justify new provision of any kind on site. However, given the costs involved in providing many of the opportunities covered by the standards, even small developments could generate significant contributions which might go towards improving existing provision within easy reach.

Discussion with relevant parties suggests the following programme of action:

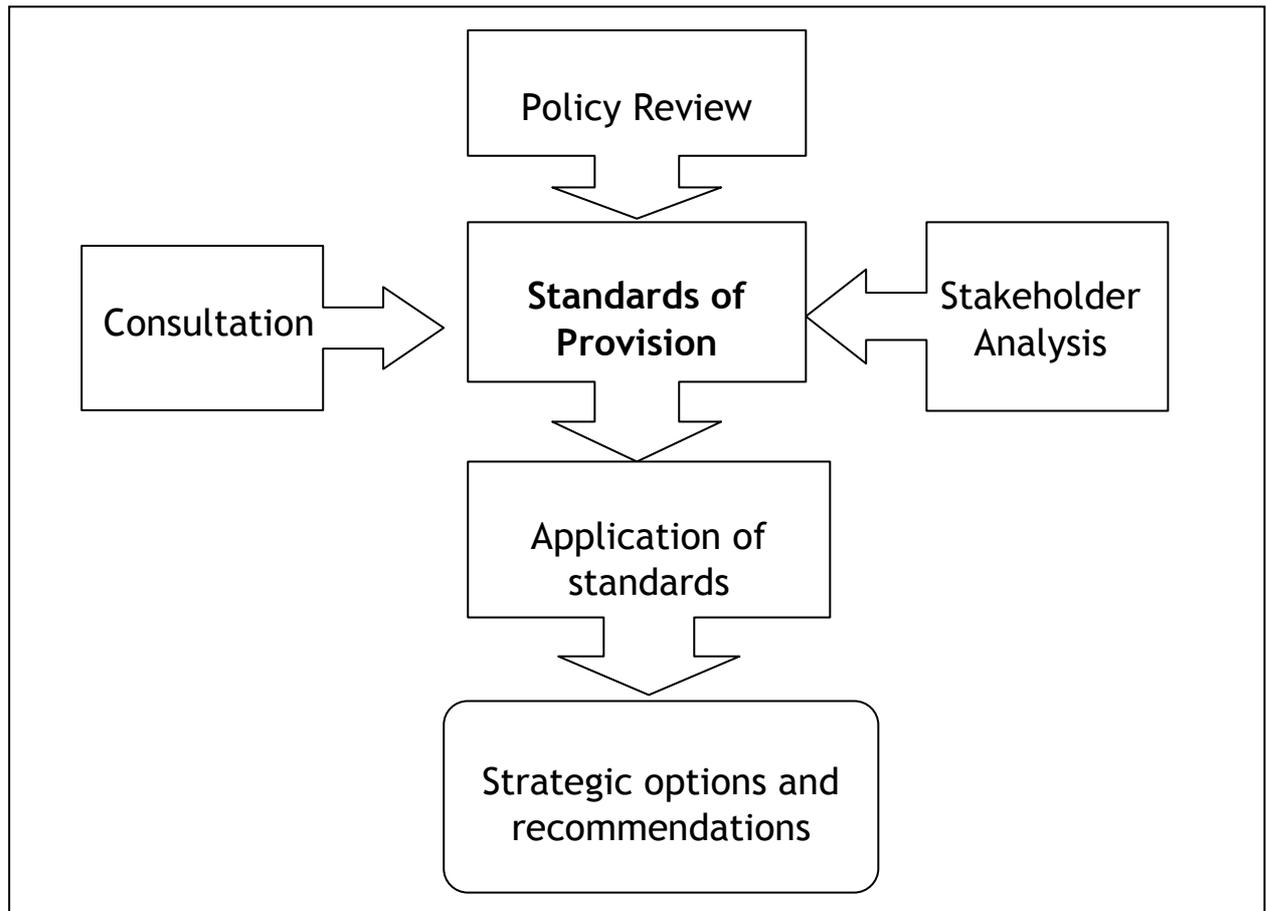
Opportunity	Action
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Improvements to the recreation ground in agreement with the local community/playing field trust
Informal Green Space	Local consultation suggests a view that the contribution could go towards improved rights of way surrounding the village. Consideration also given to 'naturalising' under-utilised parts of the existing recreation ground.
Natural Green Space	
Children and Young People's Space	Local consultation suggests no desire to improve existing provision for younger children (which is already good), but to offer something for teenagers, such as a 'hangout' area on the recreation ground and a 'target' wall.
Allotments	Improvements to the existing allotments (such as secure storage shed).

8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS

8.1 Developing strategic options

The PPG 17 guidance recommends the study should be brought together to identify and evaluate strategic options and draft policies. This information is gathered from all previous elements of the study as shown in figure below:

Map 6.0 Process for developing strategic options



Specifically, the guidance recommends that the strategic options should consider four basic components:

- Existing provision to be protected.
- Existing provision to be enhanced.
- Existing provision to be relocated in order to meet local needs more effectively or make better overall use of land.
- Proposals for new provision.

The guidance also identifies that consideration should be given to a fifth component - land or facilities which are surplus to requirements and therefore no longer needed. Further clarification of the above is outlined below, and a summary of the policies or recommendations related to each option is summarised in section 8.2.

Existing provision to be protected

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

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

The priorities emerging from this study focus on those facilities which avoid deficiencies, as those with nature conservation, historical or cultural value already afford protection through the planning system.

Existing provision to be relocated

In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or sport and recreation facility, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users, or use land which is not suitable for another purpose.

Existing provision to be enhanced

This includes those spaces or facilities which:

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

Proposals for new provision

New provision may be required where there will be a planned increase in population and will be required:

- In areas outside the distance thresholds of each different type of open space or sport and recreation facility in the adopted provision hierarchy containing sufficient people to justify new provision; or
- Where the level of existing provision fails to accord with the quantity standard.

This section brings together the information from all parts of the study and considers each of the components above. It also outlines areas of good practice in relation to the future provision of open space within the Borough, and provides an overview of the key recommendations;

It is intended that this study and all the supporting information is used to form the basis of any new planning policies related to open space (through a supplementary planning document) and form the basis for a Greenspace Strategy for the Borough.

8.2 Strategic Options

This section outlines the recommendations (**R**) in relation to each of the strategic options identified above. The recommendations are specifically geared to add clarity to the 10 key issues identified in the open spaces strategy 2006 - 2011, and the Oadby & Wigston's open space vision;

“The Borough of Oadby & Wigston will protect, enhance and develop its green space by providing for the diverse requirements of users, supporting the promotion of healthy lifestyles and valuing the diversity of nature”.

Strategic option 1: Existing provision to be protected

- R1** Parks & Recreation grounds have been identified as a key facility for users throughout the Borough. The quality of maintenance facilities varies significantly, with many without provision. Priority should be made to ensuring the quality, quantity and accessibility standards of parks and recreations is met throughout the borough, ensuring facilities are imaginative, well maintained and provide environments that users feel safe, secure and want to use.
- R2** The table in section 7.1 outlines specific areas where there are gaps in access to open space. Where possible new provision to ‘fill the gaps’ should be sought through new development when the opportunity arises. Where new development is unlikely to occur, new open space provision should be aimed at multi functional spaces, which can provide a range of experiences to the user in order to ensure they have access to the full range of typologies.
- R3** Allotments are under provided for across all 5 sub areas and in all wards. Existing allotments should be protected and enhanced where possible. Opportunities to improve links to neighbouring facilities should be explored, and the potential use of private space where possible.

- R4** Green infrastructure plans should be considered at sub area level to encourage greater use of open spaces between wards. Ward boundaries should not be considered when planning for new open space or facilities. Consultation indicated a willingness of users to travel in and around their respective wards to access open space. A joined up plan of green corridors, cycle paths and walkways should be carried out to encourage users to access open spaces across their sub area where possible.
- R5** There is a significant under supply in terms of quantity for the provision of equipped children's play across the borough, deficiencies occur in all five sub areas. Principally loss of any existing provision should be avoided, unless alternative new provision can be provided. The majority of wards have adequate coverage of equipped play facilities, but lack quantity. New innovative provision should be explored through the use of natural play, providing a range of fixed and natural environments for children to experience. Through the use of 'natural play, the authority could ensure a greater range of play experiences, and ensure they have sufficient quantity to meet the required standard.
- R6** There is a clear lack of youth facilities across the whole borough, priority should be given to ensuring the protection of existing facilities.

Strategic option 2: Existing provision to be relocated

- R7** There are no Sub Areas, or wards that meet the required open space standards across all typologies. An area 'green print' could be developed for each sub area, identifying future use of open space sites with a view achieving the open space standards before any disposal or relocation is considered.
- R8** The potential to dispose of remote sites in areas that have sufficient accessible green spaces should be explored, with any receipts reinvested in to accessible open spaces.
- R9** There are a number of outdoor sports sites throughout the borough that could serve as parks with minimal investment. Where parks & recreation grounds are deficient, accessible outdoor sports space should be considered for improvements to provide the multi functionality that park and recreation grounds offer.

Strategic option 3: Existing provision to be enhanced

- R10** Section 7.2 makes recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the Borough. A long term strategy for achieving improvements is required (to be delivered through a Green space Strategy, and the creation of a green print for each area).
- R11** Priorities for improvement include the enhancement of natural green spaces to include natural play, environments that are safe, litter free and have an element of risk that children can't experience in equipped play areas.

Natural play areas can be as simple as mounding, cut down trees for climbing or a range of scrubs and robust planting providing different textures and senses. Play provision priority should be geared to new innovative natural play spaces, in conjunction with the upkeep of the equipped play areas.

- R12** Where gaps in access and deficiency in quantity in parks and recreation grounds appear, enhancement of outdoor sports grounds to incorporate formal areas should be prioritised.
- R13** Youth facilities should be improved, and each ward should focus on providing a multi functional space that caters for all ages of informal and formal play.
- R14** A Greenspace Strategy should outline options for funding improvements to open space. The most significant opportunities include funding from developer contributions, grant funding, council funding, and sale of land.
- R15** Key sites throughout each sub area which could provide strategic links to improve access should be identified, and a green infrastructure plan developed to ensure future investment promotes user movement throughout their identified areas.

Strategic option 4: Proposals for new provision

- R16** New provision of open space may be required as part of new development in order to meet any deficiencies in provision in both quantity and access within the ward or sub area within which the development takes place. Where on site provision is required, it should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards. Where on site provision is deemed impractical, off site contributions will be required to meet the quantity, access and quality standards where possible.
- R17** The priorities for new provision are for young people's space. There is also a need to increase of children's play space, in the form of natural play.
- R18** Consideration needs to be given to the supply of allotments in areas of sufficient open space, where the conversion of open space to allotments should be explored.

8.3 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

In addition to the strategic options outlined above, the PPG17 guidance also recommends that consideration should be given to facilities that are surplus to requirement. This section considers this for both open space and built facilities.

8.3.1 Surplus open space

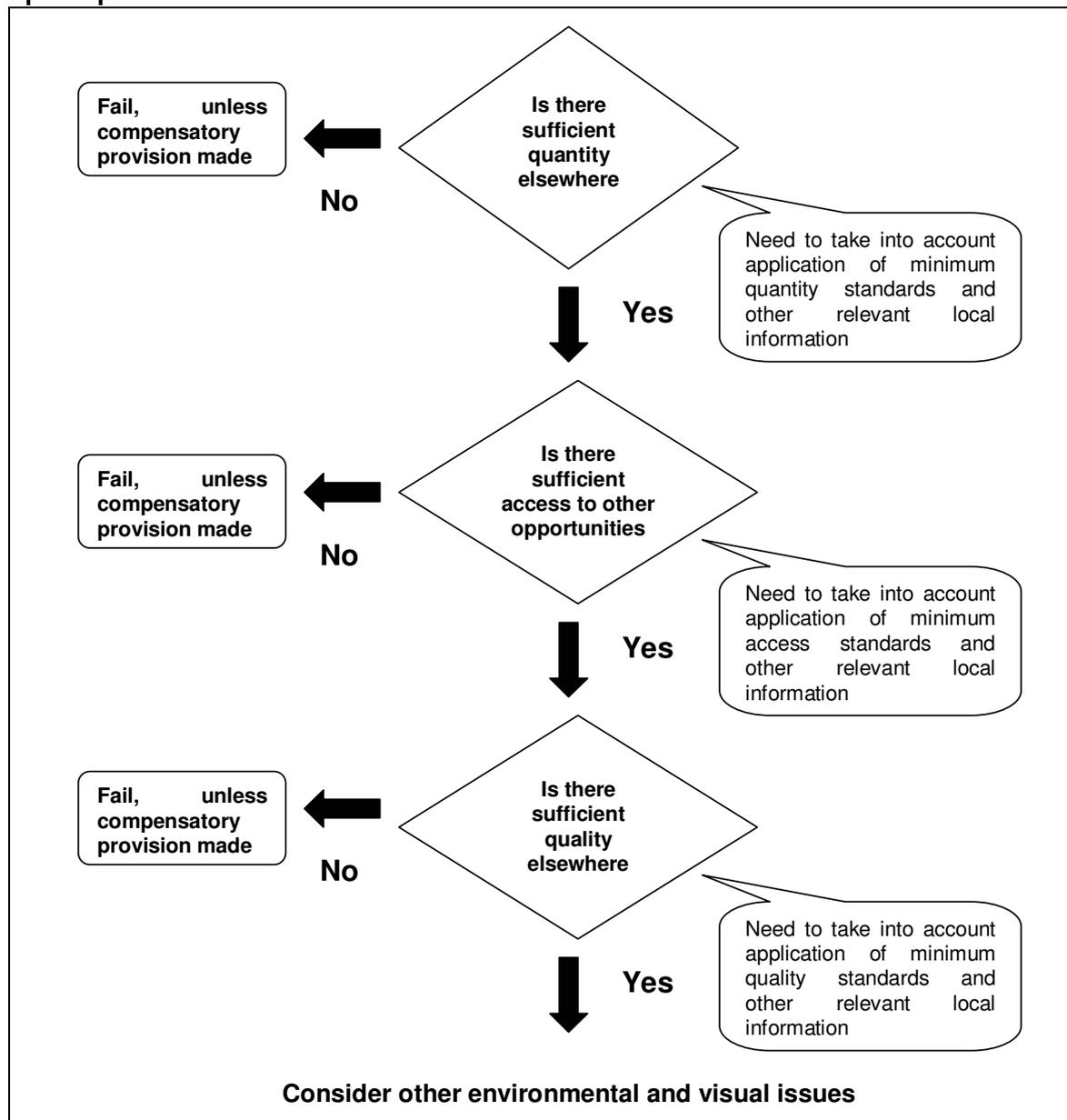
There are important issues to resolve in terms of getting the correct balance of open spaces across Oadby & Wigston before any disposal can be contemplated. Whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in some areas of

the Borough, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that the proposed standards are for *minimum* levels of provision. Factors to be taken into account before any decision to release open space for alternative uses can be taken include:

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

The following Figure suggests an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development of an open space can be seriously contemplated.

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



A hypothetical example of how this might be applied follows, and relates to an area of informal open space.

Q. Is there sufficient quantity?

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

Q. Is there sufficient access to other opportunities?

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

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

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

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

8.4 Guidance and good practice

The following section provides guidance and outlines good practice in relation to the planning and provision of open space in relation to PPG17. The guidance has arisen out of the learning from this study, and from various other PPG17 studies that the consultants have been involved with. This section is not a requirement of PPG17, but has been provided to add value to the study, and to begin to consider some of the options that a Greenspace Strategy will need to consider. The guidance is summarised by typology of open space.

8.4.1 Parks & Recreation Grounds

Developing a hierarchy of provision

Many local authorities are developing ‘hierarchies of provision’ for their open spaces, these vary from area to area, but there are some emerging models, such as through the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE), and the model being developed by the London Borough’s. It is therefore recommended that Oadby & Wigston Borough Council considers the value of working with other local authorities towards a hierarchy embracing provision aimed at frequent local use, and also regular (but perhaps less frequent) strategic use which perhaps might be in the form of a Country Park resource hosting other opportunities.

- **Strategic level:** Landscaping with a variety of natural and semi natural features, including natural habitats and planted beds. Space for outdoor pitch and other sports provision as appropriate (see separate standards). Space for children's and youth play facilities (see separate standards). Car parking. Footpaths. Cycleways. Buildings for secured storage and for catering outlets. Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle which may require improvements to the external environment (see below). Events venue. A notable and defining architectural feature. Seating. Litter and dog bins. Toilets. Refreshment venues. Picnic tables. Consideration of zoning between active and passive zones. The overall size of the park might be expected to be approaching or greater than **40 hectares**. Strategic provision might also take the form of a contribution towards a Country Park, or other existing publicly accessible forested/woodland area.
- **Local level:** Landscaping with a variety of natural features, including natural habitats. Space for outdoor pitch and other sports provision as appropriate (see separate standards). Space for children's and youth play facilities (see separate standards). Car parking. Footpaths. Cycleways. Buildings for secured storage and/or catering outlets (if appropriate). Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle which may require improvements to the external environment. Seating. Litter and dog bins. The overall size of the park might be expected to be at least 2 hectares.

Beyond this 2-tier hierarchy contributions from developers arising from the application of this standard should also be used to create small ‘pocket parks’ in certain circumstances.

Access to and links between Open Spaces

Although the study area's parks, sports and recreation grounds are appreciated and valued, their use clearly depends on how easy they are to access. There is little point in considering the provision of new facilities or the improvement of existing facilities without considering the means of access to them at the same time. This will be especially important by foot and bike, including access for people with disabilities. This is critical for certain groups in the community, particularly children and teenagers. New standards for park, sports and recreation grounds should therefore also include guidance on the improvement of approach routes by foot and bike for which developer contributions should be sought. The Council will need to determine:

- The linear distance threshold upon which such contributions should be based.
- The nature of improvements sought to facilitate and improve upon ease and safety of access. These might include clearly defined cycle lanes, safe crossing points, provision for disabled access etc.

8.4.2 Children and Young People's provision

Good practice in play provision

In addition to the general recommendations outlined above and the more specific recommendations outlined in part 2 of the report, this section outlines some advice and recommendations related to good practice in play provision, which the council will consider in planning and providing future provision.

Provision of play equipment

Space must comprise a variety of equipped and unequipped play opportunities, and further guidance should be provided by the Council. However, provision could include the following:

- ***For young preschool children:*** Small low key games area preferably with play features & 3 items of 'small scale' items of play equipment. Seating for accompanying adults.
- ***For other children up to teenage years:*** About 5 items of play equipment and a small flat ball games area with kick walls and 'low level' hoops and 'very low key wheel play facility (undulating riding surface with features). Seating for accompanying adults.
- ***For young people:*** About 5 types of play equipment, Ball Play and Wheeled Play opportunities, and covered seating for teenagers to use as a meeting place.
- ***Provision for those with disabilities:*** At least some of the larger play areas should contain equipment designed to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities.

Consultation

The standards outlined in this report should be applied flexibly and imaginatively, taking into account the views of local residents, potential users and various interests wherever possible. Meaningful consultation will therefore help to make new provision sensitive and appropriate to local circumstances.

SAFETY

All new Children's' Outdoor Playing Spaces, the equipment and ancillary facilities need to conform to all aspects of safety standards EN 1176 & 1177. Items not covered by either standard or exceptions to the standards must be justified and made explicit.

Combined Provision

It may sometimes be appropriate to provide for all three age groups at the same location separated only by a short distance or by enclosing the separate areas. This might be most appropriate in the case of sites of a more strategic nature, such as in parks and leisure centre grounds in the towns and larger villages.

OTHER IDEAL LOCATIONS

OTHER IDEAL LOCATIONS FOR PROVISION COULD BE AT LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRES, NEAR PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND ON VILLAGE GREENS:

- Facilitates 'stopping off' for parents / carers when accompanying older children to and from school, or whilst shopping.
- Facilities on known / familiar routes for children are a safety advantage.
- The more 'busy' the play area the more 'fun' and 'safe' it is.
- Informal surveillance (overlooking) normally more frequent.

Achieving the Standard in Small Settlements

The intention should be that these play standards are applied flexibly and with imagination. Many settlements will not be of the size to justify full provision in accordance with the above. However, even a relatively small developer contribution can be invested imaginatively in improving local play opportunities. For example:

- Individual contributions could be used to improve/upgrade the existing provision, which in a small village is likely to be within convenient distance of the funding development.
- Individual contributions could be married to other council and partner funding to provide new or improved provision.
- Public consultation may show a desire and willingness to consider innovative community based solutions to provision. 'Self help' schemes perhaps involving young people in design and creation, can often prove much cheaper and reflective of true local needs than off-the-shelf installations.

A key issue is how to best provide for the needs of youth in urban fringe locations where it will not generally be feasible to provide facilities on the scale that might be envisaged in the larger settlements. In many ways this is an intractable problem, but in others it may not be so difficult to resolve.

Fundamentally, all young people are asking for is somewhere to meet, play, and feel independent. Bespoke play equipment and sites may be one way of providing for these needs. But there may be other much cheaper solutions involving for example inexpensive but intelligent landscaping on the edges of village recreation grounds; encouraging young people to become

involved in the design and development of home spun facilities, such as cut and fill BMX tracks; planting trees with low branches to encourage climbing etc, and the creation of dens. All these are 'low tech' solutions, but could be of immense local benefit to youngsters. A prerequisite to such initiative is perhaps a change of mindset (on the part of facility managers) in some circumstances and greater tolerance to such projects and activity.

Issues Relating to Risk

There is growing concern about how safety is being addressed in children's play provision. Fear of litigation is leading many play providers to focus on minimising the risk of injury at the expense of other more fundamental objectives. The effect is to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities, limiting their enjoyment and causing potentially damaging consequences for their development.

This approach ignores clear evidence that use of play provision is a comparatively low risk activity for children. Of the two million or so childhood accident cases treated by hospitals each year, fewer than two per cent involve playground equipment. Participation in sports like soccer, widely acknowledged as 'good' for a child's development, involve a greater risk of injury than visiting a playground. Fatalities on playgrounds are very rare - about one per three or four years on average nationally. This compares with, for instance, more than 100 child pedestrian fatalities a year and more than 500 child fatalities from accidents overall.

New provision should balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm. The provision should extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

8.4.3 Informal Open Space

Flexible Use of Informal Open Space

Depending on local circumstances it may be appropriate to use the provision sought under the Informal Open Space standard for additional or improved park space, natural space, and recreation ground space as there is clearly some interchangeability of function.

Informal Open Space can provide an extremely valuable play resource to complement equipped provision. Attention in design of new spaces to planting, topography and safety/security will maximise its potential in this regard.

The shape and size of space provided should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. It will not be appropriate for highway verges and other small pieces of roadside space (for example) to be counted towards such provision. However, these smaller spaces can serve another important function in improving the visual environment.

Further guidance on the flexible use of space and contributions is provided at the end of this section.

8.4.4 Natural Greenspace

Providing new natural greenspace

The focus of the quantity standard for natural greenspace is that of new provision, therefore, some guidance has been provided in determining the nature of this provision, which should be determined to reflect local circumstances.

Provision might be expected to include (as appropriate) elements of woodland, wetland, heathland and meadow, and could also be made for informal public access through recreation corridors. (See below under 'Routeways and Corridors').

For larger areas, where car borne visits might be anticipated, some parking provision will be required. The larger the area the more valuable sites will tend to be in terms of their potential for enhancing local conservation interest and biodiversity. Therefore, the aim should be to create areas of Accessible Natural Green Space of at least 2 hectares that are well distributed throughout the urban areas.

Wherever possible these sites should be linked which will help to improve wildlife value. There should be parallel commitments to maintain natural green space through appropriate maintenance techniques reflecting the primary purpose of promoting natural habitats and biodiversity that can also be accessed and enjoyed by local people. Access by people should not be restricted to narrow corridors, but should allow freedom to wander.

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

- Changing the management of marginal space on playing fields and parks to enhance biodiversity.
- Encouraging living green roofs as part of new development/redevelopment.
- Encouraging the creation of mixed species hedgerows.
- Additional use of long grass management regimes.
- Improvements to watercourses and water bodies.
- Innovative use of new drainage schemes / Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- Use of native trees and plants in landscaping new developments.

The above should in any event be principles to be pursued and encouraged at all times.