



North Norfolk Open Space and Recreation Study **Volume I** Open Space Strategy



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Recreation Study

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North Norfolk District Council



North Norfolk Open Space and Recreation Study

Volume I Open Space Strategy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North Norfolk Open Space Study was carried out in 2005-06, with the following main aims:

- to inform the review of the local plan;
- to provide guidance on open space standards;
- to advise the management of open space and sports facilities; and
- to help the Council to set priorities for expenditure, as well as find sources of funding.

In order to carry out the work, the study involved an audit of over 250 open spaces in the district. The audit data was linked to a Geographic Information System (GIS) database, and it is now possible to use this as a positive tool for the planning of the District.

Volume I of the study includes an assessment of the quantity, quality and value of parks and open spaces in North Norfolk and says whether provision is meeting local needs. It develops local standards and measures to address deficiencies in open space provision. The findings from the residents' consultation have informed the preparation of this report.

This study is based on the national, regional and local open space planning framework and takes into account new government thinking on sustainable development and the role that parks play in the quality of life of residents. It recognises that most open space, with good planning and management can perform multiple functions and provide a variety of benefits which cut across the Council's strategic priorities.

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Residents have provided an input to the study, through a series of telephone interviews and Focus Group meetings carried out to establish what local people feel about open space in the District.

North Norfolk is a large rural District, with a large number of small and dispersed settlements, and seven main towns. A profile of the District shows it to have concentrations of people 'not in good health' compared to the national average. Equally, some parts have higher than average numbers of young children. Each of these features will have an effect on demand for open space.

Public parks in North Norfolk are well provided for, especially at the strategic level represented by country parks. There are a good number of large parks, which are also well distributed throughout the District. Difficulties begin to arise at the more local level, such that a number of settlements in the rural hinterland have no children's play areas, and are too far from other villages which may have adequate facilities to be able to use those.

The study recommends standards of provision for certain, but not all types of open space.

The study does not just deal with the quantity of open space. Quality and value are equally important. It finds much of the open space in the district to be of a high standard, and it gives advice on how to improve open space sites which are below standard; where existing functions can be expanded to meet demand, and on improving accessibility. It recommends the establishment of a Green Network to link open space and enhance its value. It advises on how to use existing facilities to better effect, and identifies areas with specific requirements.

It is recommended that the wider community be consulted on the results of the study. This could be done through the establishment of an Open Space Steering Group comprising representatives of stakeholder groups and local authority departments, which would help to guide the implementation of an open space strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Atkins was commissioned by the District Council of North Norfolk in December 2004 to undertake an assessment of Open Space and Indoor Sports Facilities within the District. The purpose of the study has been to produce a qualitative and quantitative audit and analysis of the supply of, and demand for, open space and indoor and outdoor sports provision in the District and to provide recommendations which will inform the next stages of the Open Space Strategy.
- 1.2 This study has been prompted by recent reports and guidance stressing the importance of assessing recreational and open space requirements. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17, 2002) on Sport, Open Space and Recreation, sets out central government's guidance on Open Space, and recommends that local authorities carry out studies of its availability. Local authorities are advised to adopt a methodology which assesses the wider recreational needs of the local community and to make appropriate provision in the light of those assessments. The study is set in this national and regional framework and aims to support and inform the following local initiatives:
- Funding bids and investment priorities;
 - The District Local Planning policies;
 - Management of public open spaces.
- 1.3 The need for a study has also been highlighted by the difficulties the Local Authority experience in improving and enhancing facilities given the absence of major housing allocations and the resulting lack of developer contributions to open space and recreation facilities.

- 1.4 The lack of coordinated and accessible information on the type and quality of facilities is preventing an informed assessment of these formal and informal recreation needs and opportunities.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- 1.5 The aim of the North Norfolk Open Space Study was to assess and analyse the quantity and quality of existing open space, the varied functions of open space and the needs of local people.

- 1.6 The results of this analysis will:

- Inform the review of the Local Plan;
- Provide the Council with planning guidance on open space standards;
- Assist the Council in identifying the changing community needs for new open space and outdoor sports facilities;
- Inform the future management of open space and sports facilities including the identification of opportunities to enhance and reconfigure open space provision;
- Enable the Council to set priorities for future investment and provide a rationale to secure external funding for the improvement and additional provision of facilities, particularly via developer contributions.

- 1.7 This section of the report (Volume I) of the study includes an assessment of the quantity, quality and value of parks and open space in North Norfolk and shows whether provision is meeting local needs. It develops local standards and measures to address deficiencies in open space provision.

- 1.8 All open spaces in North Norfolk are listed in Appendix A to this report and illustrated in Figures 4.1A, 4.1B and 4.1C.

- 1.9 Volume II reports on a demand assessment of playing pitches and indoor sports facilities in the District, which has also been an element of this study. These assessments looked at all outdoor sports, concentrating on those

which depend on playing fields (football, rugby, cricket and hockey), as well as all sports and leisure centres in the District. These assessments will enable the Council to establish whether the District is meeting demand for these sports.

METHODOLOGY

- 1.10 Phase 1: The National, regional and Local Framework: the Open Space study was undertaken in four phases. In Phase 1 a desk top study looked at the national, regional and local initiatives and analysed the local context.
- 1.11 In Phase 2 an audit of supply was carried out, looking at the quantity and quality of the open spaces in the District and identifying opportunities for improvement and enhancement. It reported on a total of 249 open spaces throughout the District, classified them according to type, and calculated how accessible they were to the population at large. A quality assessment was applied consistently to all the open spaces.
- 1.12 In Phase 3 an assessment of need took place, identifying strategic, district-wide concerns and assessing the demand for playing pitches. There were various strands to this study:
- 1.13 A telephone survey was conducted of a representative sample of 500 residents in the District. This examined people's use of open space, how they got to it, how often they used it, and what they thought of its condition and quality.
- 1.14 Two focus group meetings took place, in different parts of the District, at which key issues about open space were teased out;
- 1.15 A socio-economic profile was built of the District, looking at demography, population projections, ethnicity, socio-economic characteristics of the population (professions, occupations) working hours, car ownership, travel to work, housing, health and deprivation.
- 1.16 An analysis of open space supply and demand allowed initial accessibility standards to be developed, and these were used to identify shortages/deficiencies in provision.

- 1.17 Phase 4 saw the analysis of strategic demand and supply. The value of open space was addressed resulting in recommendations for the protection and enhancement of existing spaces to inform the Open Space Strategy and guide policy development. A further assessment was made of the need and availability of allotments. Finally, a detailed series of recommendations is made of improvements which could be made to open spaces in the District, in order to enable them to fulfil their potential and contribute to the overall health and social wealth of the District.
- 1.18 This report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 contains a review of the current national, regional and local strategies, guidance and initiatives, while an assessment of local open spaces needs and priorities is presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 outlines the approach to planning open space provision and Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 deal with an assessment of the quantity and quality of the supply of parks, children's play, natural and semi-natural greenspace, and Allotments in the District. Chapter 9 considers quality issues, and Chapter 10 looks at Value of Open Space. Chapters 11 summarises standards recommended, and Chapter 12 looks forward to the development of an open space strategy.

2. NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 National, regional and local strategies and initiatives provide a framework to influence the development of an Open Space Study. Sport, open spaces and recreation all contribute to people's quality of life and consequently cross a number of national and local government competences including: planning, leisure and recreation, health, education and crime. The Companion Guide to PPG17 recommends that open space assessments consider the implications of national, regional and local strategies in order to ensure that the multifunctional role of open space is recognised within the assessment. A summary of these policies is contained in Appendix B whilst some of the implications of the relevant strategies relating to the District are considered below.

NATIONAL POLICY

Urban White Paper

- 2.2 In November 2000 the Government published its Urban White Paper "Our towns and cities: the future - Delivering an urban renaissance". The White Paper recognises that well managed public open spaces improve the attractiveness of urban areas and help to promote a healthier lifestyle. It also highlights the need for improvements in their management and maintenance.
- 2.3 This study will provide the up to date information and analysis of open spaces in North Norfolk to help to achieve the aims and objectives of the White Paper.

PPG 17 – Sport, Open Space and Recreation

- 2.4 Planning Policy Guidance 17, Sport, Open Space and Recreation (2002) points out the government's belief in how open spaces, sport and recreation

underpin people's quality of life and are fundamental to successfully delivering a number of strategic Government objectives:

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

2.5 In establishing the value of existing recreational facilities to the community and the need for new facilities, PPG17 recommends that Authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Guidelines describing how such assessments should be completed are set out in 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17' (ODPM, 2002). This study addresses the key issues pertaining to playing pitches and allotments

2.6 The guidelines recommend that audits of local open space needs should:

- Cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population for open space and built sports and recreational facilities including those working in and visiting areas;
- Include audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities including usage, accessibility, costs and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should establish the quantity and quality of spaces; and
- Identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses.

Approaches to Planning Open Space Provision

- 2.7 The recently published East of England Plan Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England advises that local authorities, in consultation with local community groups, develop clear strategies for improving opportunities for informal recreation for both local residents and visitors, as well as making adequate provision for formal recreational activities which rely on the use of natural and man made features/ resources.
- 2.8 The Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions select committee in its report "Public Spaces: The Role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance" (February 2002) and PPG17 emphasises the need to recognise the multiple roles which open spaces perform and their relevance to the Government's wider objectives for the urban renaissance and quality of life.
- 2.9 The Government's vision to make public spaces cleaner, safer, greener places that enhance quality of life is set out in 'Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener' (ODPM, October 2002). The report recognises that the planning system has a key role to play in ensuring high quality public spaces and local environments and creating places for people.

Sports Policy and Strategy

- 2.10 Sport England is the agency responsible for advising the Government on sports matters. It also acts as a statutory consultee on certain developments relating to sports pitches. In addition it is responsible for distributing several sources of funding and fostering:
- Promotion of social justice in sport;
 - Increased sports participation;
 - Development of community sports programmes and facilities; and
 - Appropriate planning for sport and recreation.
- 2.11 Further reference to Sport England Guidance is made throughout this document where appropriate.

LOCAL POLICY

Community Strategy

- 2.12 North Norfolk Community Partnership “Our Community Strategy” provides a broad vision for the District. The Strategy includes actions for Preserving the Environment and promoting outdoor enjoyment and for Improving Leisure and Culture.
- 2.13 Specific aims include the provision of enough outdoor leisure opportunities particularly for families and young people and getting more people involved in leisure and culture in North Norfolk (residents and visitors).

Corporate Plan

- 2.14 The North Norfolk Corporate Plan – ‘Getting Ahead’ sets out the vision for the District, together with values, principles and priorities for supporting and serving residents, businesses and visitors. Amongst the priorities are improvements to the quality of life by promoting and developing more informal leisure and recreational options to complement existing sports and leisure facilities.

Best Value Review – Parks and Open Spaces and Foreshore

- 2.15 The Service Delivery Review in April 2001 provided an assessment of the service provided for the maintenance and management of the Council’s public open spaces, including, playgrounds, formal gardens, putting greens, bowling greens roadside verges, estate adoptions, informal open space recreation grounds, woodlands and other open spaces. It recognised the contribution of such provision to the aims of the North Norfolk District Council, improving quality of life, protecting the environment, developing the economy and involving the community.

LOCAL OPEN SPACE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

North Norfolk Local Plan

- 2.16 The North Norfolk Local Plan Adopted April 1998 sets out policies to ensure that the open spaces within the District are protected and enhanced.

2.17 The most relevant policies relate to the following issues:

- Recreation, Leisure and Tourism proposals;
- Conservation / Protection Policies;
- Site Specific Proposals and Policies.

CONCLUSIONS

2.18 This study is consistent with planning guidance and other supporting strategies at the national, regional and local level and takes into account new government thinking on sustainable development and the role that green space plays in the quality of life of residents.

2.19 It recognises that most open space, with good planning and management can perform multiple functions and provide a variety of benefits which cut across the Council's strategic priorities. An Open Space Study is vital to bring all those who are responsible and have an interest together with a common purpose and a shared understanding of what can be done to enhance and maintain green space for the future.

3. LOCAL OPEN SPACE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

3.1 What is open space, and how do people use it? It is useful to break down the uses of open spaces into its component parts, so as to be better able to make future provision for it. PPG17 summarises these as follows:

- Parks and gardens, used for informal recreation;
- Natural and semi-natural greenspace, the main use of which is biodiversity and wildlife conservation
- Green corridors, used for walking, cycling etc
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Amenity greenspace,
- Provision for children and young people
- Allotments, community gardens
- Cemeteries and disused churchyards.

3.2 This study seeks to establish what the need for open space is, and key parameters are accessibility, quality and quantity.

- Accessibility: how far can people be expected to go to get to an open space? Some spaces, such as country parks, will draw

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people from a large area, while others, such as children's play areas, will have a very small catchment;

- Quality: if an open space is uninviting, e.g. due to lack of facilities, it will have limited use;
- Quantity: if there are not enough open spaces, those which are available may suffer from over-use.

METHODOLOGY

3.3 To establish the need for open space in the North Norfolk, a three-strand study was undertaken. This consisted of:

- A telephone survey of users;
- Two focus group meetings at North Walsham and Fakenham, and
- An analysis of a socio-economic profile of the District which aimed to establish how use of and attitudes towards open spaces and sports facilities differ according to age, gender and ethnicity.

Telephone Survey

3.4 The Companion Guide to PPG17 asserts that it is impossible to identify local needs for open space properly without involving local communities. Accordingly, as part of the study, in May 2005 500 residents of North Norfolk were interviewed in a telephone survey. The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- To identify groups of residents who use open spaces and sports facilities;
- To assess patterns of usage and determine the purposes for which the open spaces and sports facilities are used;

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- To explore attitudes towards and perceptions of open spaces and sports facilities;
- To identify reasons for non-use; and
- To determine issues, problems and potential improvements that could increase usage of North Norfolk's open spaces and sports facilities.

3.5 The main findings of the consultation relevant to this study are listed below. The detailed findings are incorporated into the relevant chapters of Volumes 1 and II.

Use of Open Space

- 3.6 85% of respondents take part in some sporting or recreational activity on a weekly basis, with 55% of respondents typically spending over 3 hours/week participating in such activities.
- 3.7 76% of respondents regularly visit or large open space such as a country park. The highest proportion of those visiting this type of facility is the group aged between 15-24 (86%), with a somewhat lower proportion doing so among 55-64 year olds (73%).
- 3.8 The North Norfolk Coast and Countryside is used on a frequent basis by its residents, demonstrated by the fact that 43% of respondents stated that they took walks on the coast and 26.4% taking a walk in the countryside on a regular basis.
- 3.9 The most popular of the larger country parks/large open spaces were Sheringham Park (17%) and Holt Country Park (8.4%).
- 3.10 Smaller Local Parks accounted for 5.2 % of visits, with visits to children's play areas accounting for 7.2%.
- 3.11 Although overall 1% of the respondents used allotments, this rose to 2.8% for those over 65 years of age and fell to 0% for the 15-24 age category.

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Reasons for visits

- 3.12 The most popular reason for visiting open spaces is walking (38% of respondents), with this pursuit most popular amongst 35-44 year olds. Dog walking was the next most popular reason for visits at 21%.
- 3.13 Exercise was also an important reason for visits to open spaces (14% of all questioned) which in the case of males accounted for 31% of visits and females 28%. Many more men (8.4%) than women (0.4%) gave sport as a reason for their visits.

Mode of travel

- 3.14 46% of respondents travel to open spaces by car, with this figure rising to 55% where passengers were included. Those visiting by foot accounted for 39%, and the most common age group for this mode was 15-24 year olds.
- 3.15 3.1% of people travel to open spaces by cycle. Over 20% of those aged 15-24 years travel by cycle to open spaces. Only 1.1% travel to parks/open spaces by bus and train.

Satisfaction with Open Spaces

- 3.16 Interviewees were asked how they rated the quality of the Park/Open Space. 57.7% rated the space as very good and 34% as good. Satisfaction levels were lowest amongst those in the youngest age category surveyed (15-24 year olds), of which 37% rated the space as very good and 10.3% as neither good nor poor.
- 3.17 More men (62.4%) than women (54.6%) rated open spaces as very good.

Quality of Life

- 3.18 The majority of respondents recognise the contribution of open space in their local area to their quality of life. 77.6% of respondents feel that local spaces contribute a lot/a little to their quality of life, while a further 11.9% considered it to contribute a little.

Non Use

- 3.19 The majority of respondents who very rarely or did not visit open space at all cited constraints such as distance and time, and inability to gain access. 15.4% cited lack of interest or not enough to do at the open space as a reason for non use.

Improvements

- 3.20 38% of respondents suggested ways in which existing open spaces and parks could be improved to encourage more frequent use. The leading suggestion was a cleaner environment (litter, graffiti, dog mess etc). 5% also suggested improved paths and cycle routes; other suggestions included improvements to benches, litter bins, more/different attractions and the provision of toilets.

Focus Groups

- 3.21 To supplement the telephone interviews, more informal discussions took place at two focus group meetings, held in Fakenham and North Walsham. The results of these Focus Groups are summarised in Appendix E of this report. Significant issues identified in these meetings included:

- The definition of open space is important. The definition of open spaces is broad, and can include large areas of natural open space in North Norfolk, including woodland and parks, children's play areas and large parks, beaches and allotments;
- Catchment areas for some facilities and open spaces extend over 15-20 miles - for example, into Kings Lynn and Hunstanton;
- On occasion, inappropriate open space was imposed on certain areas.

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3.22 There was a general perception that more open space and sporting facilities (such as swimming pools) were available in the eastern half of the District.

3.23 The focus groups identified a number of qualities to which open space planning should aspire. Open spaces should be:

- Inviting - to all sectors of the community;
- Imaginative - providing a variety of experiences;
- Challenging - not simply imposing regular types of spaces but including activities for people within spaces;
- Involving - not imposed upon communities, or simply consulted upon, but implemented and planned by the communities the spaces serve themselves;
- Reflective of the size of settlement and development to which they related.

3.24 Other issues and constraints highlighted included;

- Transport – It was recognised that due to the largely rural nature of North Norfolk, there is likely to be a continued reliance on the car, with the potential to exclude those on low incomes;
- Schemes to overcome these access difficulties have generally only been short term, or one-off initiatives. There are particular difficulties in enabling young people to access sports facilities;
- Recognising that villages could not sustain some types of facility due to costs of maintenance and staffing;
- Changes to the “coastal strip”, including gentrification, may lead to some facilities becoming less affordable for the local population;

- There is limited knowledge of facilities available and how they can be accessed;
- Provision and maintenance of sports clubs and facilities often rely on the voluntary sector and on the enthusiasm of a small number of people;
- Young people should be involved in the provision and design of open space and recreation facilities.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISATION OF NORTH NORFOLK

Demographic Profile

- 3.25 The age profile of a District directly influences open space usage, especially related to participation in sport.
- 3.26 Table 3.1 below illustrates the demographic profile of the District in comparison to regional and national averages.

Table 3.1 Demographic Profile

Age Cohort	North Norfolk %	East of England %	England and Wales %
0 – 4	4.38	5.97	5.95
5 – 7	3.0	3.79	3.74
8 – 9	2.12	2.59	2.62
10 -14	5.55	6.51	6.58
15	1.14	1.23	1.27
16 – 17	2.21	2.44	2.51
18 – 19	1.95	2.22	2.40
20 – 24	3.89	5.54	6.00
25 – 29	4.26	6.29	6.60
30 – 44	17.82	22.42	22.55
45 – 59	21.56	19.59	18.93
60 – 64	6.70	4.95	4.89
65 – 74	13.21	8.64	8.39
75 – 84	8.88	5.80	5.64
85 – 89	2.24	1.36	1.30
90 & Over	1.10	0.66	0.65

3.27 As clearly outlined by this table, the age structure of the North Norfolk is older than regional and national averages - 53 % of the population is over 45 years old, and 16% are under 16. This can be compared to 39% and 20% nationally.

3.28 Population projections, in line with national trends, suggest that the population of the District will continue to age. (see Appendix D, Chart 1). The impact of an ageing population in relation to sports and recreation provision and demand are explored in more detail in Volume II of this study.

3.29 RSBG found that those between the age of 25 and 44 were most likely to make use of a given open space, with 70% of respondents having done so during the course of the last year. Due to the fact that North Norfolk has a

higher proportion of people aged over 44 residing in the area than the national average, one would expect the various open spaces in the area to experience a somewhat lower level of demand.

Ethnicity

- 3.30 The ethnic profile of North Norfolk was considered. Ethnicity influences sport participation levels and people from Black and ethnic minority communities are less likely to participate in sport related activities than white people. Due to the fact that the area has a significantly higher proportion of White inhabitants (99.22%) than nationally (90.9%) however, with very small numbers involved, it is not considered that this study can make realistic recommendations on meaningful corrective action.

Socio-economic characteristics

- 3.31 Research into reasons given for sports participation and non-participation was undertaken by Mintel and published in the report 'Sports Participation' (May 2000). The Mintel report indicated that areas with a high proportion of individuals working in the service sector are likely to display higher levels of participation in sport. This is due to the fact that such individuals are likely to compensate for the relatively less physically demanding nature of their occupations by actively engaging in leisure based activities.
- 3.32 As highlighted in Table 3.2 below the North Norfolk socio-economic profile includes a higher proportion of persons employed in the routine and semi-routine occupations and a lower proportion of residents in the managerial, professional and intermediate occupations. Combined with the relatively small population of full time students, this suggests a tendency for a reduced level of participation in leisure activity.

Table 3.2 Socio-economic characteristics¹

Socio-economic classification	North Norfolk %	East of England %	England & Wales
Large employers and higher managerial occupations	2.08	3.81	3.43
Higher professional occupations	2.88	5.33	5.03
Lower managerial and professional occupations	15.71	19.86	18.59
Intermediate occupations	6.88	10.14	9.39
Small employers and own account workers	10.84	7.86	6.98
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	7.33	7.27	7.15
Semi-routine occupations	13.36	11.77	11.68
Routine occupations	9.74	8.57	9.07
Never worked	1.64	1.68	2.72
Long-term unemployed	0.70	0.71	1.02
Full-time students	3.72	5.78	7.04
Not classifiable for other reasons	25.11	17.24	17.90

Working Hours

3.33 Those in employment sometimes have difficulties in accessing sporting opportunities due to a lack of time rather than financial resources. The increasing demands that are being placed on individuals both from the workplace and from within the family have gradually eroded the amount of time that is available to participate in leisure activities. For many, further issues arise from the fact that an opportunity to participate in a leisure activity may not necessarily coincide with an individual's working hours, thereby preventing participation. Both of these factors play a crucial role in determining the leisure activities that an individual or family is likely to participate.

¹ Source: National statistics

3.34 Table 1 in Appendix D outlines working hours of employees in North Norfolk. An analysis of this table indicates that males living in North Norfolk are more likely to work longer than 38 hours when compared to the national average. This trend is largely not reflected by female working hours - although there is slightly greater proportion of females working more than 49 hours per week. These longer working hours may therefore tend to suppress the ability to participate in sport leisure and recreation in the District.

Lifestyles and Participation

3.35 The Mintel report findings suggest that although age and gender explain a significant proportion of the variation in sports participation amongst adults, the life stage of individuals is also significant. Participation is influenced by individuals' family status and occupational group - for example levels are highest amongst those who are employed and not married.

3.36 Whilst the demographic trend of an ageing population has served to increase the level of non-participation amongst the population as a whole therefore, the current trend towards later marriages and starting a family later may offset this through increasing the length of time that individuals participate most actively in sport.

Car ownership Levels

3.37 Car ownership levels influence the extent to which residents can access leisure facilities and open spaces which are beyond walking distance. Table 2 in Appendix D outlines car ownership for each ward in the District. As this table highlights, North Norfolk has a significantly smaller proportion of households that do not own a car, with only three wards, Cromer Town, Sheringham North and Suffield Park that have a higher rate of non-car ownership than the national average. In addition, there is also a slightly higher percentage of households owning more than one vehicle than the national average.

3.38 A number of assumptions can be made based on these trends. One implication of high car ownership levels is that those residing in North

Norfolk are less likely (or indeed less able) to undertake a journey by foot than those living in areas with lower car ownership levels.

- 3.39 Higher car ownership may mean a reduced number of residents taking exercise through undertaking journeys by foot. High car ownership levels can however have a positive effect on sports participation levels due to the fact that owning a private car can make leisure facilities more accessible to residents. Nevertheless, even in an area with high car ownership levels, a significant minority are still left without access to a private car. These residents may be at a significant disadvantage regarding their ability to engage in sport if facilities are not permitted locally or are not accessible by non-car modes.
- 3.40 Levels of car ownership have different influences with regards to sport, depending on where people live in the District. Whereas non-car owners residing in larger settlements may have relatively good access to leisure facilities, those living in rural locations are likely to find it more difficult to access such amenities. Conversely, non-car owners living in a larger settlement may experience difficulties regarding their ability to easily access parks in the countryside.
- 3.41 Table 3 in Appendix D identifies people's mode of travel to work. Although travel to work is undertaken by bicycle or on foot to a greater level than nationally or regionally, the rural nature of North Norfolk makes access to services, facilities and amenities more problematic and therefore increases dependence on the car.
- 3.42 A number of wards demonstrate a higher proportion of persons that travel to work by foot than the national average. Whilst predictably this includes wards within more urban wards, such as North Walsham and Sheringham, it also includes other rural wards such as Hoveton.

Tourism

- 3.43 The Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the coastal plain in North Norfolk provide one of the few remaining examples of relatively undeveloped and unspoilt coastal areas of this character. The

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North Norfolk Heritage Coast, a section of coast from Holme-Next-The-Sea to Weybourne was designated in 1975 and recognised the importance of the area as one of the finest stretches of undeveloped coast in England and Wales. There are around 45 miles of coastline, with long sandy beaches, cliffs, flint pebble banks and salt marshes stretching from Horsey to Holkham beach. The rich architectural heritage of 81 conservation areas, over 2,200 listed buildings and 100 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, set in the countryside provide a significant attraction to visitors and tourism generally.

- 3.44 It is important that the open space and recreation strategy takes these visitors into account. The influence of visitors and tourism to North Norfolk is illustrated by the high proportion of people employed in the hotel and catering industry - 7.3%

Housing Type

- 3.45 Housing type provides an indication of access to private open space in the form of gardens or yards with larger houses likely to have better access. Table 3.3 highlights those wards with the highest proportion of smaller properties in the District:

Open Space Needs Indicators and Baseline

- 3.46 Two other sets of indicators which might have a bearing on demand for open space within the district were looked at. These are:
- Child densities; and
 - Health.

These indicators were mapped, to see whether special attention should be paid to particular areas.

Table 3.3 Housing Type

Ward Name	Total dwellings	% Terrace	%Purpose built flats	%Part of converted	Total %
Cromer Town	2,158	23.54	23.08	15.25	61.87
Sheringham North	2,096	17.51	23.33	9.30	50.14
Suffield Park	1,983	21.68	11.65	6.35	39.68
North Walsham	1,808	24.83	10.12	0.00	34.95
Astley	941	29.22	0.00	0.32	29.54
Stalham and Sutton	1,903	17.39	8.41	1.26	27.06
Lancaster South	1,899	16.22	7.95	2.37	26.54
Lancaster North	1,496	23.46	2.54	0.47	26.47
Priory	2,438	19.20	4.51	1.52	25.23
North Walsham East	1,883	15.56	8.55	0.21	24.32
The Ravnams	1,095	21.10	0.55	2.01	23.66
Briston	926	21.06	1.30	0.86	23.22
Walsingham	1,145	21.14	0.96	0.79	22.89
Mundesley	2,138	14.78	5.47	2.62	22.87
Holt	1,792	16.80	4.52	1.28	22.60
Scottow	1,023	20.72	0.29	0.68	21.69
Sheringham South	1,683	13.84	4.81	2.67	21.32
The Runtons	1,070	13.74	5.70	1.87	21.31
North Walsham	1,687	12.51	6.22	0.24	18.97
Glaven Valley	1,337	16.16	0.75	1.50	18.41
Poppyland	1,094	12.61	0.82	2.47	15.90
Hoveton	1,040	9.62	5.49	0.38	15.49
Wensum	1,032	14.44	0.00	0.29	14.73
High Heath	1,172	11.95	0.51	0.94	13.40
Erpingham	1,009	11.99	0.30	0.99	13.28
Corpusty	961	11.22	0.28	0.75	12.25
Roughton	981	11.11	0.31	0.71	12.13
Waterside	2,021	8.66	1.93	0.94	11.53
Chaucer	1,120	10.54	0.27	0.63	11.44
St Benet	1,021	9.79	0.69	0.78	11.26
Worstead	964	9.13	0.62	0.31	10.06
Happisburgh	1,188	7.15	0.25	1.01	8.41
Gaunt	1,028	6.81	0.00	0.68	7.49
Waxham	1,123	6.32	0.45	0.00	6.77
North Norfolk District	48,354	15.4	4.2	1.8	21.40
England and Wales	20,451,42	26.04	13.62	4.43	44.09

Table 3.4 Child Densities

Ward	Total Ward	Children 0-15	Children 0-15 as a % of ward
Astley	2,103	375	18
Briston	2,021	391	19
Chaucer	2,347	447	19
Corpustv	2,241	415	19
Cromer Town	3,882	444	11
Erpingham	2,242	452	20
Gaunt	2,189	353	16
Glaven Valley	2,159	307	14
Happisburgh	2,290	368	16
High Heath	1,780	209	12
Holt	3,550	533	15
Hoveton	2,001	239	12
Lancaster North	3,384	580	17
Lancaster South	3,973	629	16
Mundesley	4,090	699	17
North Walsham	4,144	775	19
North Walsham	4,067	804	20
North Walsham	3,787	630	17
Poppyland	2,244	338	15
Priory	4,206	593	14
Roughton	2,090	369	18
Scottow	3,221	633	20
Sheringham North	3,612	454	13
Sheringham South	3,531	551	16
St Benet	2,050	289	14
Stalham and Sutton	4,177	734	18
Suffield Park	3,867	587	15
The Raynhams	2,237	377	17
The Runtons	2,068	272	13
Walsingham	2,232	367	16
Waterside	4,016	517	13
Waxham	2,011	320	16
Wensum	2,298	442	19
Worstead	2,272	433	19
North Norfolk	98,382	15,926	16
England	59,600,000	9,901,581	16.6

Child Densities

3.47 The percentage of the population under 16 years of age provides an indication of the need for children's play and young people's leisure provision within the District. Table 3.4 above illustrates child densities for each Ward in North Norfolk.

3.48 Although as a whole, North Norfolk has a child density which is near to that of the national average, there are a number of wards with child densities significantly higher than these averages. These include Briston, Chaucer, Corpusty, Erpingham, North Walsham East, North Walsham North, Scottow, Wensum and Worstead. These are highlighted in the table.

Health

3.49 The general health of those residing in the locality can be an important factor influencing sporting participation rates. The table below indicates the wards within the District of North Norfolk which exhibit the highest proportion of people of "not good health".

Table 3.5 Health Indicators

Ward	% Good Health	% Fairly Good Health	% Not Good Health
Astlev	66.57	24.30	9.13
Briston	65.41	25.53	9.05
Chaucer	64.25	27.27	8.48
Corpusty	66.22	25.66	8.12
Cromer Town	59.94	27.38	12.67
Erpingham	70.16	22.79	7.05
Gaunt	64.87	25.08	10.05
Glaven Valley	66.60	25.57	7.83
Happisburgh	62.36	28.17	9.48
High Heath	60.90	27.36	11.74
Holt	59.38	29.44	11.18
Hoveton	57.72	31.98	10.29
Lancaster North	67.61	25.09	7.30
Lancaster South	60.79	29.42	9.79
Mundesley	61.93	26.19	11.88
North Walsham East	63.37	27.56	9.07
North Walsham North	66.68	24.69	8.63

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Ward	% Good Health	% Fairly Good Health	% Not Good Health
North Walsham West	61.79	27.52	10.69
Poppyland	63.86	27.05	9.09
Priory	62.22	28.44	9.34
Roughton	67.37	24.31	8.33
Scottow	76.59	18.26	5.15
Sheringham North	59.08	29.65	11.27
Sheringham South	63.81	27.22	8.98
St Benet	65.51	25.80	8.68
Stalham and Sutton	63.97	26.07	9.96
Suffield Park	62.06	27.08	10.86
The Ravnhams	65.09	27.05	7.87
The Runtons	63.44	27.08	9.48
Walsingham	61.87	28.72	9.41
Waterside	62.18	27.09	10.73
Waxham	62.85	26.85	10.29
Wensum	67.80	24.89	7.31
Worstead	67.43	23.59	8.98
North Norfolk District	63.92	26.58	9.50
East of England	70.35	22.05	7.60
England	68.55	22.23	9.22

3.50 Analysis of this information demonstrates that the number of North Norfolk residents categorised as in “good health” is 4.6% less than the national average, and 6.5% fewer than the East of England average.

3.51 This picture is reinforced by the statistics for those wards falling in the category ‘not good health’. There are 18 wards within North Norfolk which have a greater percentage of residents than the national average in ‘not good health’. Those wards with percentages significantly above the national average include:

- Cromer Town (12.7%);
- Gaunt (10.5%);
- High Heath (11.74%);
- Holt (11.18%);
- Hoveton (10.29%);

- Mundesley (11.88%);
- North Walsham West (10.69%);
- Sheringham North (11.27%);
- Suffield Park (10.86%);
- Waterside (10.73%), and
- Waxham (10.29%).

3.52 These indications of poor health are likely to be a result of the age structure of the population within the District and suggest that the number of people able to participate in sporting and more active leisure activities is likely to be lower than the national average. On the other hand, an older population may want more open space in which to undertake passive recreation.

3.53 The distribution of both age and health indicators outlined above has been mapped, and can be seen on Figures 3.1 and 3.2. They show:

- Areas with child densities significantly above the North Norfolk average (> % of the population aged 0-15) Figure 3.1;
- Areas where the percentage of the population not in good health is greater than the national average (9.2%) Figure 3.2;

CONCLUSIONS

3.54 The physical characteristics of North Norfolk have clearly had a significant effect on the extent of public need for open space within the District. Unlike more urban districts, the area is open and rural with population in 7 towns and a large number of widely dispersed villages and hamlets. The low population density means that the area cannot support the same level of facilities as an urban area. But while accessibility may be problematic, the district does have a number of benefits, including easy access to open

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countryside, and a large number of public rights of way to and through it, and a magnificent coastline recognised internationally for its biodiversity interest.

- 3.55 The socio-economic character of the district also influences the population's open space needs and their levels of participation in sport and recreation. North Norfolk has a higher proportion of people aged over 44 residing in the area than the national average and one would expect the various open spaces in the area to experience a somewhat lower level of demand.
- 3.56 Other influences on participation include working hours and car ownership. Although North Norfolk has high car ownership levels, a significant minority do not have access to a private car. If facilities are not permitted locally or are not readily accessible by non-car modes these residents may be at a significant disadvantage regarding their ability to engage in sport and gain access to certain types of open space
- 3.57 Finally, two key indicators have been mapped to show open space needs within the District; child densities and health. It is recommended that those areas identified by this exercise within these categories are given particular emphasis in future policy for provision of open space.

4. SURVEY OF OPEN SPACE PROVISION

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 PPG17 and the Regional Spatial Strategy, advises local authorities to draw up their own standards for open space, sports and recreation provision for inclusion within their Local Plans. These standards should be based upon a locally based assessment of open space needs.

APPROACHES TO PLANNING OPEN SPACE PROVISION

- 4.2 PPG17 recommends that any assessment take into account:
- The overall level of supply, including the degree to which provision meets needs from beyond the local authority boundary;
 - The accessibility of locations;
 - The level of usage of facilities;
 - The particular functions which certain facilities may perform, for example as a meeting place for one age group or community;
 - The potential for a recreational use to contribute to wider social or regeneration objectives for North Norfolk;
 - The potential for new use, for example by achieving dual use of a facility or by bringing a private open space into public use;

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- The potential to focus improved recreational provision of a particular site, in preference to lower level use of less accessible locations.
- 4.3 The two main approaches traditionally used to assess open space needs are the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) six acre standard and use of an open space hierarchy.
- 4.4 The NPFA standard relates playing space provision to population and recommends that there should be a minimum of 6 acres (2.43 hectares) of outdoor playing/recreational space per 1000 people. The standard recommends that the 6 acre provision is broken down to take account of the different needs of different age groups. This standard can be easily applied but takes little account of the distribution of open space and people's access to it. The application of this standard to Outdoor Sports is discussed in more detail in Volume II. Children's play provision is assessed in Chapter 6.
- 4.5 Recreational roles can be either active/formal e.g. sports, or passive/informal e.g. dog walking. The activity may have dedicated provision e.g. sports pitches, or informal provision where there are no formal facilities but other evidence suggests an activity takes place. Non-recreational roles include the ecological, educational, social, cultural and amenity roles that an open space might play.
- 4.6 The Government's companion guide to PPG17 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' (2002) recommends that the hierarchy approach can provide the basis to develop local standards as it identifies characteristics, size and effective catchment of different types of open spaces.
- 4.7 However, it is recommended that local authorities develop their own open space typologies to reflect local characteristics and facilities and the recreational and non-recreational functions of open spaces. An understanding of the types of open space will provide a basis for analysing the results of the site audits and enable an assessment of whether the range and types of open space functions in the local area meet the needs of local people.

- 4.8 This study in fact uses a combination of hierarchy and a modified NPFA standard. The hierarchy serves to set out accessibility standards, while the NPFA approach deals with quantitative issues.

Current Local Plan policy

- 4.9 There is no existing formal open space hierarchy within the North Norfolk Local Plan. Chapter 12 of the Plan does however refer to typology of open spaces and the requirements of PPG17. Local Plan policies relate to the protection and enhancement of the following existing types of open space and recreation facilities:

- Outdoor Playing Space;
- Allotments;
- Formal Sports Facilities;
- Informal Recreation in the Countryside, including rights of way, open access sites and equestrian activities;
- Water Recreation.

- 4.10 The Local Plan indicates that the NPFA Six Acre Standard (a minimum of 2.4ha per 1,000 population) should be met from a combination of playing space for youth and adult use, children's playgrounds and children's casual playing space within housing areas. It does, however recognise that outside North Norfolk's towns and three large villages the area is more sparsely populated and therefore the Council considers it inappropriate to apply the NPFA's standard to the more rural areas.

- 4.11 The needs for recreation within these areas is not dismissed and a suitable target for playing space provision in selected small villages is given: a playing field of a size suitable for senior cricket and winter games (minimum size 142m x 114m) and a children's play area (minimum size 700m²).

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Introduction

4.12 The survey of public, private and educational open spaces was undertaken in Spring 2005. Its aim was to record the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces in North Norfolk. A detailed survey pro-forma was developed to capture the key features and characteristics relating to each site (copy at Appendix C).

Data Sources

4.13 Open space sites within the District were identified from the following information sources:

- A review of the Council's adopted Local Plan proposals map;
- The Council's ground maintenance database (best value report);
- A desk top assessment of Ordnance Survey mapping of North Norfolk District.

Open Space Typology

4.14 During the site assessments each open space was classified with reference to the typology of open space types included within the Annex to PPG17. The identification of the open space type was based upon consideration of the size, the primary role and function, recreational value, access arrangements and physical characteristics. The other roles performed by spaces are considered in Chapters 5-8. The categories of Open Space identified are as follows:

Parks

- Country parks;
- District Parks;

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- Neighbourhood parks;
- Small local parks.

Other open spaces

- Provision for children and teenagers (incorporated into public park hierarchy);
- Linear open spaces;
- Natural or Semi-Natural greenspace;
- Green Spaces within grounds of institutions;
- Amenity Green Space;
- Allotments;
- Cemeteries and churchyards;
- Civic Spaces/Pedestrianised areas;
- Outdoor Sports Facilities / Playing Fields.

4.15 A public park hierarchy has been defined in order to set out appropriate levels of parks provision for different settlement types within the District. The hierarchy is based upon the following factors:

- Analysis of the existing range and type of open space provision available within individual settlements;
- Analysis of the typical sizes of different park types within the district; and

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- Identification of effective catchment areas for each park type based upon the findings of the residents survey which identified park usage and travel patterns to different open space types.
- 4.16 The hierarchy is defined in Table 4.1. The term 'Public Parks' used within this assessment refers to the four types of open space identified in Table 4.1.
- 4.17 Parks were classified according to the most appropriate park category based upon their role, size and range of facilities. The size criteria represent a guide to the typical size of parks within each category. In a small number of cases there are a number of open spaces on the margins between different categories. Where a park does not fulfil the size thresholds defined in a particular park type but performs the range of functions identified as being associated with that park type, the park has been classified on the basis of its range of functions.
- 4.18 Alternative catchment distances have been applied to the towns and villages within the district reflecting the number and distribution of parks and usage patterns.

Park Catchment Areas

- 4.19 The Local Plan does not set out recommended catchment areas. The catchment areas identified below are based on best practice and informed by the Residents' Survey.
- 4.20 The distances identified below relate to the typical effective catchment area of each park type. The effective catchment area represents the area within which around 80% of park users are likely to be drawn. The review of distance parameters also considered specific factors which may influence walking time/distances on a District wide basis such as topography, street morphology, and urban grain and the distribution of open space provision and its relationship with patterns of residential development. The catchment area and population for each individual park will be different even within the same level of the hierarchy.

Table 4.1 Public Parks Hierarchy

Type of Open Space and its Function	Typical Size and Effective Catchment Area	Characteristics
Country Parks Mainly car based visits for those living > 15 minutes walk	>60 hectares 5-10km (users originating from North Norfolk district)	Serve as regional attractions. Either: i) natural heathland, downland, commons, woodland, or ii) formal park providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields, but at least 40 ha for other pursuits. Adequate parking. Country Parks will also serve as District Parks for those living within 1200m and as Neighbourhood Park for those living within 400m (Main settlements) or 800m (Other areas).
District Parks Mainly car based visits for those living > 15 minutes walk	15-50ha 1.2km	Landscape setting with a variety of natural features and a range of facilities including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups and informal recreation pursuits. Some car parking. These will operate as a neighbourhood park for those within 400m (Main settlements) or 800m (Other areas).
Neighbourhood Parks Pedestrian Visits by those living within 10 minutes walk	3-15ha 0.8km (7 Main Settlements) 1.2km (Areas outside principal Settlements)	Provision for court games, important children's play function, sitting-out areas, nature conservation, landscaped environment, and playing fields if the parks are large enough. Indicative catchment area (refined to take into account barriers of access) 560m (Main settlements), 840m (Other areas).
Small Local Parks including Children's play/pocket parks Pedestrian visits, especially by old people and children, particularly valuable in high density areas	0.5-3ha 0.4km (7 Main Settlements) 0.8km (Areas outside principal settlements)	Gardens, sitting out areas, children's playgrounds or other areas of a specialist nature such as nature conservation. Indicative catchment area (refined to take into account barriers of access) 280m (Main Settlements), 560m (Other areas).
Linear Open Spaces Pedestrian visits	Variable Where feasible	River and canal banks, canal towpaths, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, paths, disused railways and other routes which provide opportunities for informal recreation, including nature conservation. Often characterised by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space.

4.21 The catchment definition assumes that 400 metres is the equivalent of a five minute walk, 800 metres is a ten minute walk, etc. When plotting these on a map, 800 metres is represented by a radius of 560 metres, to

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allow for topography, urban grain etc. It is recommended that both radii are plotted to allow sensitive analysis.

4.22 The overall number and frequency of visits is influenced by factors including:

- The range of facilities and environments within the park and their quality and condition affect the attractiveness of the space to potential users. Parks with a wider range of facilities will have larger catchments than shown in Table 4.1. The number and frequency of visits is also likely to be higher;
- The demographic and socio-economic structure of the population in the catchment and the extent to which park facilities meet their needs;
- The pattern of land use within the park catchment particularly patterns of residential development and population density;
- Choice of other open space nearby.

Country Parks

4.23 According to the residents' survey, the majority of users of Country Parks travel to these parks by car (74%) with over 62% of journeys taking over 15 minutes.

4.24 The distance people are prepared to travel to country parks is significantly greater than how far they will go to use smaller facilities. If one applies the distances revealed by the residents' survey, of about a 20 minute journey, at a conservative assessment the effective catchment is between 5 and 10km. Access issues related to public parks within the District are considered further in Chapter 5.

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District Parks

- 4.25 The residents' survey showed that 60% of users travelled to larger parks by car (including passengers) and 35% by foot. 61% of journeys take up to 15 minutes. A 1.2km pedestrian catchment for District Parks is therefore considered to be appropriate. This represents a 15 minute walking distance but also recognises that the larger parks may also attract visitors travelling by private car or public transport.

Small local parks and neighbourhood parks

- 4.26 The findings of the residents' survey show that the 42% of users of local parks and neighbourhood parks travel by foot and some 30% by car.
- 4.27 74% of users travel from a 15 minute catchment area and 42% from within a 10 minute catchment.
- 4.28 Analysis of the existing distribution of small local parks and neighbourhood parks shows that there are a number of areas of population living within the 7 main settlements that are not well served by public park provision and currently live outside of the 10 minute walking distance of a park of this type.
- 4.29 The 10 minute pedestrian catchment is still considered to be applicable for neighbourhood parks and small local parks in the 7 main settlements in the district.
- 4.30 Within other parts of the district the number of smaller spaces located within settlements is lower, reflecting population levels. In many cases it is not possible for the population of villages to be located within 5 minutes walk due to the linear urban form of many settlements and the relatively low density of development. Outside of the growth towns and small towns it is appropriate to adopt a 15 minute pedestrian catchment as the minimum accessibility target for access to small local parks and neighbourhood parks.

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Other Types of Open Space

4.31 There are a number of other forms of open space provision within the District in addition to public parks. Their characterisation follows the nine different types of open space defined in Table 4.2 (taken from the Annex to PPG17).

Table 4.2 Other Open Space Provision

Type of Open Space	Definition
Provision for children and teenagers (incorporated into public park hierarchy)	Play areas (including LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs), skateboard parks, outdoor basketball goals and 'hanging out' areas (including teenage shelters). Many of these spaces have been incorporated in the small Local Parks typology due to the similarity of such spaces.
Natural or Semi Natural greenspace	Woodland (coniferous, deciduous, mixed) and scrub, grassland (e.g. downland, meadow), heath or moor, wetlands (e.g. marsh, fen), open and running water, wastelands (including disturbed ground), bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs, quarries, pits) and beaches.
Green Spaces within grounds of institution	Open space located within the grounds of hospitals, universities and other institutions which are accessible to the general public or some sections of the public. This definition also includes education sites where there is only hard surface and or amenity open space (no pitch sports provision).
Amenity Green Space	Includes informal recreational spaces and housing green spaces. A large number are formed by village greens. This category includes green spaces in and around housing areas.
Allotments	Open spaces where the primary use is allotment gardening or community farming.
Cemeteries and churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards which include an element of green space
Civic Spaces/Pedestrianised areas	More formally laid out hard surfaced public spaces including squares, pedestrian streets, sitting out areas and space surrounding the docks. These spaces do not normally have a formal recreational function
Outdoor Sports Facilities / Playing Fields	Those sites, which are not located within a public park and where the primary role is for formal recreation. Sites include tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school playing fields, other institutional playing fields and outdoor sports areas. Categorised by ownership i.e. public/private/education.
Other	Agricultural Land and former airfields which perform a structural or amenity role.

Linear Open Spaces

4.32 This category includes river and canal banks, canal towpaths, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, paths, disused railways and other routes which provide opportunities for informal recreation, including nature conservation. They are often characterised by features or attractive areas which are not fully accessible to the public but contribute to the enjoyment of the space. They play a vital role in linking open space. They should not be taken for granted, though it is not appropriate to try to define a standard for them.

Standards

4.33 Locally based standards of provision for the following categories of open space, where it is important that local needs are provided for on a consistent basis are recommended. Issues considered include quantity, accessibility/distribution, quality, value.

- Parks;
- Provision for children and teenagers;
- Outdoor sports fields and playing field needs;
- Natural or semi-natural green space;
- Allotment provision.

4.34 It is not appropriate to set District-wide standards of provision for cemeteries. Amenity green spaces were found to include a range of uses, varying from village greens featuring mostly passive recreation, to open grassland featuring occasional sports activities. Only two civic spaces were identified in the District. As their name implies, they have less of a recreational role and are more formal urban spaces. They are not considered further in this study.

- 4.35 The exact level and type of provision should be responsive to the nature of the development and the existing level and type of open space provision. Within certain areas of the District amenity green space and other forms of open space form an integral part of the fabric of the settlements in North Norfolk and contribute towards local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.36 For this reason it is not appropriate to define a consistent quantity or access standards relating to such provision. Within areas with shortfalls in other forms of open space provision such other open spaces can be of particular value and represent possible opportunities for meeting local deficiencies.

CONCLUSIONS

- 4.37 It is considered that the use of a parks hierarchy concept is the most appropriate means of planning open spaces in North Norfolk. This study has used this approach to address the issues identified in PPG17. The hierarchy of open space has been amended and the typology of open space expanded to reflect the findings of the Residents Survey and the roles of different open space types and accessibility issues. In the next chapter the significance of the application of the hierarchy to existing spaces within the District is demonstrated.

5. ASSESSMENT OF SUPPLY

INTRODUCTION

5.1 People value parks and green spaces. Over 30 million people in England use them, making over 2 billion visits in total each year (“Green Spaces, Better Places” - final report of The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce). With about 80 percent of the population of England living in medium to large towns, the countryside and its open spaces are seen as resources with the potential to enhance quality of life.

5.2 This chapter examines the distribution of public parks and provision for children and teenagers within the District through the application of the hierarchy defined in the previous chapter. It contains the following:

- A summary of the open space audit, and the role of parks in the hierarchy;
- An analysis of the quantity and accessibility of current provision;
- A consideration of the range of functions of open space; and
- An identification of deficiencies in accessibility to parks.

EXISTING OPEN SPACE PROVISION

5.3 Utilising the methodology described in Chapter 4, a total of 249 open spaces were identified in North Norfolk, comprising a total of 2744ha. North Norfolk is a large rural District (966,883ha in area) dominated by agricultural land. It is therefore unsurprising that open space amounts to only 0.30% of the total area of the district.

- 5.4 A summary of open space provision within the District by type and ward can be found in Appendix A. Where a space lies within 2 or more wards, it has been included in the ward which includes its greatest proportion.

DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE

- 5.5 Distribution and access to public parks within the District has been considered looking at their distribution by ward/population, and distribution by distance from residential areas.
- 5.6 These findings have then been used to identify and consider the significance of shortfalls in public park provision in terms of access and quantity.

General considerations

Improving Public Park Accessibility

- 5.7 Consideration should be given to practical measures which could be employed to extend the present catchments. Such measures could include creating more park gates or establishing clearly sign-posted routes to parks to avoid busy roads. Related to this, the Quiet Lanes project could be extended to provide safe access to a network of parks.
- 5.8 The quality of facilities and condition of open spaces should also be taken into account when prioritising investment and information collected on non-public spaces within areas of deficiency should be interrogated to assess whether they could play a role in meeting deficiencies.
- 5.9 In areas short of public parks and where there are limited opportunities to increase supply either by the creation of new spaces, improving other types of public open spaces, or by increasing public access to private spaces, the only way of addressing deficiency will be to ensure that the potential of existing spaces is fully realised where appropriate. Also, access should be improved where possible. This is discussed in the next chapter.

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- 5.10 At the District and Country Park level efforts should be made to improve the accessibility of these parks by public transport through, for example, improving pedestrian links between parks, creating more bus stops, improving service information and providing enhanced waiting facilities such as seating or shelters. To date, a number of local community initiatives such as community bus services, dial-a-ride mini bus services and car links have been set up to help improve transport provision within the District.
- 5.11 The PPG17 companion guide recognises the importance of the predisposition of individuals to use parks and the relative attraction of different parks. For example, a highly motivated and mobile user may be prepared to travel further to reach a park, while another person living immediately adjacent to the same park may never visit it at all. Similarly the varying quality and attractiveness of parks is an important factor in people's use of open spaces. The importance of qualitative considerations is discussed below.

Existing Provision

- 5.12 By far the greatest quantity of open space is public parks, including country, district, neighbourhood and local parks. Overall public park provision comprises a total of 71% of all open space in the District. Table 5.1 shows a breakdown by type of open space.

Table 5.1 Open Space Provision by Type

Type	No.	Area	% Open Space Area
Country Park	7	1872.9	68.7
District Park	2	32.7	1.20
Neighbourhood Park	3	4.4	0.16
Small local park/open space	39	26.9	0.99
Amenity Green Space	55	43.35	1.52
Linear open space/green corridor	4	5.2	0.19
Allotments	24	33.1	1.21

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Type	No.	Area	% Open Space Area
Cemeteries and Churchyards	22	18.9	0.69
Civic Spaces/Pedestrianised spaces	1	0.1	0.01
Green spaces within grounds of institution	3	164.5	6.03
Natural/semi natural green space	18	186.4	6.84
Outdoor sports facilities (education)	13	115.9	4.25
Outdoor Sports facilities (private)	26	153.7	5.64
Outdoor Sports Facilities (public)	33	69.3	2.54
Total	251	2725.5	100.00

Open Space by Ward

5.13 Overall within the District there is 1937ha of public park open space, or 19.7ha per 1000 population. There are major variations between wards, ranging from 282ha/1000 in Priory Ward to no provision in Lancaster North, Happisburgh, Poppyland, Sheringham South and Worstead.

Table 5.2 Distribution of Public Park Open Space by Ward

Ward	Total Area of Public Parks (ha)	Total Open Space (ha)	Population	Public Parks per 1,000 popn.(ha)	Total Open Space per 1,000 popn. (ha)
Priory	1188.76	1214.88	4,206	282.6	288.8
Chaucer	221.39	268.46	2,347	94.3	114.4
Erpingham	177.80	183	2,242	79.3	81.6
Roughton	156.01	159.16	2,090	74.6	76.2
Mundesley	113.42	136.03	4,090	27.7	33.3
Holt	43.31	75.24	3,550	12.3	21.2
Hoveton	3.72	11	2,001	1.9	5.7
North Walsham East	5.27	17.95	4,144	1.3	4.3
Cromer Town	4.47	15.84	3,882	1.2	4.1
Wensum	2.79	3.26	2,298	1.2	1.4

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Ward	Total Area of Public Parks (ha)	Total Open Space (ha)	Population	Public Parks per 1,000 popn.(ha)	Total Open Space per 1,000 popn. (ha)
Astley	2.27	8.4	2,103	1.1	4.0
Briston	1.67	11.46	2,021	0.8	5.7
Gaunt	1.41	141.89	2,189	0.6	64.8
Lancaster South	2.31	10.03	3,973	0.6	2.5
Stalham and Sutton	2.38	10.6	4,177	0.6	2.5
Corpusty	1.10	80.02	2,241	0.5	35.7
High Heath	0.76	32.47	1,780	0.4	18.2
North Walsham North	1.65	2.97	4,067	0.4	0.7
North Walsham West	1.38	16.12	3,787	0.4	4.3
Walsingham	0.83	31.2	2,232	0.4	14.0
Waxham	0.79	7.33	2,011	0.4	3.6
Glaven Valley	0.63	12.47	2,159	0.3	5.8
Sheringham N	0.70	12.29	2,050	0.3	6.0
Suffield Park	1.26	22.54	3,867	0.3	5.8
The Runtons	0.66	48.33	2,068	0.3	23.4
Scottow	0.20	8.6	3,221	0.1	2.7
The Raynhams	0.33	44.54	2,237	0.1	19.9
Happisburgh	0.00	3.73	2,290	0.0	1.6
Lancaster North	0.00	30	3,384	0.0	8.7
Poppyland	0.00	54.03	2,244	0.0	24.1
Sheringham South	0.00	32.93	3,612	0.0	9.1
St Benet	0.00	26.5	3,531	0.0	7.5
Waterside	0.16	5.87	4,016	0.0	1.5
Worstead	0.00	5.95	2,272	0.0	2.6
North Norfolk	1937.71	2744.94	98,382	19.7	27.9

Catchment populations

- 5.14 The estimated number of people within the catchment areas of different types of park was calculated by counting the number of address points within the catchment radii applicable to the type of park, and factoring it up by the average household size of 2.2. The population outside the park's catchment, but inside the park's ward was also calculated. This made it possible to get an indication of numbers of people not well served by public park provision. The method has its shortcomings, since not all address points are residential. They include businesses as well as houses, which exaggerates total numbers in town centres. However, it is a graphic representation which allows one to make a good estimate of the situation on the ground.
- 5.15 This exercise was undertaken for small local parks/neighbourhood parks, and for District and Country Parks. For local/neighbourhood parks, the catchment was based on walking distances, whilst for District and Country Parks it was based on driving distances, reflecting the modes of travel revealed in the residents' survey.

Application of Park Catchment Areas

- 5.16 Figures 5.1 and 5.2 demonstrate the distribution of the different types of public park throughout the District and identify their assumed catchment areas by foot and car in accordance with the criteria in the Parks Hierarchy (Table 4.1). This provides a basis for identifying the parts of the District which are not adequately served, in relation to access, by public parks. Figures 5.1A to 5.1G illustrate the distribution of and catchment areas for small local parks and neighbourhood parks in relation to each of the 7 larger settlements.
- 5.17 It should be recognised that the process of identifying people outside the notional catchments must not be removed from other criteria such as quality and function, which also inform the catchment of a park. These issues are discussed further in Chapters 9 and 10.

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Country and District Parks

5.18 The open space assessment identified two District Parks and seven Country Parks. Their details are summarised in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 below.

Table 5.3 District Parks

Site Address	Unique ID	ha	Ward
Pretty Corner, Sheringham	55	27.58	Chaucer
War Memorial Park, Yarmouth Road, North Walsham	117	5.16	North Walsham East

Table 5.4 Country Parks

Site Address	Unique ID	ha	Ward
Sheringham Park, Upper Sheringham	64	193.81	Chaucer
Wolterton Park, Wolterton	243	177.80	Erpingham
Holt Country Park	44	42.43	Holt
How Hill Nature Reserve, Ludham	257	3.72	Hoveton
Bacton Woods, Field Lane, North Walsham	125	112.78	Mundesley
Holkham Hall, Wells-next-the-Sea	155	1187.52	Priory
Great Wood/Felbrigg Hall, Cromer	66	154.93	Roughton
District Parks			
Pretty Corner, Sheringham	55	27.58	Chaucer
War Memorial Park, Yarmouth Road, North Walsham	117	5.16	North Walsham East

5.19 Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of Country and District Parks, and illustrates that with the exception of parts of the District south of Fakenham, and in the eastern corner east of Stalham, most of the

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population has good access to the higher level facilities represented by Country and District parks. In the eastern portion it should be remembered that this area is part of the Broads (which are in themselves a major resource), which have not been included in the formal assessment.

5.20 Table 5.5 below shows the estimated populations outside the 1, 5 and 10km catchment areas for District and Country parks.

Table 5.5 Estimated Population outside 1, 5 and 10km radius of Country and District Parks

WARD	Population	Outside 1km	Outside 5km	Outside 10km
Astley	2218	2218	2204	568
Briston	2297	2297	1496	0
Chaucer	2565	1934	0	0
Corpusty	2493	2222	40	0
Cromer Town	4963	4888	0	0
Erpingham	2301	2204	365	0
Gaunt	3080	3080	2200	0
Glaven Valley	2319	2319	486	0
Happisburgh	2739	2684	1168	0
High Heath	2882	2754	810	0
Holt	4781	1093	0	0
Hoveton	2541	574	4	4
Lancaster North	3489	3489	3489	0
Lancaster South	4886	4886	4886	2660
Mundesley	5020	4897	2534	0
North Walsham East	4380	158	0	0
North Walsham North	4077	1038	0	0
North Walsham West	4308	1201	0	0
Poppyland	2567	2567	543	0
Priory	5929	5438	1905	75
Roughton	2209	2020	1111	0
Scottow	2244	2244	1709	0
Sheringham North	5089	5084	0	0
Sheringham South	3832	1916	0	0
St Benet	2477	2477	495	0
Stalham and Sutton	4536	4536	4536	35
Suffield Park	4191	4176	0	0

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WARD	Population	Outside 1km	Outside 5km	Outside 10km
The Raynhams	2603	2603	2603	1426
The Runtons	2416	1958	0	0
Walsingham	2739	2724	1379	0
Waterside	4574	4574	4574	2169
Waxham	2471	2471	2066	818
Wensum	2400	2400	2400	1551
Worstead	2160	2160	257	0
Totals	113776	93284	43260	9306

Neighbourhood Parks

5.21 The open space assessment identified only 3 open spaces which fulfilled most of the criteria for a Neighbourhood Park. They are shown in Figure 5.1. They reflect a lack of variety and functions displayed by many of the parks in this survey. Although small local parks in some cases can meet demand for neighbourhood parks where none are accessible, they rarely provide an adequate range of facilities.

Table 5.6 Neighbourhood Parks

Site Address	Unique ID	ha	Ward
Playing Fields/Millennium Park, Queens Road, Fakenham	208	1.72	Lancaster South
Stalham Recreation Ground, Hill Crest Stalham	174	2.38	Stalham and Sutton
Halifax Crescent, Wicken Green	17	0.33	The Raynhams

Small Local Parks and children's play areas

5.22 Within the District there are 38 open spaces which fulfilled the criteria for small local parks. These are listed in Table 5.7 below with Figure 5.1 and Figures 5.1A–G identifying their distribution.

5.23 In the seven main settlements the figures give a graphic illustration of where parks could be located so as to provide a more optimal distribution. It can also be seen that large rural areas have very limited access to such parks.

Table 5.7 Small Local Parks

Site Address	Unique ID	ha	Ward
Playing Field The Street Hindolveston	213	2.27	Astley
Melton Constable Recreation Ground	196	1.67	Briston
The Green, Edgefield	50	0.29	Corpusty
The Green, Corpusty	51	0.81	Corpusty
The Meadow, Runton Road, Cromer	78	2.31	Cromer Town
North Lodge Park	81	2.10	Cromer Town
Thornage Common	228	1.41	Gaunt
Knapton Millennium Green	250	0.63	Glaven Valley
Harry Dawson Playing Field, Weybourne	53	0.28	High Heath
Cley next the Sea Play Area	219	0.20	High Heath
Cley Green	222	0.28	High Heath
Edinburgh Road, Holt	203	0.88	Holt
Neil Avenue, Holt	248	0.28	Holt
Lancaster Avenue, Fakenham	7	0.46	Lancaster South
Jubilee Avenue Fakenham	8	0.13	Lancaster South
Fraser Crescent, Mundesley	98	0.44	Mundesley
Mundesley Memorial Gardens	103	0.20	Mundesley
Hadfield Road, North Walsham	122	1.65	North Walsham North
Trackside Park, North Walsham	115	1.38	North Walsham West
Wells Community Playground	21	0.69	Priory
The Butlands Park, Wells-next-the- Sea	24	0.44	Priory
Binham Amenity Space	31	0.03	Priory
Warham Playing Field, Warham	234	0.08	Priory
Thorpe Green, Walsham Road, Thorpe Market	95	0.40	Roughton
Thorpe Markey Playing Field	229	0.68	Roughton
Sheringham Putting Green	61	0.31	St Benet
Sheringham Playground	62	0.39	St Benet
Fearns Park, Park Road, Cromer	89	1.26	Suffield Park
Sculthorpe Pond, Creak Road, Sculthorpe	15	0.12	Walsingham
Mount Pleasant, Great Walsingham	19	0.15	Walsingham
Great Snoring Playing Field, Barsham Road, Great Snoring	195	0.56	Walsingham
Doorstep Green, Clink Road, Sea Palling	223	0.79	Waxham
The Green, Swanton Road, Gunthorpe	35	0.07	Wensum
Playing Field, Fakenham Road, Great Ryburgh	194	2.72	Wensum
Nelson Heights Cromer	247	0.06	Cromer Town
Chestnut Avenue, North Walsham	249	0.11	North Walsham East
Barton Road, Coltishall Airbase	111	0.20	Scottow
Catfield Road, Ludham	212	0.16	Waterside

SHORTFALLS

Country and District Parks

- 5.24 Figure 5.2 illustrates the relatively good provision of strategic open space – country and district parks, which are distributed reasonably equitably over the area. Given the nature of the District, the logical form of action would be to improve accessibility to this category of open space, as recommended in para 5.7.

Neighbourhood Parks

- 5.25 This category of open space is not well represented in the District, and it is suggested that it be merged with small local parks.

Small local parks

- 5.26 In Figure 5.1 it can be seen that while there are large areas of the District which do not have easy access on foot to small local and neighbourhood parks, the areas with shortfalls are mostly rural, and sparsely populated.
- 5.27 Shortages should be considered in the context of the character, density and other needs in the District. Shortages in wards with a high proportion of small dwellings such as terraced houses, flats or apartments are likely to be more significant than areas where residents have more access to private gardens. In five of the seven main towns in the District there are very easily identified areas of higher density housing where an investment in a few well chosen locations could meet the needs of a large number of people.
- 5.28 Conversely, areas within rural wards may also have significant concentrations of private open space and good access to the countryside which, although not all accessible to the general public, may be an acceptable substitute for public open space.
- 5.29 There are 30 villages which have no public parks. Although it should be recognised that other forms of provision such as outdoor playing pitches and fields may provide a form of informal public recreation throughout the

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year as well as serving the more formal recreational role, it is considered that the Council should give early consideration as to whether these should be prioritised for future public park provision.

5.30 The Companion Guide to PPG17 says (para 2.2):

“Residents in rural areas cannot realistically expect to have the same level of access to the full range of different types of open spaces and sport and recreation facilities normally available in more densely populated urban areas. This means that residents of rural areas usually have to travel further than most urban residents to some forms of provision.”

5.31 Almost all settlements in the District suffer from a shortage of park facilities. However, most of the area is rural, with low population densities, and ample opportunities for access to the countryside through a network of public rights of way, quiet country lanes, etc. The inset maps demonstrate that the shortfalls, in terms of people, are concentrated round the main seven settlements.

5.32 The provision of additional open space provision to alleviate deficiencies should be prioritised where the threshold population of the area with the deficiency is large enough to justify additional provision. Generally this means that priority for future provision should therefore be given to the larger settlements. Figures 5.1A-G suggest interventions should be prioritised in Fakenham, Holt, Sheringham, Cromer, North Walsham, and reviewed in Wells-next-the-Sea and Stalham. Table 5.8 illustrates the possible level of intervention.

Table 5.8 Park Requirements (Main Settlements)

Settlement	Park Requirements (Number)	Park Requirements (ha)
Fakenham	2	6
Sheringham	2	6
Cromer	1	3
North Walsham	2	6
Holt	1	3
Wells-next-the-Sea	0	0
Stalham	1	3
Total	9	27

5.33 It need not be necessary to acquire new land for new parks. It may also be possible to reduce the effects of poor distribution by upgrading the roles and range of functions provided at other publicly accessible open spaces. It may also be possible to negotiate better community use of non-public open spaces. In many villages, there are open spaces whose primary function is playing fields. Enabling diversification of use within these spaces would help meet the current deficiency of provision.

RANGE OF FACILITIES IN PUBLIC PARKS

5.34 The variety of user demands or aspirations is recognised as a fundamental principle of the Parks Hierarchy (Table 4.1). However, in practice, even if an area is not deficient in open space it may be that the open space leaves certain recreational needs unmet. Table 5.9 shows the distribution of facilities by type of public parks.

Table 5.9 Distribution of Park Facilities

Park Type/Features	Country Park	District Park	Neighbourhood Park	Small local park/open space	Total
Pitch Sports Dedicated	0	0	2	5	7
Court Sport Dedicated	0	1	0	0	1
Golf Course/Putting	0	0	0	2	2
Equestrian Uses	1	0	0	0	0
Noisy Sports	0	0	0	0	0
Skate Park	0	0	1	0	1
Kickabout area	0	0	0	1	0
Childrens Play Dedicated	1	1	2	13	17

5.35 Table 5.9 shows that some public parks do not provide the full range of typical facilities that could be expected of such spaces. However, it should be noted that the description of park facilities is general and not intended to be prescriptive. Furthermore, the provision of a wide range of facilities within a predominantly natural park or historic park could harm its character. It is considered that the analysis of facilities should be undertaken on a park-by-park basis taking into account both the character of the parks and proximity of other parks which may have an oversupply of facilities. Chapters 9 and 10 look at the quality of provision and different roles the open spaces play in more detail.

Recommendations: Public Park Provision

Quantitative Component Recommendations

5.36 At present the average public park provision within the District is 19.7ha per 1,000 population. This does not include the large areas of the District where people can roam, such as the National Nature Reserves at Blakeney and Holkham, and the opportunities in the Broads National Park, and in the North Norfolk AONB, which are outside the scope of this study, but which could easily add 5,000ha to the amount of accessible open space.

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- 5.37 Considering the quantity and distribution of existing public open space provision, it is not recommended that the average quantity of public park provision should be increased artificially.
- 5.38 Proposals for new housing development, however, should be accompanied by proposals to improve open space provision. The nature of such improvements should reflect the additional open space needs generated as a result of the proposed development, as well as local circumstances.
- 5.39 If a proposed development is located in an area deficient in public park provision, therefore, it will be necessary for additional land to be brought into public park use. This will require the developer to make a contribution towards the provision of a public park, either by incorporating it within the development or contributing to off-site provision.
- 5.40 If the proposed development is not located within an area which is deficient in either quantity or access to public park provision, then consideration will be given to quality and value issues. If appropriate, therefore, the developer will be required to make a contribution towards the enhancement of the quality of public park provision, including related to the range of facilities and their condition.
- 5.41 The working paper on developer contributions provides the rationale for calculating the contributions associated with individual housing proposals.

Accessibility Component Recommendations

5.42 As outlined in Chapter 4, the following access targets are recommended for adoption:

- All residents of main towns should have access to a Neighbourhood or District Park within 800 metres of their home;
- Within the 7 main settlements, all residents should have access to a public park (as defined in Table 4.1) within 400m of their home; or

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- Outside the main settlements, all residents should have access to a public park within 800m of home.

5.43 No standard is proposed for Country Parks. This type of facility is well catered for in the District. Furthermore, it would not be appropriate to set a standard because this type of strategic open space will almost invariably be unique, and created in accordance with the circumstances of the place and events which led to its creation.

5.44 Consultation with local user groups and other stakeholders helps to define the types of facilities, amenities and activities that might be required in a certain area. The Residents' Survey, discussed in Chapter 6, identifies the types of improvements people would like to see to existing open spaces.

6. CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 Open space provides an important role in serving children's play needs. It is widely acknowledged that the importance of children's play extends far beyond the activity itself and contributes directly towards child development through developing a wide range of physical, social and emotional skills and abilities. The key issues relating to children's play are the nature and location of play, the influence of age and gender, safety and risk issues and the condition of play environments.

Location of play

- 6.2 The outdoor environment is a key element for children, particularly during summer months. Play takes place in a range of environments, many of which are not planned play environments. Studies of children's play have emphasised the appeal and use of unofficial play areas, which can include the street, back gardens and natural/wild areas such as woods, areas of wasteland, disused buildings, garages and back alleys. All of these spaces afford opportunities for a range of different experiences which are likely to appeal to particular groups of children.

Age and gender

- 6.3 Age and gender strongly influence the nature and type of play. Coffin and Williams (1989)² suggest a five fold evolution of play over the course of childhood:

² Coffin, G. and Williams, M. (1989) Children's Outdoor Play in the Built Environment, London: National Children's Play and Recreation Unit.

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- Toddlers aged 1-3 tend to play alongside rather than with other children. Activity focuses upon experimentation with new found abilities and role play;
 - Pre-school children show higher levels of inquisitiveness, practice new physical skills, enjoy constructional play and begin to acquire skills in social play;
 - Primary school children (aged 5-10) commonly develop interests in the environment (animals and plants in particular) and explore environments more widely. They continue enjoy constructional play and play involving movement, ball play and wheeled objects. This age group is highly sociable;
 - Older children (aged 10-13) are more competitive, show wider incidence of sexes playing apart and roam further from home. Playing games and organised activities is important for this group and more time may be spent in conversational and social activity. Constructional and movement play continues to be important; and
 - Adolescents (aged 14-16) display more focused patterns of activity, including interests in hobbies, music and dance; greater independence which may be reflected in informal street based groups, and some return to mixed group activity. It is debatable whether this group actually recognise their actions as 'play'.
- 6.4 Parkinson (1987)³ notes the influence of gender both on locations of play and the distance from home. Females are more likely to go on organised outings and play in the garden at home. In comparison boys are more likely to play in the street or at a friend's house. Both sexes utilised planned playgrounds although boys tended to patronise facilities located further from home. As children get older there is a greater desire for more adventurous, risk taking activities outside of controlled environments which may include negotiation and testing boundaries. Parkinson notes

³ Parkinson, C.E. (1987) *Where Children Play: An Analysis of Interviews About Where Children Aged 5-14 Normally Play and their Preference for Out of School Activities*, Birmingham. Association for Children's Play and Recreation.

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that these activities are part of growing up and are necessary in order to provide a degree of challenge and excitement for older children.

- 6.5 Safety and risk – parental perceptions of risk and safety influence patterns of play including when and where children may play and with whom, although parental influences decreases with age. The need for parental supervision (perceived or actual) is particularly strong in relation to toddlers and pre-school children although supervision of primary and older is increasingly common. Behaviour patterns of parents with children have altered significantly in response to growing fears over safety of children particularly relating to car and cycle accidents, assaults, abductions, accidents whilst at play, drug taking and substance abuse and anti-social behaviour. Despite the fact that the risk of accidents is relatively small, parents seek to place restrictions on their children's mobility and independence in response to these concerns and anxieties which leads to more localised patterns of play or a greater degree of supervised play including parents transporting children from a to b.
- 6.6 Within the context of the issues identified above traditional forms of children's play provision have been criticised. Some forms of equipped play areas can be almost valueless in meeting the developmental needs of children. The design of play areas has also been criticised for taking the needs and concerns of adults such as noise and disturbance more seriously than children's play needs. Williams (1995)⁴ notes several problems with existing patterns of children's play provision including:
- An over-emphasis on unsupervised play areas play containing fixed equipment rather than informal play opportunities;
 - The preoccupation with safety surfaces resulting in the creation of unchallenging environments directed primarily at younger children; and
 - A strong emphasis on the 'containment' of children within dedicated 'play' areas to discourage young people congregating in other areas.

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- 6.7 To overcome these problems Williams identifies the need to engage children and young people in the identification and design of play opportunities as part of the planning process in order that play environments meet local needs and priorities.

LEVEL OF PROVISION

- 6.8 Table 6.1 sets out current levels of children's play provision within the district. This excludes consideration of school sites which do not have general public access, but includes Council and non-Council provision.

Table 6.1 Formal Children's Play Provision

Type of Children's Play Provision (excl. Schools)	N° Open Spaces with provision	% Open Spaces
LEAP	10	4
NEAP	1	0.4
LEAP and NEAP	1	0.4
Other children's play provision	43	17
No children's play provision	194	78.8

- 6.9 Of the open spaces surveyed, 55 were assessed as providing dedicated and other children's play provision, of which only 12 sites meet the NPFA LEAP/NEAP standards. If minor improvements were made to play spaces however, a number of the open spaces with "Other children's play provision" would fulfil the criteria for a LEAP.

STANDARDS OF PLAY PROVISION**Current NPFA and North Norfolk Standards**

- 6.10 There are currently no adopted national standards relating to children's play provision. However, a structured approach to the planning and provision of children's play areas has been developed by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). The standards of provision

⁴ Williams (1995) Outdoor Recreation and the Urban Environment, Routledge, London.

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recommended by the NPFA were revised in 2001 and reflect changing views towards children's play provision, emphasising the need to provide both designated areas and casual play opportunities. The standards also suggest that areas need to respond to the needs of different age groups and recognise their value to the development of children and young people.

6.11 Overall, the NPFA recommends a minimum standard of outdoor space for children's play of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people.

6.12 Policy 105 of the North Norfolk District Council Adopted Local Plan includes standards for playing space in residential developments. It recommends that there should be a minimum of 2.4 hectares of playing space for every 1,000 population, of which between 1.6ha and 1.8ha should be for outdoor playing space for sport, and between 0.6ha and 0.8ha for unsupervised children's playing space.

6.13 The Council's playing space standards outline the minimum amount of space which should be provided for play within a certain walking time of a child's home. The Council outlines two categories of children's playing space that should therefore be provided:

- Local Areas for Play (LAPs);
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs).

6.14 Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) are unsupervised playing spaces suitable for children between 9 and 16. These are intended to serve substantial residential areas and were not envisaged within the North Norfolk Local Plan.

Recommended Dedicated Children's Play Provision

6.15 Standards for LAPs have been made for developments of 15 or more dwellings, and every dwelling should be within a 1 minute walk (60m straight line distance) of a LAP. Alongside, on developments of 50 or more

dwellings, each dwelling must be within a 5 minute walk (240 metre straight line distance) of a LEAP.

Existing Provision

- 6.16 The full range of criteria is outlined in the guide to the pro-forma included in Appendix C. The assessment included consideration of the number and range of types of activities/opportunities provided, provision of informal and hard surface play areas, safety issues and consideration of other amenities (seating, bins etc).

Access to Children's Play Provision

- 6.17 Local effective catchment areas for children's play provision were derived from the findings of the residents' survey. 61% of users live within 10 minutes of children's play areas, with 73% of users living within a 15 minute catchment area. Overall 46% of users travel to children's play areas by foot or cycle.
- 6.18 Travel patterns to children's play areas differ slightly between towns, villages and other areas. The effective catchment area radii for children's play provision within the 7 main settlements for example are 800 metres and 1200 metres for other settlements.
- 6.19 This suggests that the coverage of children's play facilities within the 7 main settlements is adequate. Resources within these areas should therefore be restricted to repair and improvement
- 6.20 Although provision within the 7 main settlements for children's play areas is sufficient, there are a number of villages lacking any such facilities. These villages are highlighted in Table 6.2 below, and shown on Figure 5.3

Table 6.2 Villages Lacking Children's Play Provision

Parish	Settlement	Settlement Population (Parish if stated)
Raynham	West Raynham	190
Helhoughton	Helhoughton	197 (Parish)
Little Snoring	Little Snoring	603 (Parish)
Kettlestone	Kettlestone	755 (Parish)
Fulmodeston	Fulmodeston	195
Fulmodeston	Barney	225
Swanton Novers	Swanton Novers	263
Gunthorpe	Gunthorpe	130
Binham	Binham	270
Field Dalling	Field Dalling	215
Edgefield	Edgefield	260
Hempstead	Hempstead	179 (Parish)
Baconsthorpe	Baconsthorpe	232 (Parish)
Gresham	Gresham	443 (Parish)
Erpingham	Erpingham	395
Swanton Abbott	Swanton Abbott	436 (Parish)
Honing	Honing	319 (Parish)
Tunstead	Tunstead	674 (Parish)
Lessingham	Lessingham	160
Lessingham	Eccles on Sea	355
Potter Heigham	Potter Heigham	961 (Parish)
Total		7,457

6.21 It is, regrettably, not possible to provide a children's play area in every settlement.

Condition of Children's Play Areas

6.22 The condition of the children's play provision in North Norfolk was assessed according to its range and type of play equipment and associated facilities, including provision of seating, skateboarding facilities, rebound walls, hard playing surfaces, informal games areas, safety surfaces and play area boundaries. This score was used to classify the condition of children's play as shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Condition of Children's Play Provision

Quality of Children's Play Provision (excl. Schools)	% Total Children's Play Areas
Good	46
Fair	40
Poor	14
Total	100

6.23 Overall 86% of the children's play areas in North Norfolk are considered to be in either fair or good condition. The remainder (14%) are considered to be in a 'poor' condition. To improve the quality of individual play spaces therefore existing spaces should aim to fulfil the criteria set out by the NPFA to qualify as a LEAP. A schedule of play sites within the District is provided in Appendix A.

Improvements

6.24 Particular attention should be paid to the potential for upgrading and improving the following children's play area sites which were identified as having provision of poor quality;

- Site 177 - Briston Sports and Social Club, Ridlands Avenue, Briston;
- Site 180 - Bacton Playing Field, North Walsham Road, Bacton;
- Site 194 - Great Ryburgh Playing Field, Fakenham Road, Gt Ryburgh;
- Site 210 - Holt Rugby Club, Bridge Road, High Kelling;
- Site 266 - Fakenham Sports Centre, Trap Lane , Fakenham⁵;

⁵ Under construction during site visit.

- Site 33 - Graham Allen Playing Fields, Hollow Lane, Langham;
- Site 57 - Corpusty Green, The Street, Corpusty.

Children's Play Provision: Recommendations

Quantity and Accessibility Component Recommendations

6.25 The areas where open spaces are not provided with dedicated children's play areas are mainly confined to certain villages. In order to ameliorate these deficiencies, it is recommended that opportunities for both formal and informal children's play should be increased, and that support be given to local communities with well-developed and economically well-grounded cases for provision of children's play facilities.

6.26 The following access standards/targets are recommended for adoption.

- Target: All residents within the District should have access to areas of formal and informal play provision for children and teenagers within 800 metres of their homes home in the case of the 7 main settlements. This should be extended to 1200 metres for villages;
- Standard: Proposals for new housing development should be accompanied by proposals to improve children's play provision. The nature of such improvements should reflect the additional play provision needs generated as a result of the proposed development and the exact form of play provision should be identified following consultation with the local community to identify local priorities;
- If the proposed development is located within an identified area of deficiency for children's play provision it will be necessary for additional land to be brought into use for the purpose of children's play. The developer will also be required, if appropriate, to make a contribution towards the enhancement of the quality of existing provision. This may include improving the range and facilities for particular age groups not well served at present and improving the condition of facilities already provided;

6.27 The working paper on developer contributions provides the rationale for calculating the contributions associated with individual housing proposals.

Qualitative Component Recommendations

6.28 Children's play provision within the District should be of adequate quality and provide the range of facilities associated with the size of the facility. The Council's guidelines for design standards of children's play spaces should be consistent with the NPFA 6 acre Standard (2001) of 0.8ha children's play space per 1000 population, and used to assess levels of adequacy in terms of the range and quality of provision.

6.29 The NFPA "Six Acre Standard 2001" suggests that 3 types of equipped Children's Play-space be provided.

6.30 LAPs (Local Areas for Play) are designed to provide low-key activities of children aged up to 6 close to their homes. These are small open spaces of approximately 0.04ha (20mx20m) within housing areas and overlooked by nearby housing. It can be difficult to create usable spaces and at the same time avoid disturbance of nearby residents caused by the use of LAPs by children of all ages. For these reasons the use of LEAPs and NEAPs is considered to be a more appropriate and practical form of provision.

6.31 LEAPs (Local Equipped Areas for Play) are designed to provide equipment for children aged 4-8, or sometimes younger. LEAPs should be located so that they are easily and safely accessible to users and ideally they should serve a wider area. They should be a minimum 400sqm in size, include at least 5 pieces of equipment, have safety surfacing and be surrounded by dog-proof safety fencing. The distance between a LEAP and the nearest residential boundary should be a minimum 20m. A LEAP (0.04ha), including its buffer zone (0.46ha), should extend to a minimum 0.50ha.

6.32 NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play) are designed to provide equipment mainly for children aged 8 upwards. NEAPs should be located such that they are easily and safely accessible to users. Ideally this means

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they should serve a wider catchment area than LEAPS. They should be a minimum 1,000sqm in size, include at least 8 pieces of equipment on safety surfacing (approx. 500sqm) and include a hard surfaced multi-purpose area (minimum 465sqm) and surrounded by dog-proof, open safety fencing. The distance between the NEAP and the nearest residential boundary should be a minimum 30m. Therefore a NEAP (0.1ha) including buffer zone (0.90ha) extends to a minimum 1.00ha.

7. NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREENSPACE PROVISION

- 7.1 This type of open space is one where the focus is on wildlife conservation, biodiversity, and environmental education and awareness.
- 7.2 The statistics from the survey do not reflect the full range of opportunities to enjoy biodiversity, because of the tremendous range found in the District. North Norfolk is unique: a large part of it is included in the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, parts of it fall inside the boundary of the Broads National Park, and there are a number of national nature reserves.
- 7.3 “At a national level, it is one of the few remaining examples of relatively undeveloped and unspoilt coastal areas of this character. At a regional level it is wild, rich and diverse foil to the intensive agricultural landscapes that dominate East Anglia”⁶
- 7.4 English Nature has produced standards relating to natural greenspace provision known as the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). The recommended standards are:
- That no person should be located more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size;
 - Provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population;
 - That there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home;

⁶ Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, 2004-2009

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- That there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km; and
 - That there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.
- 7.5 The distribution of natural greenspace provision has been assessed using the findings of the open space site appraisals. A definition of natural greenspace used within this study includes the following:
- Open spaces which are wholly or partly designated with National, or Local nature conservation designations (including SSSIs, SNCVs, LNRs); or
 - Open spaces where at least 5% of the site is comprised of natural heath land, down land, common or natural woodland, wasteland/derelict areas, water area, or informal grassland.
- 7.6 The survey identified 18 sites on which Natural or semi-natural Greenspace was the main use.
- 7.7 However, the district contains natural greenspace not included in the above figure which is much more extensive. The Blakeney National Nature Reserve covers some 1100ha, Holkham NNR covers some 4000ha, whilst the area of the Norfolk Coast AONB which lies in North Norfolk District covers 2422km². It is estimated that the ANGSt target of 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population is exceeded by at least 50 times. These unique assets for the District are used on a frequent basis by its residents. For the Residents' Survey for example, 43% of respondents stated that they took walks on the coast on a regular basis and 26.4% indicated they did so in the surrounding countryside.

Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace Provision: Recommendations

Quantitative Component Recommendations

- 7.8 It is not considered appropriate to make recommendations to increase this use through the Planning system. However, proposals for new housing development should take account of existing supplementary planning

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guidance on Biodiversity, and follow sound practice for the enhancement of biodiversity in the creation of other open space.

Accessibility Component Recommendations

7.9 In order to improve accessibility of natural and semi-natural greenspace, efforts should be made, wherever possible, to improve accessibility to open spaces through improvement of public transport, and of access to the countryside in general.

Qualitative Component Recommendations

7.10 Overall, areas of natural and semi-natural greenspace should be of adequate quality and support local biodiversity. Areas of natural and semi-natural greenspace which underperform in terms of their value to the local community or local biodiversity therefore should be brought into line with the guidelines identified in this chapter.

Consultation

7.11 It is recommended that the wider community is consulted on the results of the study of open space needs to ensure participation and “ownership” of future initiatives for provision and design of open space within the District. The development of an Open Space Steering Group comprising representatives of stakeholder groups, including The Area Partnerships and local authority departments would be a suitable forum to guide consultation on open spaces.

8. ALLOTMENT NEEDS

INTRODUCTION

- 8.1 The role of allotments is in a period of transition and their value is undergoing reappraisal. Traditionally allotments were developed within urban areas from the latter half of the C19th onwards to provide the urban poor access to land to grow their own fruit and vegetables. The spread of allotments was linked to development of high density housing without gardens. Growth of allotments intensified once again during the first and second world wars when they were used to supplement national food production. Following a near-steady post-war decline, more recently interest in allotments has increased due to public awareness of 'green' issues and concerns over links between food and health.

POLICY

National Context

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Sport Open Space and Recreation

- 8.2 The national planning framework relating to allotments is set out in PPG17, where it is another form of open space performing strategic recreational functions.
- 8.3 PPG17 also identifies the issues which Local Planning Authorities should take into account in considering allotment provision and circumstances when disposal may be appropriate.

The Future of Allotments

8.4 The Fifth Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs prepared a report entitled 'The Future of Allotments' in 1998. The report made recommendations including:

- Consolidation of allotment legislation;
- Need for increased recognition of the multifunctional value of allotments;
- Need to plan for increased allotment demand. Improvements to quality of provision are required in order to convert latent demand into actual demand;
- Allotments should be integral to local authority leisure strategies and local agenda 21 initiatives;
- Local authorities should publish annually details of allotment provision;
- All local authorities should make clear the designation of sites as either statutory or temporary within Local Plans. Furthermore temporary sites should be identified with their final intended use along with expected date of change of use;
- With the exception of sites which are ultimately intended for use as cemeteries, the report recommends that any 'temporary' site which has been in continuous use as allotments for thirty years or more be automatically re-designated as 'statutory' subject to an appeal by a local authority;
- All local authorities examine the potential for self-management of their allotment sites.

LOCAL CONTEXT

- 8.5 The Adopted Local Plan April 1998 includes a policy which seeks to protect allotment sites from development (Policy 106). Development proposals which would involve partial or complete loss of allotments will not be permitted unless alternative provision is made, or there is insufficient demand.
- 8.6 There is no formal guidance on how allotment needs should be assessed, but the Local Government Association good practice guide 'Growing in the Community' has valuable informal advice. The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) per 1000 population. This standard is easily met in North Norfolk. The standard would require 20ha - in North Norfolk there are some 63ha.
- 8.7 In 1996, the National Allotment survey identified an average provision in England of 15 plots per 1000 households. In North Norfolk there are on average 22.5 plots per 1000 households.

ALLOTMENT SUPPLY IN NORTH NORFOLK

- 8.8 About half of the allotments in the District were surveyed - a total of 874 occupied plots, together with a further 137 unoccupied plots (1011 plots, or 84% in total). Allotments not surveyed totalled 1033 plots. Their distribution is reasonable, with only comparatively small pockets of the District without any provision. The main villages without allotments are Adborough, Eppingham and Banningham, Worstead, and Great Ryburgh with about 1250 households. For a list of individual sites, see Appendix A.
- 8.9 Allotment sites are generally managed by the Parish Councils/Town Councils and voluntary associations.
- 8.10 A comprehensive survey of allotments was carried out as part of the open space study. Salient features of the assessment follow.

8.11 The Residents' Survey suggests that people are prepared to travel further to reach an allotment than a park. The Survey identified an even split between those who drove to allotments (40%) and those who walked (40%) with others travelling by cycle.

DEMAND ASSESSMENT

8.12 In addition to manifest demand (i.e. the number of occupied allotments) there are also two forms of latent demand:

- Latent Suppressed Demand – individuals who want to rent an allotment but none are available. They are defined by existing allotment waiting lists. Demand fluctuates throughout the year with summer peaks;
- Latent Potential Demand – people who might rent an allotment now or in the future. Demand is influenced by age, accessibility and availability of allotments, quality and standard of allotment management, public awareness and extent of allotment promotion.

8.13 The extent of unfulfilled demand needs to be considered in conjunction with the size and distribution of the sites (see Figures 4.1A-C). The accessibility of allotment sites and allotment catchments areas are considered below.

Accessibility and Demand Catchments

Latent Potential Demand

8.14 The Residents' Survey suggests that people are prepared to travel further to reach an allotment than a park. The Survey identified an even split between those who drove to allotments (40%) and those who walked (40%) with others travelling by cycle.

8.15 Previous studies have found that, although participation is highest amongst those who live in close proximity to their plot, the relationship between site size, occupancy, availability and catchments area indicates

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that some plot holders are able and prepared to travel to alternative sites when a plot is not available at their nearest site. However the extent to which local allotment demand can be satisfied outside of the immediate neighbourhood is limited. Many plot holders wish to be near to their plot for reasons of security and ease of access. Furthermore, given the age and socio-economic profile of existing and potential allotment holders, a significant proportion of plot holders are unlikely to have access to a car. Some residents are currently therefore excluded from allotment gardening by the distribution and availability of vacant plots within the District.

- 8.16 There are few wards of significant population that are not well served by the existing distribution of allotment sites. An occupancy rate of 83% suggests that there is still capacity for future growth in allotment use.
- 8.17 Given the under-use of allotments at present, it is not considered that more are needed in all but those areas without any current provision. The shortfall is for 56 plots, which is equivalent to just under 2ha. Priority should be given to those larger villages without allotments listed in para 8.8 above.
- 8.18 Users located within the growth towns and larger towns in the District are more likely to walk to allotments (as the distribution of provision is more even compared with other parts of the District). Elsewhere allotments tend to be outside the centre of towns. A catchment equivalent to a 5 minute car journey (2.5 km) seems reasonable here.
- 8.19 There are few wards of significant population that are not well served by the existing distribution of allotment sites. An occupancy rate of 83% suggests that there is still capacity for future growth in allotment use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed Allotment Standard

Provision

Quantitative Component

- 8.20 To meet the needs of the District up to 2016 it is recommended that a standard of 0.65ha of allotment land per 1,000 populations is adopted
- 8.21 Overall, there is currently provision for an estimated additional 300 allotment holders within the District from vacant plots. Demographic change between 2001 and 2016 could generate additional demand for about 60 plots. Areas without allotments fall short of the suggested standard by 56 plots. Growth-generated demand could be met from existing supplies. The land requirement for underserved areas is about 2ha only.
- 8.22 Proposals for new housing should be accompanied by proposals to improve the allotment provision. The nature of such improvements should reflect the additional open space needs generated as a result of the proposed development.
- 8.23 If the proposed development is located within an identified area deficient in access to allotment provision it will be necessary for additional land to be brought forward for this purpose. The developer will be required to make a contribution towards the provision of allotments. It may be appropriate for such provision to be incorporated within the curtilage of the development. Alternatively a contribution to off site provision may be appropriate.
- 8.24 If the proposed development is not located in an area which is deficient in access to allotment provision then consideration will be given to any deficiency in quality or value of existing allotment sites serving the development. The developer may be required to make a contribution towards the enhancement of existing provision.

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8.25 The working paper on developer contributions will provide the rationale for calculating the contributions associated with individual housing proposals.

8.26 Allotment sites should be of adequate quality and support the needs of the local community. Allotment sites which under perform in terms of their value to the local community consistent with the criteria relating to the role of sites identified in Chapter 8 should be improved. Those sites identified within Chapter 10 should be prioritised for improvement.

Accessibility Component

8.27 All households within the District should have access to an allotment garden within 2,500m of home.

Qualitative Component

8.28 Allotment sites should be of adequate quality and support the needs of the local community. Sites which underperform compared to the criteria in 8.25 above should be improved.

9. QUALITY OF SUPPLY

INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Research into Open Space Planning highlights the importance that users of open spaces place on the quality of facilities and condition of landscape.
- 9.2 As qualitative factors are often difficult to assess objectively, it is important to establish a methodology to enable the consistent scoring and ranking of the condition and quality of spaces. Many aspects of open space quality raise detailed issues of park management and maintenance which are beyond the scope of this study.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Methodology

- 9.3 The range and condition of facilities within each open space were assessed using scoring criteria method derived from the Civic Trust Green Flag standard assessment. The standard is based partly on a physical site appraisal of 27 criteria relating to the range, quality and condition of park facilities and park management arrangements, which accounts for 70% of the overall score and a desk research element which makes up the remaining 30% of the score.
- 9.4 The open space assessment included consideration of 18 green flag criteria which could be assessed through a visual appraisal of the site. The dimensions of quality considered were:
- The conservation of natural features;
 - The conservation of landscape features;

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- The conservation of buildings and structures;
 - The provision of educational interpretation facilities;
 - Standards of arboriculture and woodland management;
 - Whether the space was welcoming;
 - How well signposted the space is;
 - Whether there is equality of access to and within the space;
 - The safety of equipment and facilities;
 - Levels of personal security within the space;
 - Evidence of dog fouling and availability of appropriate provision (designated bins, dog walks);
 - The appropriate provision of facilities for the type of space;
 - The quality of facilities;
 - The cleanliness of a site including litter and waste management arrangements;
 - Standards of grounds maintenance and horticulture;
 - Standards of building and infrastructure maintenance; and
 - Standards of equipment maintenance.
- 9.5 The criteria which were not assessed related to the sustainability of management and maintenance practices (4 criteria), arboriculture standards (1 criterion), the level of community involvement (2 criteria), marketing and promotion (2 criteria) and implementation of the park management plan (1 criterion).
- 9.6 Each of the 17 criteria was attributed a score between 0 and 10, where 0 is considered to be very poor and 10 is considered to be exceptional. The score for each of the criterion was evaluated against a range of issues relating to each factor. These are described fully in the guide to the site survey pro-forma (Appendix C). The green flag scoring system used to assess each criterion within the standard is as follows:
- 0 - <2 Very Poor;
 - 2 - <4 Poor;

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- 5 - <6 Fair;
 - 7 - <8 Good;
 - 8 - <9 Very Good;
 - 9 <10 Excellent;
 - 10 Exceptional
- 9.7 Not all of the criteria were applicable to each type of open space (e.g. conservation of buildings, equipment maintenance). Therefore an average score was derived for each open space based upon those aspects of quality considered. However a percentage score was also calculated which assumed all 17 quality variables.
- 9.8 The minimum quality standard required for an open space to reach the Green Flag standard is 66% (taking account of the desk top and site based aspects of the assessment). The open space must achieve an overall score of more than 60% on the site based assessment.

Quality ratings

- 9.9 Table 9.1 provides an indication of how each type of open space performs against the 17 Green Flag criteria assessed on site. The average score shows the average of those variables scored at each site, whilst the Average % Score provides an indication of how each site fares against all 17 criteria, an indication of the overall quality of each open space type.

Table 9.1 Quality Assessment by Space Type (Overall Average Score)

Open Space Type	Average Score	Average % Score
Country Park	8.0	69.7
District Park	6.4	61.8
Neighbourhood Park	5.0	47.3
Small Local Park / Open Space	5.9	52.0
Linear open space / Green Corridors	4.0	36.6
Allotments, Community Gardens and Urban Farms	5.5	49.8
Amenity Greenspace	5.8	51.7

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Open Space Type	Average Score	Average % Score
Cemeteries and Church Yards	6.9	57.8
Civic spaces / Pedestrianised Areas	6.3	62.9
Green Spaces within Grounds of Institution	7.3	70.4
Natural or semi-natural Urban Greenspaces	5.0	44.1
Outdoor sports facilities / playing fields (education)	5.5	47.9
Outdoor sports facilities / playing fields (private)	6.1	58.3
Outdoor sports facilities / playing fields (public)	6.1	57.6
Total	6.0	54.9

Analysis

- 9.10 These findings are broadly consistent with the residents' survey where 91.7% of respondents consider overall open space provision to be good or very good quality.
- 9.11 It is noticeable that Country Parks, and green spaces within the grounds of institutions, primarily privately owned, reach the Green Flag standard. District Parks also score highly. Many other open spaces do not reach the Green Flag standard, including those Neighbourhood Parks identified, allotments and natural/semi-natural greenspaces. Only Linear green spaces are ranked as "poor".
- 9.12 Table 9.2 identifies the quality issues pertaining to each of the Green Flag criteria. Lowest of those indicators is the provision of educational interpretation facilities. Indeed many sites failed to offer any type of education interpretation. The potential to improve interpretation facilities is considered in Chapter 10.
- 9.13 The table demonstrates that overall most open spaces fell below the score of 7 required to meet the "good" standard for open space. In particular it is evident that on issues of welcoming, good access and signposting criteria, most open spaces were consistently below the good ratings.

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9.14 This suggests that priority should be given to undertake improvements including:

- Making the entrances and site boundaries of sites more prominent; clearly defined and inviting; and,
- Provide adequate welcome signs and better land marked entrances.

9.15 Qualitative assessments need to be integrated with the assessment of the quantity and accessibility of provision. In areas deficient in public open space and where there are limited opportunities to increase supply, either by the creation of new spaces, or by increasing public access to private spaces, the only way of addressing deficiencies is to ensure that the potential of existing spaces is fully realised and there is improved access to them.

9.16 Reference should also be made to Volume II Recreation Strategy which provides an assessment of the quality of playing pitches in the District under the Sport England methodology.

9.17 Open space policy has hitherto primarily been concerned with the quantity and distribution of open space. This study updates this information but also considers the range and condition of facilities within open spaces and the quality of those facilities.

9.18 The analysis undertaken in this Chapter illustrates that some of the parks do not provide a typical range of facilities. It also demonstrates a certain lack of variety in the type of open space available for residents in North Norfolk, with few spaces “fitting” into the category associated with Neighbourhood or District Parks. This is perhaps unsurprising given the size of settlements. It is unlikely to be sustainable to provide large District Parks in more rural remote areas. The characteristics in the parks hierarchy is also only used as a guide to illustrate the range of amenities that people might expect and is not prescriptive.

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9.19 Open spaces can fulfil many needs often in highly sustainable ways. They are generally local facilities accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. They can be used for exercise, education, meeting people, community events and to encourage the movement of flora and fauna. They also contribute to the visual amenity of a local area, breaking up the urban fabric and providing an escape from traffic and built environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PUBLIC PARKS

9.20 A strategy for improving the range and condition of facilities within parks should be developed to taking into account:

- The unique character of these parks and the potential to incorporate further facilities;
- Whether there is a deficiency in the provision of open space in the area;
- The proximity of other parks which may have an oversupply of certain facilities;
- Recommendations from the Recreation Strategy (Volume II);
- Recommendations to enhance the Green Network (Chapter 10); and
- Local social conditions (Chapter 3).

PROPOSED QUALITY STANDARD

Public Parks

9.21 Public Parks within the District should be of good quality and provide the range of facilities associated with their respective tier of the parks hierarchy. The Green Flag assessment identifies spaces with a ranking of 6 or above to be considered as good quality. Those public parks which

either underperform in terms of their value to the local community or their condition should be improved consistent with the guidelines identified.

Table 9.2 Quality Assessment: Average Score for each Space Type according to Green Flag Criteria

Open Space Type	Country Park	District Park	Neighbourhood Park	Small local park / open space	Linear open space / green corridors	Allotments, community gardens and urban farms	Amenity green space	Cemeteries and church yards	Civic spaces / pedestrianised areas	Greenspaces within grounds of institution	Natural or semi-natural urban greenspaces	Outdoor sports facilities / playing fields (education)	Outdoor sports facilities / playing fields (private)	Outdoor sports facilities / playing fields (public)
Conservation of Natural Features	8.7	7.0	4.0	5.9	4.5	6.0	5.8	6.9	2.0	6.3	6.7	5.3	3.7	5.6
Conservation of Landscape Features	7.9	7.0	4.0	6.8	3.3	5.9	5.8	6.9	3.0	7.7	6.2	5.5	4.6	5.2
Conservation of Buildings & Structures	8.8	7.5	4.5	6.4	2.8	5.0	6.5	7.4	7.0	8.0	5.1	5.3	5.5	5.5
Provision of Education	6.1	1.5	1.0	0.3	1.3	0.0	1.5	1.1	8.0	1.7	0.5	0.0	0.2	1.7
Welcoming	7.0	6.5	4.3	5.5	4.0	4.5	5.5	6.2	6.0	7.3	4.4	5.2	5.5	5.8
Good Access	6.9	6.5	4.3	5.8	3.7	5.0	5.8	6.9	8.0	8.0	4.6	5.2	5.4	6.1
Well Sign posted	7.0	4.5	3.3	4.4	4.7	2.3	4.4	6.5	9.0	7.3	3.6	5.4	5.5	5.3
Equal Accessibility	6.9	6.0	5.7	5.2	4.3	3.9	5.5	6.6	7.0	7.3	3.5	5.3	5.3	5.6
Safety of Facilities	6.9	6.5	6.0	6.6	5.0	5.4	6.2	7.0	7.0	7.3	4.7	5.5	5.9	6.3
Security	6.7	6.0	6.0	6.6	6.0	5.8	6.8	6.8	8.0	7.3	5.1	5.6	6.4	5.9
Dog Foul	6.7	5.0	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.6	8.1	7.0	7.7	6.4	5.6	7.3	6.7
Appropriate Provision of Facilities	6.3	7.0	6.3	5.6	4.3	6.2	5.3	7.3	8.0	7.0	4.6	5.7	6.6	6.3
Quality of Facilities	6.7	6.5	5.3	5.9	4.7	5.8	5.9	6.8	6.0	7.3	4.4	5.7	6.4	6.3
Clean Litter	6.9	7.0	6.3	6.7	5.3	6.9	7.0	7.8	7.0	7.7	5.8	5.6	7.0	6.8
Grounds Maintenance	6.9	7.0	5.7	6.2	4.3	6.8	6.8	7.5	6.0	7.3	3.1	5.5	6.9	6.8
Building Maintenance	6.9	7.0	2.7	6.3	4.7	5.9	6.6	7.5	7.0	7.3	3.8	5.5	6.3	6.1
Equipment Maintenance	6.7	6.5	6.0	6.4	5.3	5.9	6.2	7.3	8.0	7.0	3.7	5.6	6.5	5.9

10. VALUE OF OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

10.1 Value relates to:

- Context: Value varies according to the context of the open space. For example, where there is a high level of open space provision in an area, some of it may be of relatively little value. Conversely, where there is very little provision of open space, even a space of mediocre quality may be valuable. From another perspective, space which is inaccessible may be of little value, irrespective of its quality;
- Level and type of use: Value should also be interpreted in relation to its use by people and wildlife;
- Wider benefits: The value of the open space depends on the benefits generated for people, biodiversity and the wider environment.

10.2 Value is therefore a different concept to quality.

10.3 The benefits and value of open spaces to local communities extends beyond their active recreational role. Both public and private open spaces perform recreational and non-recreational roles contributing to community and quality of life. These roles are examined under the following headings:

- Recreational;
- Structural;

- Amenity;
- Historical / Heritage;
- Ecological;
- Educational;
- Cultural; and
- Social.

Recreational Value

- 10.4 The recreational value of open spaces in North Norfolk has been assessed by considering the recreational roles performed at each site and the indications of informal use. While active recreational roles include sports and other active recreational activities such as allotment gardening, informal recreational activities include walking and dog walking, children's play, teenagers 'hanging out', relaxation and other pastimes such as remembrance at memorial gardens and cemeteries.
- 10.5 A recreation score was derived for each open space based upon the number of active and informal recreational roles each space performed, whether they represented a major or minor role within the open space and whether there was dedicated provision or the activity was supported informally. Indications of informal use were also included within the score. From this exercise, a standardised % score for each space was derived.
- 10.6 Table 10.1 below identifies the recreation role of open spaces. In the table, a major role for each activity has been identified where 40% of the site area or estimated usage is dedicated to the role. A minor role has been identified where the activity represents a lower level of usage or land take.

Table 10.1 Recreational Role of Open Spaces

Recreation Type Pitch Sports	Sites With Each Sport Type		Major Role (above 40% of usage of site)		Minor Role (abo40% of usage of site)		Dedicated provision of facilities		Informal provision of facilities	
	No	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ACTIVE RECREATION										
Pitch Sports	76	28	63	24	13	5	55	21	11	4
Court Sports	17	6	14	5	3	1	15	6	2	1
Golf/ Putting	10	4	8	3	2	1	6	2	2	1
Equestrian	6	2	1	0	5	2	0	0	4	1
Water sports	3	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
Other Activity (Active)	23	9	21	8	2	1	19	7	1	0
INFORMAL RECREATION										
Walking/ Dog Walking	135	51	42	16	93	35	6	2	109	41
Children's Play	115	43	44	16	71	27	50	19	54	20
Teenagers Hanging Out	86	33	8	2	78	29	6	2	72	27
Sitting Out/ Relaxation	131	49	36	13	95	36	47	18	62	23
Cycling	12	4	3	1	9	3	1	0	7	3
Other Activity/ Pastime	17	6	13	5	4	1	9	3	1	0

10.7 The table indicates that the most common role which open spaces perform is for walking or dog walking, followed by children's play. Although 19% of all spaces provide dedicated play facilities, there was usually no dedicated provision for cyclists at sites. Almost 28% of sites accommodated some form of pitch sports.

10.8 The survey also recorded use of open spaces for informal uses which do not require the provision of dedicated or specialist facilities. The results are as follows:

Table 10.2 Indications of Informal Use of Open Space

Informal Use	No. Open Spaces
Skateboarding	1
BMX	8
Cycling	20
Basketball practice areas	17
Kick-about areas	65
Dog Walking	92

Structural Role

- 10.9 The structural role of open spaces can be described as the value of the space on the physical landscape of an area. Identified by site surveys, these areas are shown in Table 10.3. The open spaces which are considered to perform a structural and/or amenity role are illustrated in Appendix F and the definitions used to assess each criteria are included in the guide to the pro-forma in Appendix C.

Table 10.3 Structural Role of Open Spaces

Structural Role	No. Open Spaces	% Total Area of all Open Space
Clearly distinguishable from the built up area providing separation between different communities	53	72
Contributes to North Norfolk's special identity	54	76
Creates a positive and significant open space experience when passed or crossed while travelling on adjacent main road networks and railway	69	79
Contributes to 'sense of place' of the local area	64	77
Helps to separate / define districts / parts of districts	30	71
Accommodates recognised and recognisable features of local importance (e.g. buildings / structures, landscape, events / activities)	135	83
Total open spaces with structural role	169	94
Total open spaces with no structural role	98	6

10.10 Open spaces are often located within areas with specific structural designations by the current North Norfolk Local Plan such as “Area of High Landscape Value”, “Undeveloped Coast” or more generally, “Countryside”. Open spaces, such as public parks and gardens, cemeteries, golf courses, green spaces within grounds of institutions, and allotments often provide a physical and visual break between residential areas, and help to ensure that the District can continue to offer a high quality rural unspoilt environment and landscape quality. Open spaces are therefore a vital component of the District's overall physical structure.

10.11 Table 10.3 shows that 63% of all sites, or 94% of the area of total open space, fulfil at least one of the structural roles identified above. The most common structural role is the accommodation of buildings, features and events/activities from open spaces.

Amenity Value

10.12 The manner in which open space contributes to the visual amenity of its surroundings is influenced by the amount of open space in the area, the visual envelope of the open space and the contribution it makes to the street scene.

10.13 The following criteria were used to assess the amenity value of open spaces in North Norfolk (See guide to pro-forma Appendix C for more specific criteria definitions):

- Is it visible from parts of the surrounding area?
- Is it visually attractive?
- Does it have a clearly definable townscape value?
- Does it provide relief from the built up area?
- Does the site mitigate visual impact of unsightly land uses (through buffering or screening for example)?

10.14 If the open space meets one or more of the above criteria it is considered to offer 'significant amenity value'- the more criteria the space meets the greater the amenity value of the space. The overall amenity value of open spaces within the District is summarised within Table10.4.

Table 10.4 Amenity Role of Open Spaces

Amenity Value	No. Open Spaces	% Total Area of all Open Spaces
Visible from parts of the surrounding area	155	92.5
Visually attractive	109	90.4
Clearly definable townscape value	101	87.8
Provides relief from the built up area	44	76.3
Mitigates visual impact of unsightly land uses	7	0.4
Total open space with amenity value	186	67
No amenity role	92	33

10.15 Nearly 70% of open spaces in North Norfolk therefore provide an amenity value based on one or more of the criteria identified above. The scores achieved by each site in terms of meeting the amenity criteria are shown in Appendix F, Table 2.

Heritage

10.16 The relationship between open space provision and areas of heritage value within the District is shown in Table 3, Appendix F. This identifies the location of existing historic parks and gardens, and the relationship between open space provision, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

10.17 The English Heritage Register for Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest identifies nine phases of park and garden development criteria which any site must meet to warrant inclusion on the register:

- Sites with a main phase of development before 1750 where any layout of this date is still evident;
- Sites with a main phase of development laid out between 1750 and 1820 where enough of the landscaping survives to reflect the original design;

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- Sites with a main phase of development between 1820 and 1880 which is of importance and survives intact or relatively intact;
- Sites with a main phase of development between 1880 and 1939 where this is of importance and survives intact;
- Sites with a main phase of development laid out post-war, but more than 30 years ago, where the work is of exceptional importance;
- Sites which were influential in the development of taste whether through reputation or references in literature;
- Sites which are early or representative examples of a style of layout, or a type of site, or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance;
- Sites having an association with significant persons or historical events;
- Sites with strong value.

10.18 These criteria, set by English Heritage, make specific reference to 'Parks and Gardens' only. Many of the open spaces assessed as part of this study do not qualify as either a Park or Garden. However, cemeteries do fall within the scope of the Register criteria and should be assessed for inclusion.

10.19 At present, of the spaces assessed as part of this study, 10 are wholly or partly included within English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. These are:

- No.64 Sheringham Park and Garden, Sheringham;
- Great Wood, Cromer;
- Bayfield Hall and Bayfield Park, Letheringsett;
- Holkham Hall Gardens, St Peter's Lane, Hoveton;
- Mannington Gardens;
- Walsingham Abbey Grounds;
- Felbrigg Hall, Park and Gardens, Cromer;
- Norfolk Coastal Path;

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- Weavers Way National Trail;
- Wolterton Park, Wolterton.

10.20 North Norfolk Council's Local Plan includes a policy (Policy 25) relating to the protection of Historic Parks and Gardens and their settings. 15 such sites are contained within the Local Plan area, together with a further 18 Historic Parks and Gardens of local interest. They form an important part of North Norfolk's landscape and heritage character.

10.21 In addition, other open spaces are also of heritage value as they form part of a Conservation Area or their setting. There are 80 Conservation Areas in North Norfolk.

10.22 Open spaces are of enhanced value where they are found in Conservation Areas as they provide a complementary setting for the built fabric. Spaces such as village greens are of additional value as they form an intrinsic part of the interaction between buildings and public spaces which led to conservation area designation.

10.23 A total of 12 open spaces surveyed either incorporate Scheduled Ancient Monuments or form part of their setting. These spaces contribute to the intelligibility of these structures and some make provision for historical understanding and interpretation.

Education

10.24 Open spaces can represent an educational resource for both children and adults either on an organised basis, such as schools using open spaces for activities linked to the curriculum, or on a more informal basis such as nature walks. Educational roles should be assessed in terms of the potential benefit to the wider community (not just schools) and include:

- Sport / Organised Games – Sites should be assessed for signs of existing use by schools for active recreation;
- Nature / Environmental Study – Sites should have a range of ecological/ environmental features. For the sites to have an

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existing role there should be some form of interpretation provision (e.g. boards, leaflets, programme of events); and

- Historical Interpretation / understanding – Open spaces which form part of the setting for any of the heritage designations including English Heritage Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, conservation areas, listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, or sites located within the extent of the proposed World Heritage Site boundary and buffer zone. For the sites to have an existing role there should be some form of interpretation provision (boards, leaflets part of trail).

10.25 Open spaces were assessed on site for signs of use by schools such as for environmental education. In order to enhance use for environmental education, further work with schools should take place. It is suggested that a survey of schools' use of parks and playing fields is undertaken to fully establish the educational role that open spaces play. Questions to be asked could include:

- Location of activity;
- Activity undertaken;
- Frequency of visit;
- Difficulties arising from using the open space;
- Criteria for choosing the open space;
- Other comments.

10.26 Open Spaces in North Norfolk were assessed on their existing and potential educational roles. 105 (39.4%) of all surveyed open spaces perform at least one educational role. The most common existing role is for sport and organised games, with a total of 28.5% of all open spaces providing this role. The assessment identified that 62.0 % of all sites have

additional potential for one or more educational roles. This is further illustrated in Table 10.5:

Table 10.5 Educational Role of Open Spaces

Educational Role	Number of Open Spaces		% of Total Open Space	
	Existing	Potential	Existing	Potential
Sport / Organised Games	76	27	28.5	10.1
Nature / Environmental Study	12	72	4.5	26.9
Opportunities for enhancing historical interpretation / understanding	17	67	6.4	25.0
Total Open Space with Educational Role	105	166	39.4	62.0

Social and Cultural

10.27 Open spaces also bring wider social benefits and cultural value, providing the setting for community meetings, fairs, firework displays, picnics and a wide range of other activities. As the Urban Open Spaces study of 2003 describes, social benefits are recognised as perhaps the most obvious benefits and opportunities that open spaces provide for urban areas. The social and cultural benefits associated within open spaces include:

- Community focus – A sense of community can be provided by open spaces which host small and large events and both organised and informal gatherings. Open spaces also represent a source of local identity and pride;
- Cultural focus – Parks and open spaces are important for people from different cultures. They provide a venue for religious services, festivals and charity events;
- Open spaces provide opportunities for social interaction and the development of social capital through family and group outings, community events and activities, meetings between friends and

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chance encounters. Participation in physical recreation has shown to contribute towards a reduction of anti-social behaviour among participants;

- Open spaces provide benefits to health. Exercise and physical activity contribute towards physical well being, and peace and quiet, social interaction, opportunities for aesthetic appreciation and proximity to nature is beneficial to mental well being;
- Open spaces provide opportunities for children's play which are beneficial to child development. These benefits are not confined to children's play areas but other features and experiences on offer within open spaces. Open spaces provide visual stimulation, opportunities to develop and appreciation of wildlife and the natural environment, and provide opportunities to improve cognitive, co-ordination and communication skills through play. Open spaces can provide a safe environment for informal play and adventure which can foster a sense of independence; and
- Open spaces can be of historic value and provide opportunities for people to engage and interpret with the historic environment. This can help provide a sense of community identity.

Table 10.6 Cultural Roles performed by Open Spaces

Cultural Role	No. Open Spaces		% Open Spaces	
	Existing	Potential	Existing	Potential
Venue for large scale outdoor events	32	32	11.9	11.9
Dedicated venue for small scale outdoor events	28	81	10.5	30.3
Events Programme	38	62	14.2	23.2
Community / Youth Centre / Meeting Hall	35	29	13.1	10.8
Indoor Sports Hall / Leisure Centre	11	4	4.1	1.5
Total Open Space with one or more cultural role	144	208	53.8	77.7

10.28 Table 10.6 summarises the existing and potential cultural roles performed by open spaces in North Norfolk. 53.8% of open spaces already perform a cultural role either through the provision of dedicated facilities to support cultural activities or through events held within the space. 77% of all sites were identified as having potential to perform cultural related functions, including any additional cultural roles.

Ecological Role

10.29 The Government has set out the need to promote biodiversity through the preparation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) which include the provision of natural and semi-natural green space.

10.30 Whilst the site appraisals did not include an ecological appraisal of open space sites, the study however has identified the number and distribution of open spaces which are subject to either landscape or ecological designations. The study has also considered the extent to which open spaces represent accessible natural or semi-natural greenspace consistent with the English Nature definition. Suggested standards of access to natural greenspace have also been recommended.

- 10.31 To illustrate those sites which have nature conservation or ecological designations, records of existing nature conservation and ecological designations have been overlaid with open space surveys.
- 10.32 Of international importance are Special Protection Areas (SPA/RAMSAR). Of national importance are the series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Alongside, Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and Wildlife Heritage Sites (WHS) or Protected Species Sites (PSS) are recognised at a County and local level for their role as sites for education and enjoyment by the public. These designated sites combine with the non-designated network of copses, hedgerows, small woodlands, ponds, watercourses and coastal features to form the ecological fabric of the District.

Biodiversity Action Plan

- 10.33 The Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance for Norfolk identify a number of priorities for conservation and action plans for species and habitats. The SPG identifies the methods to be employed in the protection of wildlife and nature conservation during the planning process.
- 10.34 Implicit in all biodiversity strategies is the understanding that site conservation alone is unlikely to achieve the aim of conserving genetic diversity and that local agendas and local action are needed to achieve the mutual benefits for wildlife conservation and human enjoyment. In many cases, the more successful biodiversity initiatives arise from the participation of local communities with a vested interest in the resource, an interest often fostered by active participation in planning, decision making or site management, activities which confer a sense of ownership and investment.

Enhancing Nature Conservation in North Norfolk

- 10.35 Open spaces where multiple uses remain a key requirement, or where multiple uses are to be encouraged, may be enhanced for wildlife through a variety of well established landscaping and habitat creation methods. For example, land with core areas under intensive use such as sports pitches, may have peripheral areas by the boundaries or between pitches

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where changes in land management may be accommodated. Enhancement strategies include:

- Tree planting, which should include a high proportion of or complete stock of native species depending on the site. Native woodland herb species should be particularly considered;
- Management of existing trees by pollarding or coppicing as appropriate;
- Allowing development of dead-wood habitats, retaining standing, fallen or stacked dead timber where safe to do so;
- Resisting linear plantations where space allows, and adding graded and scalloped edges of smaller trees and shrub species, preferably with native species of local provenance;
- Providing groupings of appropriate native shrubs, particularly where a lack of space or other considerations constrain the planting of large trees;
- Replacing fences with hedgerows where appropriate;
- Allowing development of tall-grass/tall herb communities along the edges of shrub formations, and varying and maintaining these by appropriate mowing regimes adopting late-summer/early autumn cuts over a 2-3 year cycle;
- Encouraging where appropriate a turf of medium height rich in native grass species and native wildflowers, managed by one or two annual cuts;
- Wildflower seeding to enhance areas of species-poor amenity grassland. It is appreciated however that enhancement of species poor amenity grassland is sometimes difficult due to the high nutrient status and rich topsoil. Soil stripping may be a necessary

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alternative, with subsequent application of appropriate wildflower seed mix in an effort to increase biodiversity therefore;

- Varying landforms to induce variation in drainage and aspect, thereby encouraging natural diversity to develop;
- Continuing to seek improvements to river corridors and encouraging natural river banks with geomorphologic diversity such as cut cliffs, shallow-water margins and ledges, depositional bars;
- Restoring connectivity through green links beyond immediate river channels where continuity of river corridors cannot be achieved;
- Using landscaping and habitat creation schemes to improve connectivity for wildlife across sites of low diversity such as amenity grassland;
- Considering lowering ground levels in river flood plains. This has the potential to assist in improving flood storage, helping to encourage marshland plants and new water features. These would be significant projects and should be undertaken in conjunction with the Environment Agency as it would involve major earthworks in a floodplain;
- Working alongside the objectives of the Norfolk Coast AONB Management Plan 2004-2009.

10.36 Overall, the Open Space Strategy, incorporating sound management at site level, should remain flexible so as to be able to respond to environmental change that has the potential to result in increasing rarity of certain habitats or species.

11. OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

- 11.1 A series of locally based open space standards have been recommended based upon the findings of the assessment of local open space needs within the District, and are summarised in Table 11.1. The assessment, summarised within the preceding chapters of this Volume and Volume II, has considered the supply, quality and value of all types of open space provision within North Norfolk and levels of demand for playing pitch and allotment provision. The analysis of local needs has also informed an open space hierarchy for Public Park and natural and semi-natural greenspace provision within the District.
- 11.2 Assessing Needs and Opportunities, the companion guide to PPG17, recommends that local authorities set local provision standards which incorporate a quantitative, qualitative and accessibility component.
- 11.3 The purpose of these standards is to afford adequate levels of provision for each type of open space within the District based upon existing needs and the future needs of the District up to 2016. The standards identified at the end of the relevant chapters and summarised in Table 11.1 will enable the formulation of planning policies to protect existing open spaces where appropriate and to identify areas where additional open space provision is required.
- 11.4 Whilst planning policies are an effective mechanism to deliver an appropriate level of open space provision and to improve access to open space within the District, it is also necessary to prepare an open space strategy to secure improvements to the quality and value of open spaces. Such a strategy will be based upon the qualitative requirements which have been highlighted within this assessment. The study has identified areas of the District and

individual spaces which should be prioritised for enhancement within such a strategy.

- 11.5 A standard for playing pitch provision is identified below and relates to the analysis undertaken in Volume II. We do not recommend that a quantitative standard is adopted for the provision of amenity greenspace or civic spaces. However, it is expected that a design led approach would be used to identify the level of provision appropriate to the context (i.e. levels of overall open space needs, whether the site is located within a conservation area) and the scale and type of the individual residential, employment or mixed use development. Supplementary planning guidance should be prepared identifying the design criteria to be used to incorporate amenity greenspace appropriate to particular types of development.

PLAYING PITCH PROVISION

Quantitative Component

- 11.6 Volume II of this study identifies playing pitch needs within the District. To meet the needs of the District up to 2016 in terms of the quantity of pitch provision it is recommended that that a minimum standard of **1.90ha of pitch space per 1,000 population** will be required.
- 11.7 Proposals for new housing development should be accompanied by proposals to improve playing pitch provision. The nature of such improvements should reflect the additional playing pitch needs generated as a result of the proposed development.
- 11.8 If the proposed development is located within an identified area of deficiency in access to football provision it will be necessary for additional pitch space to be brought into use. The developer will be required to make a contribution towards the provision of additional pitch space. It may be appropriate for such provision to be incorporated within the curtilage of the development. Alternatively, a contribution to off-site provision may be appropriate.
- 11.9 If the proposed development is not located within an area which is deficient in either access to football pitch provision then consideration will be given to any deficiency in the quality of existing facilities for outdoor pitch sports. The

developer will be required to make a contribution towards the enhancement of the quality of outdoor pitch sports facilities.

11.10 The working paper on developer contributions provides the rationale for calculating the contributions associated with individual housing proposals.

Accessibility Component

11.11 The following access standards are recommended for adoption. The rationale for the standards is provided within Volume II.

- All residents of the main settlements and villages within the District should have access to a site providing football pitch provision in secure community use within 1.2km from home;
- All residents within the District should have access to a range of other outdoor sports facilities

Qualitative Component

11.12 Outdoor pitch sports facilities within the District should be of adequate quality and provide the range of facilities required to meet the needs of sports clubs. Those playing fields in secure community use identified within Volume II, which either under perform in terms of the range of provision provided or the quality of existing provision, should be improved consistent with the guidelines identified.

Table 11.1 Open Space Standards

Open Space Type	Quantity Standard	Area required to meet needs up to 2016	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard
Public Parks (all)	None	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residents within the seven main towns of the District should have access to an area of public park within 400m of home. People living outside the main towns should have access to an area of public park within 800m of home.. 	Public parks within the District should meet the Green Flag 'good' quality standard. Open spaces identified within Chapter 10 for improvement should be prioritised.
Children's Play			All residents within the District should have access to areas of formal and informal play provision for children and teenagers within 400 m of home, if living in one of the main towns, or 800m if living outside in the rural areas.	Children's play provision within the District should be of adequate quality and provide the range of facilities associated with the size of the facility. The guidelines set out within the NPFA 6 acre Standard (2001) should be used to assess levels of adequacy in terms of the range and quality of provision.

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Open Space Type	Quantity Standard	Area required to meet needs up to 2016	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard
Playing pitches	1.90ha of pitch space per 1,000 population	90.24ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residents within the District should have access to a playing pitch within 1200 metres of home; 	<p>Outdoor pitch sports facilities within the District should be of adequate quality and provide the range of facilities required to meet the needs of sports clubs. Those playing fields in secure community use identified within Volume 2, which either under perform in terms of the range of provision provided or the quality of existing provision, should be improved consistent with the guidelines identified.</p>
Natural Greenspace	None	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<p>Areas of natural and semi-natural greenspace should be of adequate quality and support local biodiversity. Areas of natural and semi-natural greenspace which either under perform in terms of their value to the local community or local biodiversity should be enhanced consistent with the guidelines identified in Chapter 10.</p>
Allotments	0.64ha of allotment land per 1,000 population	29.6ha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residents within the District should have access to an allotment garden within 2.5km of home. 	<p>Allotment sites should be of adequate quality and support the needs of the local community. Allotment sites which under perform in terms of their value to the local community consistent with the criteria relating to the role of sites identified in Chapter 8 should be improved.</p>

12. A STRATEGY FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

12.1 This chapter considers how the open space needs identified within the study can potentially be addressed and prioritised. There are four different types of action:

- Consideration of the potential scope for change and improvement of individual open space sites;
- Addressing existing open space needs through the definition of a green network concept which provides a series of priorities to help guide the Council in preparing its open space strategy;
- Identification of how existing deficiencies in open space quantity, quality and access may be addressed to better meet local needs through enhancement of the existing green network; and
- Identification of an approach to areas where existing levels of provision have been met.

ACTION IN RESPECT OF INDIVIDUAL SITES

12.2 The open space site assessments included identification of the physical potential for site to accommodate a range of possible changes. The evaluation of potential is intended to identify possible opportunities and not to assess the feasibility of improvements or identify particular projects.

12.3 Table 12.1 provides a summary of the overall number of open spaces with scope for each of the changes/improvements, and Appendix G lists those individual sites identified as having potential for improvement or change under each category.

Table 12.1 Scope for Change/Improvement

Scope for change/Improvement Categories	Number of Sites	% of all Open Spaces
Potential for improved site utilisation (through redesign/improvement)	77	28.21
Potential opportunities for introducing other open space uses	67	24.54
Potential for usage which could contribute to social/regeneration objectives	19	6.96
Potential to improve landscaping	96	35.16
Potential to Improve Access	74	27.11
Potential for enhancing Historic value	25	9.16
Potential to intensify use of existing pitches	17	6.23
Physical potential to accommodate changing rooms/social facilities	10	3.66
Physical Potential for Additional Pitches	4	1.47
No real scope for improvement	93	34.07
Other	3	1.1

Potential for Improved Utilisation

12.4 During the course of the open space site assessments some 77 sites (28% of open spaces) were identified as having potential for improved site utilisation. Detailed study indicates that these are either areas within the site which have no particular role or purpose, or that there are facilities or parts of the site which may be under used perhaps due to the quality of the environment or the condition of existing provision.

Potential Opportunities for Introducing Other Open Space Uses

12.5 Some 67 sites (24.54% of all sites) were identified as having potential for the introduction of other open space uses. Generally this indicates that either all or part of the site does not currently fulfil the primary open space function suggested by its place within the open space hierarchy. There is potential for either re-defining the primary role of the space or the potential to diversify the range of open space functions currently performed by the space, in order to increase its value to the community.

Potential for Usage Which Could Contribute to Social and Regeneration Objectives

- 12.6 The site assessment identified 19 sites (6.96%) where potential exists for the usage which could contribute towards delivering social or regeneration benefits to the surrounding area. This could be where site improvements secured increasing participation. Alternatively, improvements to facilities or other qualitative improvements could contribute towards the improvement of the local environment thus assisting in sustaining and enhancing the quality of life in the surrounding area.

Potential to improve landscaping

- 12.7 Some 96 sites (35.16% of all sites) were identified as having potential for improved landscaping and environmental quality. Almost all sites could be subject to minor landscaping improvements. These open spaces were only selected where there was a strong justification for making improvements to improve the value of the site to the community through providing a more varied environment within the park or where existing landscapes are of poor quality and require enhancement measures rather than simple improvements to management or maintenance.

Potential to Improve Accessibility within the Park

- 12.8 A total of 74 sites (27.11% of all sites) were identified as having potential for improved internal accessibility. Such sites were identified because they have barriers to pedestrians, cyclists or those with mobility difficulties which preclude or discourage (poor paths and through-routes) potential users from the space.

Potential to Improve Historic Value

- 12.9 The open spaces of cultural heritage value within the District should be seen as key interpretation assets for schools and lifelong learning programmes. A total of 25 sites were identified as having scope for improved cultural heritage value. Improved intelligibility of the open spaces can be achieved through enhancements such as planting and modern landscaping which reflects the original forms and also through the use of sensitive and appropriate interpretation facilities such as information boards, signposting and portable media e.g. pamphlets.

Potential - Enhance Pitch provision and facilities.

- 12.10 17 sites were identified as having potential for more intensive use as playing pitches and a further 4 sites had potential for additional pitch provision. 10 sites were identified as having potential for changing facilities/social facilities.
- 12.11 Potential for other forms of improvement was identified in a further 3 cases. This included controlling parking on a village green and potential for additional allotment plots.

ESTABLISHING A GREEN NETWORK

- 12.12 It is important to protect the extensive network of existing green spaces and links within North Norfolk, as they form the basis for its future expansion. These existing routes run primarily along railway, along the river/canal corridors, and through and around parks, sports pitches, cemeteries, allotments, amenity areas, sites of ecological value and other open spaces. Some of these open spaces are linked together by the rivers and railways, forming more extensive networks.

Existing Links between Spaces

- 12.13 The Local Plan includes a number of policies to encourage the enhancement of recreational routes and green corridors including:
- Pedestrian Routes and Footpaths;
 - Cycle Network;
 - Wildlife Corridors;
 - Design and New Development;
 - Accessibility;
 - Green Routes;
 - Quiet Lanes;
 - Dilham – North Walsham Canal.

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- 12.14 There is some potential to increase the numbers of footpaths between some of the open spaces, thereby allowing or encouraging people to walk between them. This could be carried out comparatively easily, by reducing the impact of traffic along certain routes (possibly under the umbrella of existing safe routes to school programmes), with traffic calming measures, and making safe places for people to cross roads. These measures, in addition to the planting of shrubs and/or trees along streets, would create a more pleasant environment for walking, whilst also providing a more continuous network for wildlife.
- 12.15 Informal recreation has considerable health benefits for physical and emotional well-being. The majority of the population is more likely to participate in passive, rather than active recreation as shown by the results of the resident's survey. Provision should be made for them to do this, by encouraging them and making passive recreation as easy and inviting as possible.
- 12.16 Future new development should incorporate walking and cycle routes and include open spaces provision as "beads on a necklace".
- 12.17 The aim should be to provide a series of differing lengths of routes accessible to the public, in the form of footpaths and/or cycle routes, linking important green spaces together, and picking out areas, features and buildings of historical or other importance, to provide points of interest between them. Where possible, the start and finish points of these routes should link closely to public transport, thereby allowing ease of access to a wider range of the population. The opportunity to provide missing links could be taken in conjunction with planning proposals in these areas. The Green Network Plan should be used to inform the Council's Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan to be developed over the next year.
- 12.18 Creating a green network will help to protect and improve open spaces, and reduce the likelihood of further new building from taking place in these areas. The network will also help to address open space deficiency by prioritising the introduction of tree planting, cycle and walking routes in deficient areas, and improving the local amenity and connectivity to larger open spaces.
- 12.19 It is important not just to think of creating green routes and corridors within the District, but to look at creating links on a more strategic level, with the surrounding areas, in order to create a green network for the region. Liaison

with adjacent authorities will need to be undertaken, to enable these links to be established.

AREAS OF SPECIFIC OPEN SPACE NEED/REQUIREMENT

Areas of Identified Open Space Deficiency

- 12.20 Areas of specific open space need have been identified in previous chapters of this report.
- 12.21 Deficiencies in open space provision should be addressed through specific improvements to existing spaces within the areas affected where possible, or through establishing new open spaces where opportunities arise as a result of new housing development. Existing Council land holdings could potentially be used to fulfil local needs particularly where opportunities are linked to other initiatives (i.e. Schools re-organisation).

ROLE OF EXISTING OPEN SPACES

Public Open Spaces

- 12.22 There are a large number of public open spaces within the District, varying greatly in size and scale. Within these spaces, a balance needs to be reached, between providing increased public access, and providing areas of increased ecological diversity, where public access should be controlled or restricted. Factors to be considered when deciding the appropriate balance include the size of space, location i.e. if it is within an area rich or deprived of open space, and the value and importance of the ecological habitat to be protected.
- 12.23 Measures to improve the quality of these areas, and make them better green chains would be comparatively easy to implement. The relationship between the quality and value of public spaces (see Appendix E) provides a basis to identify open spaces which have the potential for their role to be re-focused to meet identified open space deficiencies.

Sports Pitches and Formal Recreation Areas

- 12.24 The sports facilities within the District fall into public, voluntary and private ownership. Generally, the sports pitches do little to contribute to the biodiversity of the District, as they tend to have short mown grass throughout

the whole site, and few or no trees planted. However, there are a number of underutilised reserve pitch sites which are likely to be of high ecological value. Golf courses, with a variation in mown fairways and greens, longer grass and trees and shrubs in the areas of rough, and the provision of water hazards, are ecologically richer habitats, providing more valuable green corridors.

- 12.25 Simple variations in management and maintenance regimes could increase the diversity of habitats of both the sports fields and golf courses. A greater range in mowing regimes – keeping pitches close mown, and allowing the grass around the edges to grow longer; planting of trees and or hedgerows around the boundaries of these areas; planting of wildflower plugs in the areas of longer grass would all contribute to providing better quality wildlife corridors.

Private Gardens

- 12.26 Private gardens create narrow green corridors through and between the residential areas. Whilst the gardens are not accessible to the general public, they form an important resource and habitat for the native flora and fauna of the area, providing invaluable and often irreplaceable links between larger areas of open space. When creating further green chains from areas adjacent to these gardens, their importance should be recognised and utilised. Areas of greatest open space need, private gardens and amenity greenspace provision is in short supply. Alternative methods should be pursued to enhance biodiversity (such as street greening initiatives) and deliver the open space functions normally associated with back gardens.

Cemeteries

- 12.27 Cemeteries are an often forgotten, but valuable resource in the provision of habitat diversity. Several cemeteries and church yards within the District are also of heritage value. There is potential to link the existing cemeteries into the wildlife corridors within the District. Some of the areas are very intensively managed and maintained; allowing limited biodiversity, in other areas there is more limited management to encourage a wider range of habitats. Older cemeteries and margins around many of them have mature trees, and often less manicured edges, which contribute to the diversity of these areas.

Allotments

12.28 Allotments present the opportunity to provide links in the wildlife corridors, as they are often very rich and diverse in habitat range. The margins and empty plots are usually left un-maintained, allowing naturally occurring species to colonise and become established. They are a valuable resource within the environment and should be protected.

12.29 Uncultivated corners of individual plots and neglected strips can provide a refuge for amphibians and reptiles, invertebrates and small mammals. Vacant plots could be deliberately managed as wildlife meadows. Organic gardening practices are also helpful in maximising biodiversity value and preventing negative environmental effects.

The Role of Private Open Space

12.30 Open space policy has, in the past, concentrated on the provision of public parks. There is a growing recognition of the importance of other open spaces such as sports grounds, cemeteries, allotments and incidental amenity areas in housing areas. Such additional open space can contribute to meeting recreational needs, especially within areas which are deficient in public open spaces.

12.31 This study has dealt with additional open spaces in three ways:

- Survey of private green spaces/spaces with restricted access;
- Survey of significant educational open space; and
- The identification of a Green Network.

12.32 The survey of open spaces incorporated an assessment of the private green spaces, i.e. open space where public access is restricted, and school playing fields. These green spaces mostly comprise private playing fields and sports grounds.

12.33 The Government considers that school premises are a resource not only for pupils, but also for the wider community (Draft revised Circular 3/99, p18). Paragraph 7.15 of the Government's *A Sporting Future for All* states that: "it is important that young people of all abilities have the opportunity to have

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access to high quality physical education and sport provision outside school hours”.

12.34 However, the Government states that only authorised community use of playing fields should be considered. Such uses may be by:

- Local sports clubs for arranged games/practice;
- Local youth groups for sport or recreation;
- Nursery, pre-school and day care groups;
- After school and out of hours groups;
- Charitable groups for fetes, sports days and other fundraising events.

12.35 The measures to address the deficiency areas should be investigated on a cross departmental basis and should inform existing development site proposals, cycle and walking route projects, tree planting initiatives, home zone/safe route initiatives, park improvement schemes, regeneration initiatives. Measures should also be looked at in conjunction with the recommendations from the Best Value Reviews.

NEXT STAGE

12.36 The work set out in the preceding chapters will not happen unless a political framework is created for it to develop into.

12.37 It is recommended that the wider community is consulted on the results of this study. Development of an Open Space Steering Group comprising representatives of stakeholder groups and local authority departments could guide this and future consultation on open spaces on a sub-area basis.

12.38 These strategies will include action plans to identify timescales, relevant stakeholders and potential funding sources.

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