

A REPORT BY STRATEGIC LEISURE
FOR WIRRAL COUNCIL

Open Space Assessment

A Final Report

January 2010



Table of Contents

1	Introduction	01
2	Methodology	05
3	Current Provision	11
4	Resourcing the Borough's Green Space	50
5	Generic Recommendations for Consideration	55

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Typology Site Audit Data

Appendix 2 – Study Maps

Section 1

Introduction

1 Introduction

Definition of Open Space

- 1.1 The most complete description of open space comes from the Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (86)11 of the Committee of Ministers States on Urban Open Space (1). As revised by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, outlined below is a derivative of that description:

“Urban parks and green spaces are an essential part of the urban heritage and infrastructure, being a strong element in the architectural and landscape character of towns and cities, providing a sense of place and engendering civic pride. They are important for enabling social interaction and fostering community development, as well as providing an outdoor classroom for biological and ecological studies. Public green spaces help to conserve natural systems, supporting ecosystems and providing the contrast of designed landscapes and conserved wildlife habitats within our urban settlements”.

- 1.2 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 defines open space as land laid out as a public garden or used for the purpose of public recreation or previously used as a burial ground. This definition does not go far enough in recognising the variety of open space types both private and public that is currently available within the Borough.
- 1.3 Open space for the purpose of developing this report is the collective term that pulls together the provision of parks and public gardens, natural open spaces including nature reserves and public woodlands, facilities for outdoor sports, amenity areas, children’s play areas, allotments, cemeteries and crematoria
- 1.4 In accordance with national guidance each of the different types of open space provision has been developed into a local typology for the Borough.
- 1.5 In developing an analysis of the Borough, calculations have also been undertaken at Electoral Ward level, to enable the Council to identify priorities within more localised areas within the Borough.
- 1.6 A comprehensive audit of open space within the Borough was undertaken during July and August 2008. The audit examined the range and quality of provision in the Borough’s parks and open spaces, natural green spaces, allotments, children’s play areas, outdoor sports facilities, cemeteries and crematoria.
- 1.7 Each site was visited and evaluated by experienced auditors who assessed the sites against best practice methodologies such as the national quality standard for parks, the Green Flag Award. The results of the audit were then collated and analysed to enable local standards of provision to be recommended for each type of open space within the Borough.
- 1.8 The outcome is an analysis of the quantity and quality of open space that is firmly based on local evidence. The typologies for Wirral are identified in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 – Wirral Open Space Typologies

Typology		Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens:	Major Park	Intensively managed sites providing accessible, high quality opportunities for formal and informal recreation and children’s play including community events.
	Country Park	
	Local Park	
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space		Less intensively managed sites, including woodlands, providing accessible opportunities for informal recreation and the appreciation of nature and wildlife including wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education.
Outdoor Sports Facilities		Sites providing for participation in formal outdoor sports such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.
Amenity Green Space		Smaller scale sites providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or for the enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Provision for Children and Young People		Sites and facilities primarily designed and managed for play and social interaction by children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard parks and teenage shelters.
Allotments		Sites providing opportunities for people who wish to grow their own produce offering benefits for the promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
Cemeteries and Churchyards		Sites which may provide additional opportunities for quiet contemplation and natural wildlife.

- 1.9 The audit included all open space across the Borough to which there was legitimate public access. The majority of sites were under the ownership and management of Wirral Council but the audit also included privately owned land with public access and land held and managed for open space and recreation by other bodies such as Registered Social Landlords, the National Trust, the Woodland Trust and the Port Sunlight Village Trust.
- 1.10 Private land with no public access, including domestic gardens, agricultural land and the wider countryside, the public rights of way network, beaches, coastal promenades and walkways, golf courses and school grounds which are not open for use by the general public have not been included.
- 1.11 The collection and analysis of data has been restricted to sites within the administrative boundary of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral and has been quantified on a Borough wide and Ward basis. (See Map 1).

The Importance of Open Space

- 1.12 Open space is important for formal and informal recreation, local amenity and quality of life but can also contribute to the wider social agendas of health, local pride and identity, environmental education, environmental quality and biodiversity.

Health

- 1.13 The health benefits of open space are well documented. Access to good quality, well maintained open space has significant impact on our physical health and mental well being. They provide opportunities to enjoy the natural world and to get involved in a wide range of leisure activities; they encourage people to walk more, to participate in sport or to simply enjoy the green and natural environment. The more attractive and accessible the green space is, the more likely it is to be used by a wide range of people. It has long been accepted that physical activity is a major contributor to good health and can reduce coronary heart problems, diabetes, certain cancers and mental health problems. Trees and Woodlands can also help to reduce the effect of urban pollution and allotments can provide an opportunity for the promotion of more sustainable and organic lifestyles.

Sense of Place and Civic Pride

- 1.14 Well managed, good quality open spaces can improve the appearance of an area and can attract tourists and visitors. Good quality open spaces and areas for wildlife can also help to create a positive image for an area, helping to attract inward investment and new residents, supporting local regeneration and housing market renewal. At the local level they can stimulate local pride and make people feel good about where they live and work.
- 1.15 Research by national organisations such as the Commission for the Built Environment (CABE) [ref in footnote - "Does Money Grow on Trees?" (2005)] indicates that property values can be higher, by as much as 10%, in areas with good quality open space. Open spaces can also contribute to community cohesion by bringing people together, by providing meeting venues and by providing social spaces for a wide variety of events and activities. They can form an essential part of urban heritage, such as at Birkenhead Park and Port Sunlight Village, exert a major influence on urban fabric and play an integral role in providing for balanced and sustainable communities.

Education

- 1.16 Open spaces can provide a valuable resource for all-age education as outdoor classrooms, spaces for training in vocations such as nature conservation, horticulture, community work, landscaping, forestry and sports development and can provide an important environment for children to learn and play through physical exercise and social interaction.

Environment

- 1.17 Open spaces can provide an essential role in supporting the species diversity, by providing habitat and a rich variety of flora and fauna. This is of particular importance in an increasingly urbanised society where urban expansion has meant that true countryside has become increasingly distant from most people. Open space is being recognised as having an increasingly important role to play in mitigating the effects of climate change, through urban cooling and the provision of shade and shelter. Open spaces can also act as part of a wider network of wildlife corridors that allow the migration of plants and animals from one area to another, acting as important stepping stones between urban and rural habitats.

Economy

- 1.18 There are also economic benefits in terms of the attraction of visitors and the provision of employment in the provision and maintenance of sports and other community facilities, including retailing.

Section 2

Methodology

2 Methodology

Development of a Quantity Audit

- 2.1 With the development of digital mapping and the use of GIS (geographical Information systems) it has been possible to ensure that all sites can be identified with accurate boundaries drawn. A comprehensive list of all sites with a clear understanding of amount, type, and location, has provided base line information on which the future standards can be developed. Attached to this information is a database (that is accessible to all staff members) which can be regularly updated with information added or removed. The availability of this Borough wide information will enable decisions to be made for investment, rationalisation, and priorities for developer contributions.
- 2.2 The development of the quantity audit has been undertaken in 3 key stages namely:
- Stage 1- Initial work undertaken by the Council to establish an open space database.
 - Stage 2 - GIS mapping work completed in house by Planning Service staff.
 - Stage 3 - A comprehensive audit of all identified green space above 0.1 ha in size.

Stage 1

- 2.3 An initial audit was carried out by Corporate Services as part of the first stage of work to support a review of the Unitary Development Plan. Work included the identification and mapping sites in detail for both public and private provision and the setting of the initial typologies and standards for parks and green space.

Stage 2

- 2.4 The initial audit was extended and progressed by Strategic Leisure using GIS data from the Ordnance Survey, All sites already mapped went through a verification process using in house knowledge to confirm names, define more accurately site boundaries, identify both land owners and maintenance responsibilities, identify other features contained within each sites and capture the size of individual sites and a six figure grid reference as well as allocating a primary typology. Additional sites that were identified were also included in this verification process.
- 2.5 Features such as a playground or football pitch that were identified within a site's boundary were accounted for in separate typologies. The datasets that sit behind each of the GIS typology layers noted whether they were a whole stand-alone site or whether they were part of a bigger site. The dataset criteria used in this work is Appendix 1 to this report.

Stage 3

- 2.6 Open and Green Space was quantified using GIS using a size threshold of 0.2ha (the minimum size of a mini soccer pitch and therefore big enough to cater for informal kick about) or above by Strategic Leisure who worked alongside Council officers to verify a complete and final list to be considered and quantified to enable a detailed quality audit to be undertaken as the next step and to build on work regarding quality previously undertaken by the Council.
- 2.7 It is important to note that the provision for children and young people includes an element of double counting as many fixed play facilities are contained within the footprint of other typologies and have also been included within the calculation for that typology.
- 2.8 Detailed discussions took place between Council officers from the Parks and Countryside and Corporate Services and the consultants to ensure the quantitative element was correct prior to site visits.

- 2.9 The quantitative sum of each typology was established as the baseline provision for each type of space in the Borough. The quantitative sum was calculated against existing population to enable the Council to use the information (against predicted population growth) to establish a local quantitative standard per 1000 population. The use of ha per 1000 is a recognised means of expressing provision levels and should be used until further guidance is given from central government regarding calculating provision. The evidence gathered will enable the Council to make informed decisions regarding the future provision to meet local demand.
- 2.10 The baseline position identifies the spatial distribution of each type of open space on a Borough wide, and local Ward level.
- 2.11 Standards have not been set for other types of provision which exist, such as Institutional sites, Agricultural Land Cemetery and Churchyards, Private Grounds etc it is not possible to set quantity standards for such provision.

Development of a Quality Audit

- 2.12 The setting of a quality standard provides an objective view of whether an existing Open and Green Space meets a determined level of quality. It provides a benchmark against which improvements can be measured and priorities identified.
- 2.13 The quality audit of all types of open space across the Borough (where access has been permitted) has been undertaken by consultants.
- 2.14 The initial work included a methodology that was developed for the quality assessment and was based on the Green Flag Award Scheme. This is the most recognised national measure for parks and open spaces and provides a base on which all sites irrelevant of type can be assessed and measured for quality. The scheme is endorsed by, CABE Space, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (OPDM) and the Civic Trust.
- 2.15 A pro-forma was produced to enable the information to be recorded in a consistent manner. Criteria were developed into a series of questions which were structured to be used for a one-off site visit survey for use across a range of open space typologies. The following criteria have been considered regarding the condition of green space across the Borough :
- Welcoming
 - Good and safe access;
 - Signage;
 - Equal access for all;
 - Equipment and facilities;
 - Personal security within the park;
 - Dog fouling;
 - Quality of facilities;
 - Litter and waste management;
 - Grounds maintenance;
 - Conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora
 - Provision of appropriate marketing information
 - Building and infrastructure maintenance;
 - Arboriculture and woodland management;
 - Conservation of landscape features;
 - Conservation of buildings and structures;
 - Appropriate provision for the community;
- 2.16 A number of other elements were also recorded to capture further information to inform the longer-term priorities including:
- Outdoor activities for children;
 - Outdoor sports facilities;
 - Toilets, changing rooms and refreshment provision;
 - Park furniture,

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Open Space Assessment

- 2.17 Quality relates to the range of facilities and physical infrastructure contained within individual sites and the level and extent to which it is seen as being 'fit for purpose'. The audit therefore considers factors such as accessibility, safety, management, maintenance and overall impression it also considers the presence of fixtures such as benches, bins, gates, signage hedges trees and paths.
- 2.18 Although the audit was primarily driven by PPG17, the information collated provides the Council with a comprehensive overview of the condition of the green space provision and provides a level of management information not previously available. This information will enable the Borough to make more informed decisions on the resources required to undertake prioritised improvements in site management and maintenance.
- 2.19 A comprehensive audit of over 400+ individual sites has been undertaken based on the variety of green space provision across the Borough.
- 2.20 Scores have been used to provide a means of comparing sites by type. The audit also gives a clear and robust overview of the physical condition of green space across the Borough and within defined local electoral wards.
- 2.21 The assessment of green space quality for each site has been based on a site visit and the completion of a scored pro-forma.
- 2.22 The quality assessment pro-forma is based on a number of key criteria encompassing the quality aspects of the Green Flag Programme, ILAM Parks Management Guidance and the Tidy Britain Scheme. Sites are scored and rated based on the sub typology they may fall into. The scores are set based on best practice and on the facilities that would be expected to be present on sites of that type. As each site is scored against a potential total, the score can be translated into a percentage to enable the site to be given a rating against a quality line illustrated in Figure 2.1 below:

Figure 2.1 Open Space Quality Line

0% - 15%	16% - 30%	31% - 45%	46% - 60%	61% - 75%	76% +
Very Low	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Very High

- 2.23 A list of the criteria used for each typology is summarised in Figure 2.2 below:

Figure 2.2 –Wirral Typology

TYPOLOGY	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins, toilets • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness • The quality of specific facilities including play provision, bowls greens and multi-use games areas (shown as separate assessment)

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

TYPOLOGY	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Natural & Semi Natural Green Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management mature and young trees • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins • Naturalistic Grass Areas • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness
Outdoor Sports Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management mature and young trees • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness • Facility Assessment(pitches, greens courts)
Amenity Green Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness
Provision for Children and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall site features including access gates, whether the area is pollution and noise free, presence of shade, access for the disabled, appropriate signage, locally related features and seating • Ambience including layout, visual appeal, presence of litter or graffiti • Equipment for Toddlers, Juniors and Teenagers have been assessed as discrete elements within the overall play value assessment and they have considered play opportunities with regards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Balancing ➤ Jumping ➤ Crawling ➤ Gliding ➤ Rotating ➤ Sliding ➤ Rocking ➤ Ball Play ➤ Wheeled Play ➤ Agility ➤ Sand and Water Play
Allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • The presence of water supply • Whether the site is served by toilets • Secure fencing around the site • Signage to identify management, usage arrangements, special events and the availability of plots • The presence of facilities such as composting bins, a shop and car parking.

TYPOLOGY	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
Cemeteries and Churchyards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main entrance safety, cleanliness, and natural presence • Signage • Upkeep and safety of the graves • Quality of roads and pathways • Provision of bins and seats • Boundary fencing and hedges

- 2.24 The quality audit provides an indicative rating of quality out of 100%. It is important to note that the quality score represents a “snapshot” in time and only records the quality of the site at the time of the visit audit. Detailed analysis is provided within each of the typology findings.
- 2.25 For allotments the pro-forma is based on space audit guidance from the National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Association and best practice.
- 2.26 For the assessment of Children’s play Strategic Leisure used a Play Value Assessment derived from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) Play Value Assessment.

Assessing Accessibility

- 2.27 An assessment of accessibility has been undertaken to identify the number of households within the 400m of all open space above 1.5 ha as defined within the Unitary Development Plan. The 400m threshold has been applied to all sites within each typology deemed to be local such as parks, natural green space, amenity space, children’s play. For outdoor sport and allotments, which are more demand led facilities the assessment has followed best practice advocated by Sport England and the Fields in Trust (Formerly the NPFA) and set at a 1000m of where people live.
- 2.28 The adopted thresholds are identified below, in Figure 2.3;

Figure 2.3 - Accessibility Threshold by Strategic Grouping

Typology	Accessibility Distance Threshold
Parks and Gardens	400 metres
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	400 metres
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1000 metres
Amenity Green Space	400 metres
Provision for Children and Young People	400 metres
Allotments	1000 metres
Cemeteries and Churchyards	1000 metres

- 2.29 The distance thresholds identified above were then used to make a local assessment of how accessible green space is in the Borough. The definition of green space is taken to mean any green space that is publicly accessible. The use of GIS digital mapping has captured the number of address points within the distance thresholds of typologies to identify the accessibility issues.

Developing a Local Typology

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Open Space Assessment

- 2.30 PPG17 advocates the development of a local typology for the different types of green space within the Borough, the range of green areas that are used by the public and are in the main managed by Wirral Borough Council.
- 2.31 This document considers core typologies for provision in Wirral. As well as setting out recommended plans and policies for each of the typologies, the document proposes provision standards to ensure that people have equal access to the range of typologies regardless of where they live.
- 2.32 Open and green space land within the Borough has been categorised into one of 7 typologies. Each typology has a specific definition to help to allocate the land to a primary use (shown in Figure 2.4). For further clarification, each typology has been split into a further number of specific classes to describe the type and main use of the site. The typologies used have been developed from typologies in PPG17.

Figure 2.4- Wirral Typology

Typology	Definition
Parks & Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events
Natural And Semi Natural Green Space	Sites for wildlife conservation, biodiversity, environmental education and awareness
Outdoors Sports Facilities	Sites which allow for participation in outdoor sports, such sports, tennis, bowls, athletics
Amenity Green Space	Supplementary open green space that enhances the appearance of the Borough
Provision For Children And Young People	Designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped or unequipped play spaces, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health, and social inclusion
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity

Section 3

Current Provision

3 Introduction

- 3.1 This section summarises the findings of the audit and identifies the key issues that have emerged for the quantity, quality and accessibility of provision for each of the typologies.
- 3.2 Each open space site has been identified from information provided by Council officers based on information contained within the Council's Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and management databases. Each site has been verified by a site visit in order to provide a comprehensive factual assessment.
- 3.3 All identified sites have been plotted using GIS and the size of each site determined electronically, to provide an analysis of the level of provision across the Borough and within each Electoral Ward.

Overall Type and Quantity of Provision

- 3.4 Figure 3.1 summarises the overall provision (quantity) of open space in Wirral by typology.

Figure 3.1 Summary of Open Space by Typology

Typology	Number of sites	Total area (hectares)	Provision per 1,000 population (hectares)
Parks and Gardens	55	650.5	2.07ha/1,000
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	83	506.3	1.62ha/1,000
Outdoor Sports Facilities*	272	1079.4	3.45ha/1,000
Amenity Green Space	137	119	0.38ha/1,000
Provision for Children and Young People	48	20.85	0.07ha/1,000
Allotments	45	53.9	0.17ha/1,000
Cemeteries and Churchyards	9	87.8	0.28ha/1,000

*This figure includes an element of double counting as it incorporates outdoor sports facilities contained within other typologies such as pitches in parks.

- 3.5 The majority of Wirral's open space provision is provided by Parks and Gardens, Natural and Semi-Natural Green space and provision for Outdoor Sport. (See Map 2)
- 3.6 The NPFA recommend 1.6-1.8 ha of open space for formal sport for youth and adult use with a minimum of 1.2ha per 1000 being for pitch sport. The audit has identified 1617.11 ha of potential outdoor sports. This figure includes school playing fields and golf course both public and private. Further work is required to establish the extent of community use of school playing fields.
- 3.7 The NPFA recommend 0.6-0.8 ha per 1000 for children's playing space (including fixed play and play space within housing areas).
- 3.8 Natural England recommend
- An accessible natural green space of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home.
 - At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home.
 - One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home.
 - One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home.
 - Statutory Local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of one hectare per thousand population.
- 3.9 The Thorpe Report (1942) recommended 0.2 hectares per 1000 for allotments (This is the equivalent of 18 plots per 1000 households based on a plot being 300 square yards).

- 3.10 The National Society for Allotments would recommend 20 standard 300 square yard plots per 1000 households

Overall Quality of Provision

- 3.11 Data on the quality of provision has been gathered through detailed site assessments undertaken during each site visit. The key criteria for each typology provide each site with a score between 1 and 100. The scores for each site have then been categorised in accordance with the quality line.
- 3.12 The analysis indicates that the general quality of open space provision across the Borough is lower than 50% on the scoring matrix and that lower quality scores tend to be concentrated in Wards associated with poorer areas in the east of the Borough. This often tends to relate to the absence in best practice terms of what would be considered to be minimum standard facilities provided for the public. These include signage, benches, bins, good quality footpaths and sites that are well maintained safe and welcoming. This would argue a general need for existing open spaces to be improved where resources can be made available and may justify the drawing down of monies and site specific improvements through section 106 legal agreements. (See Map 3)

Figure 3.2 Quality Value Line

0% - 15%	16% - 30%	31% - 45%	46% - 60%	61% - 75%	76% +
Very Low	Low	Lower Middle	Upper Middle	High	Very High

Accessibility

- 3.13 Accessibility has been considered using national guidance or recommended thresholds for specific types of open space. Further work through public consultation is required to establish local accessibility thresholds for each type of open space. (See Map 4)

Analysis by Typology

- 3.14 The position with regard to each separate typology is considered in turn below, to identify the key issues relating to the current quantity, quality and distribution of each broad type of provision.
- 3.15 This analysis has also been used to recommend local standards of provision.

Parks and Gardens

Parks and Gardens provide accessible, high quality opportunities for a range of informal recreation activities, formal sporting opportunities and community events.

3.16 The typology includes urban parks, country parks and formal public gardens.'

Quantity – Parks and Gardens

3.17 The audit revealed a total of 55 sites within the Parks and Gardens typology occupying 650.5 hectares of land and providing a current standard of **2.07ha for every 1,000** (based on a population of 313,079 Source: ONS Mid Year 2005). residents across the Borough as whole.(See Map1)

3.18 The sites can be classified as follows:

- 8 large parks (449.3ha or 1.43ha per 1,000) including [5] Country Parks(370.65ha) (note: sites such as Bidston Hill have been classified within the natural and semi natural typology).
- 36 local parks (193.5ha or 0.61ha per 1,000).
- 11 formal gardens (7.8ha or 0.03ha per 1,000).

3.19 A summary of the quantity of parks and gardens for each Ward is shown below in Figure 3.3. Wards that have above the overall average for quantity are indicated in Green and those that rated below the Borough average are indicated in Red.

Figure 3.3 Provision of Parks and Gardens by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Bebington	15,424	3	19.3	1.25
Bidston & St James	14,225	1	2.87	0.20
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14,149	2	9.75	0.69
Bromborough	13,822	7	9.85	0.71
Clatterbridge	14,701	3	7.22	0.49
Claughton	14,615	1	57.49	3.94
Eastham	13,988	2	44.73	3.20
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14,569	3	59.67	4.10
Heswall	13,723	4	12.25	0.89
Hoylake & Meols	13,337	5	5.43	0.41
Leasowe & Moreton East	14,368	2	25.74	1.79
Liscard	14,602	0	0	0
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13,932	2	97.26	7.00
New Brighton	13,969	4	13.49	0.97
Oxton	13,841	1	16.48	1.19
Pensby & Thingwall	13,386	2	159.54	11.92

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Prenton	14,032	1	5.42	0.39
Rock Ferry	13,959	1	11.39	0.82
Seacombe	14,504	2	22.33	1.54
Upton	15,737	2	8.39	0.53
Wallasey	15,030	1	9.49	0.63
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13,166	6	52.4	3.98
Total	313,079	55	650.5	2.07

- 3.20 An analysis by Electoral Ward does not always take account of the wider pattern of provision across the area, for example, where a major site in one Ward may also serve a catchment population within an adjacent Ward.
- 3.21 *The inclusion of the larger Country Parks also has a significant effect on the totals for some Wards. Unlike the smaller local parks, many of the Country Parks are facilities of Borough wide importance located in areas more remote from residential communities.*
- 3.22 An analysis of the above data illustrates the following key issues:
- Five of the Six Wards with provision ahead of the Borough average have Country Parks within their boundaries. The sixth, Claughton Ward, includes Birkenhead Park (57.49 ha), at the eastern edge of the Ward.
 - The Borough wide average excluding the Country Parks would be 0.89ha per 1000 people.
 - Liscard Ward has no sites under the Parks and Gardens typology, with no audited parks or formal gardens falling within the Ward. The proximity of Central Park (21.15 ha), in adjoining Seacombe, addresses some of the needs in the southern part of the Ward.
 - Bidston and St James Ward have the next lowest level of provision with one site of 2.87ha. This is mainly due to the categorisation of many of the larger open spaces within the Ward as Semi and Natural Green space, (Bidston Hill being one).
 - Pensby & Thingwall has by far the greatest overall level of provision – nearly a quarter of the Wirral’s entire stock of parks and gardens (159.54ha) - but this is accounted for by Arrowe Country Park (153 ha) in the northern most part of the Ward. The only other Park and Garden in this Ward is Ridgewood Park in Pensby.
 - The figure for Moreton West and Saughall Massie is dominated by North Wirral Coastal Park (88.09ha).
 - The average site size for the Borough is [20ha] or [9ha] excluding the 5 Country Parks
 - Bromborough has the greatest number of sites (7). However, these total just 9.85ha, giving an average site size of 1.41ha.

Quality – Parks and Gardens

- 3.23 Quality inspections were undertaken as part of the site visit to each of the sites. The quality assessment was based on a number of key criteria encompassing the quality aspects of the Green Flag Award, ILAM Parks Management Guidance and the Tidy Britain Scheme. (See Map2) The key criteria for Parks and Gardens are set out in Figure 3.4.

Figure3.4 Parks and Gardens Quality Criteria

Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins, toilets • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness • The quality of specific facilities including play provision, bowls greens and multi-use games areas (shown as separate assessment)
--------------------------	--

3.24 A summary of the quality scores for each Ward is shown below in Figure 3.5. It should be noted that the quality of individual facilities such as play areas and playing pitches have been scored separately and are considered in a later section of this report. Wards that rated above the overall average for quality are indicated in Green and those that rated below the Borough average are indicated in Red.

Figure3.5 Parks and Gardens Summary Quality Scores by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Bebington	15424	3	28%-58%	43%
Bidston & St James	14225	1	29%	29%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	2	37%-71%	54%
Bromborough	13822	7	15%-48%	35%
Clatterbridge	14701	3	54%-81%	63%
Claughton	14615	1	45%	45%
Eastham	13988	2	54%-78%	66%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	3	47%-78%	62%
Heswall	13723	4	39%-58%	45%
Hoylake & Meols	13337	5	32%-63%	49%
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	2	26%-58%	42%
Liscard	14602	0	N/A	N/A
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	2	33%-44%	39%
New Brighton	13969	4	59%-66%	62%
Oxton	13841	1	42%	42%
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	2	28%-44%	36%
Prenton	14032	1	29%	29%
Rock Ferry	13959	1	36%	36%
Seacombe	14504	2	43%-59%	51%
Upton	15737	2	34%-44%	39%

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Wallasey	15030	1	54%	54%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	6	29%-70%	51%
Total	313,079	55	15%-81%	48%

3.25 Analysis of the data collected shows the following key issues:

- The Borough wide average score for the quality of Parks and Gardens sites was 48%, at the top end of the lower middle range of potential scores against the key criteria in Figure 2.2.
- There is a significant variation in the range of quality scores – from 15% (very low) to 81% (very high).
- The average score for twelve Wards (over half of the wards in the Borough) falls below the Borough average of 48%.
- The Borough currently has 11 Green Flag Parks, which must achieve a minimum score of 75% to qualify for the Award.
- The two Wards with the lowest overall quality rating – Prenton and Bidston & St James – have only one site in each Ward.
- Eastham obtained the highest overall average score – of 66%. However, this was only across two sites, one of which had obtained a Green Flag Award.
- For Wards with four or more sites, New Brighton scored the highest (62%), with all sites of a consistently good standard (59-66% range) while Bromborough scored worst (35%) with scores ranging from 15% to 48%.
- Within the three sub-categories, local parks scored an average of 47% (upper middle); large parks 53% (upper middle) and formal gardens 45% (lower middle).
- Of the sites assessed, 7 of the 55 had no litter bins (13%); 26 had no signage (47%) and 13 had no seating (24%). Only eight sites (15%) had lighting and eight sites offered toilets (15%).

Accessibility – Parks and Gardens

3.26 In considering the accessibility threshold Figure 3.6 identifies that 48% of the total number of households in the Borough are within 400m of a park or garden site. Figure 3.6 also identifies the breakdown within each Ward of the number and the percentage of households within 400m of parks and gardens. It is important to recognise that where there may be accessibility deficiencies these may be met by sites classified within the other typologies. (See Map 5).

Figure 3.6 Accessibility Threshold by Ward Area

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Bebington	6,709	3,263	49%	51%
Bidston & St James	7,461	3,044	41%	59%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	8,069	3,853	48%	52%
Bromborough	6,844	4,153	61%	39%
Clatterbridge	6,041	2,630	44%	56%
Claughton	6,740	3,120	46%	54%

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Eastham	6,153	2,003	33%	67%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	6,176	2,942	48%	52%
Heswall	6,015	3,604	60%	40%
Hoylake & Meols	6,040	3,402	56%	44%
Leasowe & Moreton East	6,700	3,110	46%	54%
Liscard	7,086	2,579	36%	64%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	6,220	3,123	50%	50%
New Brighton	7,231	4,126	57%	43%
Oxton	7,152	2,474	35%	65%
Pensby & Thingwall	6,100	3,373	55%	45%
Prenton	6,142	3,112	51%	49%
Rock Ferry	7,114	3,325	47%	53%
Seacombe	7,326	5,311	72%	28%
Upton	7,355	2,958	40%	60%
Wallasey	6,587	1,560	24%	76%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	5,809	3,864	67%	33%
Total	147,070	70,929	48%	52%

3.27 From Figure 3.6 the following the accessibility of parks and gardens can be summarised as follows

- Seacombe has the greatest number of households within the defined catchment with 72% of all households within 400m of a park or garden, West Kirkby and Thurstaston has 67% of households within the catchment.
- Wallasey has the least percentage of households within the defined catchment for parks and gardens with 24% of the total households in the Ward being within the threshold, Eastham also has a low percentage of households (33% within the catchment).
- 8 Wards fall below the average of 48% of households within the 400 m catchment threshold for parks and gardens.

3.28 Comparison at the Ward level can be misleading and need to be viewed in the context of the overall open and green space provision in each Area. A Ward may, for example, be deficient in parks but have a surplus of other types of green space that may serve the function of a local park.

Standards

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	To achieve and maintain a minimum standard of 2.07ha for every 1,000 people across Wirral MBC
Quality	To achieve 46% or above as the minimum standard for Parks and Gardens in the Borough
Accessibility	To aim to provide a good quality, accessible site to park or garden standard within 400m of where people live

Natural and Semi Natural Green space

Natural and Semi Natural green spaces are areas of unmanaged or managed land promoting a countryside experience or a wildlife, biodiversity interest such as a Local Nature Reserve. These sites, take a variety of forms, which are often important for their contribution to biodiversity and habitats for flora and fauna as well as provision for informal recreation and the appreciation of nature.

3.29 The typology can include green corridors, woodlands, scrubland, wetland and other nature conservation areas.

Quantity – Natural and Semi Natural Green space

3.30 The audit revealed a total of 83 sites within the Natural and Semi Natural Green space typology, occupying 506.3 hectares of land and providing a current standard of **1.62ha for every 1,000** residents across the Borough as a whole. (See Map1)

3.31 The sites include:

- 10 Nature Reserves (187.14 ha or 0.59ha per 1,000).
- 73 general natural areas (319.17 ha or 1.01ha per 1,000).

3.32 Additional Natural and Semi Natural green space is provided in Parks and Gardens and in sites falling within other open space typologies.

3.33 The breakdown of total space by Ward is shown in Figure 3.7 below.

Figure 3.7 Provision of Natural and Semi Natural Green space by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Bebington	15424	3	17.8	1.16
Bidston & St James	14225	10	109.4	7.70
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	0	N/A	N/A
Bromborough	13822	6	36.8	0.71

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Clatterbridge	14701	11	46.9	2.67
Claughton	14615	2	1.7	0.12
Eastham	13988	3	7.8	0.06
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	7	28.4	1.95
Heswall	13723	7	49.5	3.61
Hoylake & Meols	13337	6	18.9	1.42
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	3	2.3	0.16
Liscard	14602	2	2.6	0.18
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	2	1.2	0.09
New Brighton	13969	0	N/A	N/A
Oxton	13841	0	N/A	N/A
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	0	N/A	N/A
Prenton	14032	2	3.2	0.07
Rock Ferry	13959	2	1.5	0.11
Seacombe	14504	0	N/A	N/A
Upton	15737	6	20.1	1.28
Wallasey	15030	1	14.9	0.99
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	10	143.2	10.93
Total	313,079	83	506.3	1.62

3.34 The figures in Figure 3.7 do not include the large areas of natural and semi natural green space associated with many of the Borough's Country Parks, which are classified under a separate typology as parks and gardens.

3.35 An analysis of the above data, nevertheless, illustrates the following key issues:

- Five Wards with no Natural and Semi Natural Green space provision at all and the number of Wards with a low number of sites, underlines the uneven distribution of this type of open space across the Borough.
- The low level of provision recorded for Eastham and Moreton West and Saughall Massie excludes the substantial areas of semi natural green space associated with Eastham Country Park and North Wirral Coastal Park.
- West Kirby & Thurstaston has the highest overall level of provision – with over a quarter of the Borough's stock of Natural and Semi Natural Green space space (143.2ha) split across 10 sites including Thurstaston Common, (75 ha) which is the largest single Natural and Semi Natural Green space site in Wirral..
- The high level of provision in Bidston and St James contrasts strongly with the low level of provision recorded for Parks and Gardens. In other Wards, such as [Liscard, New Brighton, Birkenhead and Prenton], the low level of provision of Natural and Semi Natural Green space as well as of Parks and Gardens illustrates a cumulative shortfall of open space.

- The average site size for the Borough is 6.1ha.
- Clatterbridge has the greatest number of sites (11) with an average size of 4.26ha.

Quality – Natural and Semi Natural Green Space

3.36 Quality inspections were undertaken as part of the site visit to each of the sites. The quality assessment was based on a number of key criteria encompassing the quality aspects of the Green Flag Award, ILAM Parks Management Guidance and the Tidy Britain Scheme. (See Map 2) The key criteria for NSNG are set out in Figure 3.8.

Figure 3.8 Natural and Semi Natural Green space Assessment Criteria

Natural & Semi Natural Green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management mature and young trees • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins • Naturalistic Grass Areas • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness
---	--

3.37 A summary of the quality scores for each Ward is shown below in Figure 3.9

Figure 3.9 Natural and Semi Natural Green space Summary Quality Scores by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Bebington	15424	3	20-65	43%
Bidston & St James	14225	10	9-59	30%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	0	N/A	N/A
Bromborough	13822	6*	10-35	22%
Clatterbridge	14701	11	15-50	28%
Claughton	14615	2	2-13	8%
Eastham	13988	3	33-38	35%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	7	16-62	34%
Heswall	13723	7	26-37	32%
Hoylake & Meols	13337	6	23-36	30%
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	3	7-29	16%
Liscard	14602	2	17-28	22%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	2	15-18	17%
New Brighton	13969	0	N/A	N/A
Oxton	13841	0	N/A	N/A
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	0	N/A	N/A

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Prenton	14032	2*	42	42%
Rock Ferry	13959	2	16-24	20%
Seacombe	14504	0	N/A	N/A
Upton	15737	6	6-35	18%
Wallasey	15030	1	46	46%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	10	25-64	40%
Total	313,079	83	2-65	29%

3.38 Analysis of the data collected shows the following key issues:

- The Borough wide average score for the quality of Natural and Semi Natural Green space sites was 29%, rating within the low band width range of potential scores against the key criteria in Figure 3.7.
- The low scores are largely accounted for by the fact that 51 sites (61% of sites classified within this typology) lacked signage, 63 sites (76%) had no litter bin and 63 sites (76%) had no seating for visitors, important elements that contribute to the visitor experience..
- There is a wide variation in the range of quality scores achieved – from 2% (very low) to 65% (high)
- Claughton has the lowest overall quality rating, scoring just 8% across two sites, including the poorest site in the Borough – Vyner Road South open space, which scored just 2%.
- Every Ward with multiple sites has at least one site with a score classified as low.
- Wallasey scored the highest overall Average – of 46%. However, this was across only one site – Cross Lane Community Woodland. It is important to recognise that this was not the highest scoring natural and semi natural green space in the Borough. It is the only site classified within this typology within Wallasey. The highest scoring site was Storeton Wood in Bebington (rated at 65%).
- Of the Wards with four or more sites, West Kirby & Thurstaston scored highest (40%), with several sites of a consistently middle scoring quality (25-64% range), while Upton scored worst (18%) with scores ranging from 6% to 35%.

Natural England Standards

3.39 Natural England (formerly English Nature) has recommended that local authorities set standards relating to natural green space provision known as the Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt). This guidance was formally issued in 1996 within 'A Space for Nature'. The recommended standards are:

- That no person should be located more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space 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;
- That there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km; and
- That there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.

3.40 The ANGSt model was reviewed by Natural England (then known as English Nature) in 2003 (Accessible Natural Green space Standards in Towns and Cities: A Review and Toolkit). The review identified a number of problems with the model.

3.41 The definition used within the model of natural green space as “areas naturally colonised by plants and animals” was identified as being unclear and not practical. The definition also excluded man made

types of vegetation, which predominate within urban areas, which can often also have a high biodiversity value.

3.42 Natural England has yet to adopt revised natural green space standards following the review. However, the review does recommend that the ecological value of green space should be determined through undertaking a Phase 1 Habitat survey. National planning policy also recommends that local authorities adopt locally based standards of provision rather than adopt nationally derived standards without local justification.

3.43 The Wirral audit findings reveal that:

- There is **506 ha** of provision, equating to **1.72ha** per 1,000 population of natural and semi natural green space
- 41 sites are below 2 ha in size
- 42 sites fall between the 2-20 ha category, identified within the ANGSt Standards
- 9 sites are over 20 ha in size
- Under ANGSt there would be a requirement for 313 ha of land designated as Local Nature Reserve. At present Wirral has only ten sites designated as Local Nature Reserves covering 187.14 ha, implying a potential requirement for a further 128ha of land to be designated as Local Nature Reserve. It is important to note that this standard applies only for sites officially designated as Local Nature Reserves as such the Borough needs to identify sites that could be officially designated from within the existing natural and semi natural green space provision.

Accessibility – Natural and Semi Natural Green Space

3.44 In considering the accessibility threshold Figure 3.9 identifies that 33% of the total number of households in the Borough are within 400m of a natural and semi natural green space site, Figure 3.10 also identifies within each Ward, the number and the percentage of households within 400m of natural and semi natural green space. It is important to recognise that where there may be accessibility deficiencies these may be met by sites classified within the other typologies. (See Map 6)

Figure 3.10 Accessibility Threshold by Ward Area

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Bebington	6,709	2,232	33%	67%
Bidston & St James	7,461	3,640	49%	51%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	8,069	0	0%	100%
Bromborough	6,844	4,126	60%	40%
Clatterbridge	6,041	4,761	79%	21%
Claughton	6,740	2,142	32%	68%
Eastham	6,153	2,144	35%	65%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	6,176	4,435	72%	28%
Heswall	6,015	3,703	62%	38%
Hoylake & Meols	6,040	2,744	45%	55%

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Leasowe & Moreton East	6,700	2,141	32%	68%
Liscard	7,086	1,417	20%	80%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	6,220	1,571	25%	75%
New Brighton	7,231	0	0%	100%
Oxton	7,152	0	0%	100%
Pensby & Thingwall	6,100	614	10%	90%
Prenton	6,142	1,494	24%	76%
Rock Ferry	7,114	1,249	18%	82%
Seacombe	7,326	157	2%	98%
Upton	7,355	4,536	62%	38%
Wallasey	6,587	1,847	28%	72%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	5,809	3,994	69%	31%
Total	147,070	48,947	33%	67%

3.45 From Figure 3.10 the following the accessibility of natural and semi natural green space can be summarised as follows:

- Clatterbridge has the greatest number of households within the defined catchment with 79% of all households within 400m of a natural and semi natural green space, West Kirby and Thurstaston has 69% of households within the catchment.
- 3 Wards Birkenhead & Tranmere, New Brighton and Oxton have no sites that have been classified as having the primary purpose of being natural and semi natural green space.
- Seacombe has the lowest percentage of households within the defined catchment for natural and semi natural green space with 2% of the total households in the Ward being within the threshold, Seacombe has the greatest number of households within the catchment for parks and gardens and it must be recognised that Parks and Gardens with the variety of habitats and landscape may serve a similar purpose to natural and semi natural green space in providing people with access to nature.
- 12 Wards fall below the current average of 33% of households within the 400 m catchment threshold for natural and semi natural green space.

3.46 Comparison at the Ward level can be misleading and need to be viewed in the context of the overall open and green space provision in each Area. Owing to the fact that a Ward may be deficient in Natural and Semi Natural but have a surplus of other types of green space that may serve the function of a Natural and Semi Natural space.

3.47 **As a minimum there should be an accessible natural or semi natural green space within 400m of where people live.**

Standards

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	<p>To achieve and maintain a minimum standard of 1.6 ha for every 1,000 people across Wirral MBC</p> <p>To provide at least 1.0 ha of Local Nature Reserve for every 1000 people</p>
Quality	To achieve 46% or above as the minimum standard for Natural and Semi Natural Green spaces in the Borough
Accessibility	To provide an accessible good quality natural or semi natural green space within 400m of where people live

Outdoor Sports Facilities

- 3.48 This typology includes a variety of community accessible sports facilities (public and private) providing for participation in outdoor sports, including facilities such as playing pitches, bowling greens, golf courts and tennis courts.
- 3.49 The audit of provision for outdoor sport includes all those facilities within other typologies including parks and open spaces. It also includes those stand alone sites specifically provided for sport. Further work is required to establish the level and range of community accessible provision that is included within the overall figure. (See Map 1)
- 3.50 Other more informal facilities, such as multi-use games areas (MUGAs) have been included within the other listed typologies. Given their primary intended use, these sites have been included under the assessment of provision for children and young people.

Quantity – Outdoor Sports Facilities

- 3.51 The audit has revealed a total of 1079.4 ha of land provided as an outdoor sports facility on 272 sites. This equates to a current standard of **3.45 for every 1,000** residents across the Borough as a whole. It is important to note that this includes those sports facilities within other typologies such as pitches in parks.
- 3.52 It is also important to note that the level and extent of community use of school playing fields has not been established during the course of this assessment and where community use has been indicated this information has been collated from known use by officers in the Council.
- 3.53 The sites can be classified as follows:
- 88 sites with grass pitches with known community use totalling 282.4 ha or a provision of 0.90 ha per 1000 population and a total of 235 grass pitches
 - 11 sites each with an artificial turf pitches totalling 5.7ha or a provision of 0.02 ha per 1000 population
 - 38 tennis court sites totalling 11ha or a provision of 0.04ha per 1000 and a total of 171 courts
 - 53 bowling green sites providing a total of 78 greens on 15.4 ha or a provision of 0.05 ha per 1000
 - 3 sites with an athletics track totalling 4.5ha or a provision of 0.01 ha per 1000 population
 - 133 school playing field sites totalling 172.2 ha or a provision of 0.55 ha per 1000 population

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Open Space Assessment

- 16 golf courses occupying 597.9 ha or a provision of 1.90 ha per 1000
- 3.54 A number of outdoor sports facilities are provided in parks and gardens and in sites falling within other open space typologies. The breakdown of total space by Ward is shown in Figure 3.11 below.

Figure 3.11 Quantitative Provision of Outdoor Sports Facilities (total) by Electoral Ward

Ward	Pop'n	Sites with Grass Pitches		Sites with ATP		Sites with Tennis Courts		Sites with Bowling Greens		Sites with Athletics track		School Playing Fields		Golf Courses		total hectares	ha per 1000 population
		No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha		
Bebington	15424	3	24.8	2	0.9	2	0.5	1	0.2	1	1.4	11	17.4	1	43.5	88.7	5.75
Bidston & St James	14225	1	2	1	0.7	1	1	0	0	0	0	8	4.6	0	0	8.3	0.58
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	3	0.9	0	0	1.1	0.08
Bromborough	13822	5	9.7	0	0	2	0.3	5	1	0	0	2	1.8	1	5.8	18.6	1.35
Clatterbridge	14701	4	20.5	0	0	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	5	3.1	1	58.5	82.2	5.59
Claughton	14615	5	16.1	2	0.9	1	0.6	3	2.3	0	0	9	19.3	1	24.5	63.7	4.36
Eastham	13988	11	56.5	0	0	3	0.9	2	0.4	0	0	8	13.4	1	38.2	109.4	7.82
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	4	12.7	0	0	2	0.3	3	1	0	0	5	5.5	0	0	19.5	1.34
Heswall	13723	5	5.4	0	0	2	0.6	3	0.5	0	0	4	2	1	53.97	62.47	4.55
Hoylake & Meols	13337	4	8.5	0	0	6	1.5	6	1.2	0	0	4	4.8	2	113.6	129.6	9.72
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	6	14.5	0	0	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	12	24.3	2	72.4	111.4	7.75
Liscard	14602	2	3.1	0	0	0	0	3	0.5	0	0	1	0.2	0	0	3.8	0.26
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	1	5.4	0	0	1	0.1	2	0.5	1	1.5	2	1.2	1	8.72	17.42	1.25
New Brighton	13969	1	0.6	0	0	3	0.6	4	0.8	0	0	2	0.9	0	0	2.9	0.21
Oxton	13841	4	11.3	1	0.6	2	0.9	3	0.7	0	0	5	9.4	0	0	22.9	1.65

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Ward	Pop'n	Sites with Grass Pitches		Sites with ATP		Sites with Tennis Courts		Sites with Bowling Greens		Sites with Athletics track		School Playing Fields		Golf Courses		total hectares	ha per 1000 population
		No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha	No	Ha		
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	2	21	1	0.9	3	0.8	3	1	0	0	7	11.8	0	0	35.5	2.65
Prenton	14032	5	12.5	0	0	1	0.4	1	0.2	0	0	4	2.7	1	42.32	58.12	4.14
Rock Ferry	13959	3	6.5	0	0	0	0	4	1.1	0	0	6	5.9	0	0	13.5	0.97
Seacombe	14504	3	7.9	0	0	1	0.3	3	2	0	0	7	2.3	0	0	12.5	0.86
Upton	15737	4	8.4	1	0.6	1	0.5	1	0.3	1	1.6	10	18.7	0	0	29.5	1.87
Wallasey	15030	7	19.2	1	0.4	4	1.1	2	0.7	0	0	8	6	3	76.8	104.2	6.93
West Kirkby & Thurstaston	13166	8	15.8	2	1.3	2	0.5	2	0.6	0	0	10	16	1	49.9	84.1	6.39
Total	313,079	88	282.4	11	5.7	38	11	53	15.4	3	4.5	133	172.2	16	588.2	1079.4	3.45

- 3.55 An analysis of the data in the table highlights the following key points with regard to the overall quantity of outdoor sports facilities:
- The lowest level of provision is Birkenhead & Tranmere, which has a provision totalling 1.1ha which is equivalent to 0.08ha/1,000. Liscard also has few sites providing outdoor sport with a total provision 3.8ha or a provision of 0.26 ha per 1000 population. There are 12 Wards with a provision level under the Borough average of 3.45 per 1,000.
 - Hoylake has highest level of provision overall, with 129.6 ha, equivalent to 9.72 ha per 1,000.
 - The average site size is 3.76 hectares excluding golf courses.
- 3.56 The UDP initially required a provision of playing fields (school, public and private) with secured community use of 1.21ha per 1000 population.
- 3.57 The Council has since produced a Playing Pitch Strategy (undertaken in 2002 and adopted in 2004). This Strategy needs to be updated to reflect the changes to the ‘Towards a Level Playing Field’ methodology advocated by Sport England to provide the Council with a clear and comprehensive needs based assessment of supply and demand for sports pitches and the level and extent of future provision predicted through the use of team generation rates based on participating population.

Quality – Outdoor Sports Facilities

- 3.58 Quality inspections were undertaken as part of the site visit to each of the publicly-accessible sites The quality assessment was based on a number of key criteria encompassing the quality aspects of the Green Flag Award, as well as criteria detailed in Towards a Level Playing Field – the playing pitch assessment guidance issued by Sport England. (See Map 2) The key criteria for Formal Outdoor Sport are set out in Figure 3.12.

Figure 3.12 Assessment Criteria for Outdoor Sports Sites

Outdoor Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management mature and young trees • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins, dog bins • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness • Facility Assessment (pitches, greens courts)
----------------------	--

- 3.59 Only publicly accessible sites were evaluated for quality. Private sites with no right of public access could not be assessed. A significant number of sites have therefore not been quality scored. The results set out in Figure 3.12 below only refer to the audited facilities (total number 44).
- 3.60 A summary of the quality scores for each Ward is shown below in Figure 3.13.

Figure 3.13 Outdoor Sports Facilities Summary Quality Scores by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Bebington	15424	34-66	45%
Bidston & St James	14225	77	77%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	N/A	N/A
Bromborough	13822	15-56	34%
Clatterbridge	14701	N/A	N/A

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Ward	Area population	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Claughton	14615	31-44	39%
Eastham	13988	18-30	26%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	N/A	N/A
Heswall	13723	31-43	38%
Hoylake & Meols	13337	27-29	28%
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	22-39	31%
Liscard	14602	21	21%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	38	38%
New Brighton	13969	36	36%
Oxton	13841	13-15	14%
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	37-70	54%
Prenton	14032	27	27%
Rock Ferry	13959	N/A	N/A
Seacombe	14504	34	34%
Upton	15737	47	47%
Wallasey	15030	9-34	21%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	20-68	41%
Total	313,079	9-77	36%

3.61 It is important to note that the audit was undertaken out of season for many pitch based sports and many sites were not rated for the quality of pitches. This has a marked effect on the average quality of sites. It is equally important to realise that the audit is a snapshot in time and quality may vary dependent on whether sites audited had been cut that week, had suffered from extensive litter or over use, for example, following a weekend of wet weather.

3.62 Analysis of the data collected shows the following key issues:

- Across Wirral MBC as a whole, publicly accessible sites scored an average of 36% - a lower middle score. 11 Wards obtained a lower middle score, five a low score, one a very low score. Only two Wards obtained an upper middle score or very high score.
- There is a significant range of qualities shown by the results, from 9% (very low) to 77% (very high)
- Oxton has the lowest overall quality rating, scoring 14% across two sites. The poorest site overall was in Wallasey – the School Lane Playing Fields, which scored just 9%.
- Bidston & St James scored highest, but only over one site – Bidston Sports Centre – which was the highest scoring site in the audit (77%).
- Only three Wards had five or more publicly accessible sites – Bromborough (score 34%); Wallasey (21%) and West Kirby & Thurstaston (41%).

3.63 It is important to note that many of the private sites were not rated for quality and from experience, the quality of these sites tends to be slightly higher, as they often have dedicated grounds persons with greater control in bad weather and limited misuse though illegal or informal play.

Accessibility – Outdoor Sport

- 3.64 In considering the accessibility threshold Figure 3.14 identifies that 93% of the total number of households in the Borough are within 1000m of an outdoor sports site, Figure 3.13 also identifies the breakdown within each of Ward Areas and the percentage of households within 1000m of outdoor sport sites (See Map 8).

Figure 3.14 Accessibility Thresholds by Ward Area

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 1,000m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Bebington	6,709	6,672	99%	1%
Bidston & St James	7,461	7,131	96%	4%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	8,069	7,190	89%	11%
Bromborough	6,844	5,837	85%	15%
Clatterbridge	6,041	4,829	80%	20%
Claughton	6,740	6,740	100%	0%
Eastham	6,153	5,741	93%	7%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	6,176	5,837	95%	5%
Heswall	6,015	5,328	89%	11%
Hoylake & Meols	6,040	5,906	98%	2%
Leasowe & Moreton East	6,700	4,862	73%	27%
Liscard	7,086	7,086	100%	0%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	6,220	5,928	95%	5%
New Brighton	7,231	7,231	100%	0%
Oxton	7,152	7,151	100%	0%
Pensby & Thingwall	6,100	4,083	67%	33%
Prenton	6,142	6,142	100%	0%
Rock Ferry	7,114	7,115	100%	0%
Seacombe	7,326	7,222	99%	1%
Upton	7,355	6,976	95%	5%
Wallasey	6,587	6,587	100%	0%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	5,809	4,609	79%	21%

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 1,000m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Total	147,070	136,203	93%	7%

3.65 From Figure 3.14 the following the accessibility of outdoor sport based on distance thresholds can be summarised as follows:

- 7 wards have 100% of households within the defined threshold (Claughton, Liscard, New Brighton, Oxtan, Prenton, Rock Ferry and Wallasey).
- Bebington, Bidston and St James, Eastham, Hoylake & Meols, Moreton West and Saughall Massie, Seacombe and Upton all have over 90% of households within a catchment of 1000m.
- 7 wards fall below the current average of 93% of all households within 100m of a sports facility site (Bromborough, Clatterbridge, Heswall, Leasowe and Moreton Pensby & Thingwall and West Kirkby and Thurstaston).
- It is important to recognise that golf courses and school playing fields are included and these are not fully accessible and as such further research is needed to establish the level and extent of community use that is available.

3.66 Sport facilities are a demand led provision and as such the Council needs to consider supply and demand using the Playing Pitch Strategy as the point of reference for future provision rather than the quantitative standards identified above.

Standards

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	To establish community use and pitch demand in accordance with Sport England guidance for playing pitches and to provide a standard of 3.45ha per 1000 population for outdoor sports facilities
Quality	To achieve 46% as the minimum quality standard for Outdoor Sports Facilities in the Borough
Accessibility	To provide a good quality Sports facility within 1000m of where people live

Amenity Green Space

The Amenity Green Space (AGS) typology includes open space in housing areas, village greens, informal recreational space and hard-surfaced areas designed for pedestrians that provide opportunities for informal activities close to home or work.

3.67 They may function both as casual recreation areas as well as providing aesthetic value.

3.68 The AGS sites in this study have been split into two types:

- Active amenity spaces – locally accessible areas which provide opportunities for informal activities, for example dog walking or informal play.
- Visual amenity spaces – areas which generally only improve the visual appearance of residential or built-up areas.

Quantity – Amenity Green Space

- 3.69 The audit revealed a total of 137 sites classified as Amenity Green Space typology. PPG17 guidance advocates a size threshold of 0.2 ha. (See Map1)
- 3.70 The sites can be classified as follows:
- Active amenity spaces – 72 sites totalling 90.3 hectares (or 0.28ha per 1,000)
 - Visual amenity spaces – 65 sites totalling 28.7 hectares (or 0.09ha per 1,000)
- 3.71 The total provision of AGS is therefore 119 hectares, equal to **0.38ha for every 1,000** residents across the Borough as a whole.
- 3.72 The breakdown of total space by Ward is shown in Figure 3.15 below.

Figure 3.15 Quantitative Provision of Amenity Green Space (total) by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Bebington	15424	4	1.8	0.12
Bidston & St James	14225	10	14.9	1.05
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	2	0.7	0.05
Bromborough	13822	18	13.1	0.95
Clatterbridge	14701	7	2.7	0.18
Claughton	14615	7	5.4	0.37
Eastham	13988	5	4.6	0.33
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	6	2.6	0.18
Heswall	13723	1	0.5	0.04
Hoylake & Meols	13337	5	3.4	0.26
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	5	2.5	0.17
Liscard	14602	3	1.6	0.11
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	8	8.5	0.61
New Brighton	13969	11	12.4	0.89
Oxton	13841	6	4.2	0.30
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	2	1.8	0.14
Prenton	14032	1	0.2	0.01
Rock Ferry	13959	6	5.5	0.42
Seacombe	14504	5	2.7	0.19
Upton	15737	9	4.6	0.29
Wallasey	15030	8	24.0	1.6

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	4	1.4	0.11
Total	313,079	137	119	0.38

3.73 An analysis of the data in Figure 3.15 highlights the following key points:

- The lowest level of provision is in Prenton, which has only one audited Amenity Green Space site of 0.2ha. Heswall too has just one site, of 0.5ha.
- The highest level of provision is in Wallasey (24 hectares), over 19 hectares of which is at Kings Parade which has been split into five sub-sites.
- Bidston & St James is the only other Ward with more than 1ha of Amenity Green Space for every thousand people. The majority of Wards have levels of provision well below this level.
- Bromborough has the greatest number of sites (18) ahead of New Brighton (11) and Bidston & St James (10).
- The average overall site size is 0.87ha, which provides a reasonably sized site likely to be useful to local people and to function strongly as amenity space close to where people live.

3.74 **The provision of *Amenity Green Space* needs to be considered alongside the local provision of other types of open space such as Parks and Gardens and provision for Children and Young People.**

Quality – Amenity Green Space

3.75 Quality inspections were undertaken as part of the site visit to each of the *Amenity Green Space* sites. The quality assessment was based on a number of key criteria encompassing the quality aspects of the Green Flag Award, ILAM Parks Management Guidance and the Tidy Britain Scheme. (See Map 2). The key criteria for *Amenity Green Space* are set out in Figure 3.16.

Figure 3.16 Assessment Criteria for Amenity Green space

Amenity Green Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence and quality of signage and information • Boundary fencing and hedges • Tree management • The quality of key furniture including seats, bins • The quality of maintenance, grass cutting, pathways • Cleanliness
----------------------------	---

3.76 A summary of the quality scores for each Ward is shown below in Figure.3.17

Figure 3.17 Amenity Green Space Summary Quality Scores by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Bebington	15424	4	29-58	48%
Bidston & St James	14225	10	26-72	41%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	2	38-41	39%
Bromborough	13822	18	5-54	25%
Clatterbridge	14701	7	39-56	49%

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Claughton	14615	7	21-54	33%
Eastham	13988	5	11-35	25%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	6	17-58	39%
Heswall	13723	1	48	48%
Hoylake & Meols	13337	5	36-57	49%
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	5	26-37	32%
Liscard	14602	3	10-34	22%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	8	14-44	30%
New Brighton	13969	11	23-60	41%
Oxton	13841	6	17-51	32%
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	2	39-50	45%
Prenton	14032	1	51	51%
Rock Ferry	13959	6	21-53	39%
Seacombe	14504	5	31-55	40%
Upton	15737	9*	8-42	28%
Wallasey	15030	8	25-58	43%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	4	28-50	41%
Total	313,079	137	5-72	38%

* Some sites were not available due to access issues. These have not been counted in the score [these sites include Home Farm Close (Site ID8940), Hoole Road (Site ID 939), New Hey Road (Site ID854) and Carr Bridge Road Backland (Site ID943) all where locked with no access at the time of auditing].

3.77 Analysis of the data in Figure 3.17 illustrates the following key issues:

- Across Wirral MBC as a whole, amenity green space scored 38%. No Wards scored a very low rating overall.
- There is notable variation in the quality scores – from 5% (very low) to 72% (high).
- The lowest scoring Wards were Liscard (22%), Bromborough (25%) and Eastham (25%).
- Prenton scored the highest overall score (51%) but this was only across a single site (Osmaston Road War Memorial).
- Within the two sub-categories, active amenity spaces scored an average of 34% while visual amenity sites scored an average of 39%, both falling within the lower middle range of possible scores.
- Of the 137 sites assessed, only 30 had litter bins (22%); 29 had seating (21%) and 22 sites had lighting (16%).

Accessibility – Amenity Green Space

3.78 In considering the accessibility threshold Figure 3.18 identifies that 56% of the total number of

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

households in the Borough are within 400m of an amenity green space site, Figure 3.18 also identifies the breakdown within each Ward and the percentage of households within 400m of amenity green space sites. It is important to recognise that some accessibility deficiencies may be met by sites classified within the other typologies (See Map 7).

Figure 3.18 Accessibility thresholds by Ward Area

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Bebington	6,709	3,871	58%	42%
Bidston & St James	7,461	5,537	74%	26%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	8,069	2,533	31%	69%
Bromborough	6,844	5,506	80%	20%
Clatterbridge	6,041	3,611	60%	40%
Claughton	6,740	4,771	71%	29%
Eastham	6,153	3,540	58%	42%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	6,176	3,459	56%	44%
Heswall	6,015	530	9%	91%
Hoyle & Meols	6,040	2,070	34%	66%
Leasowe & Moreton East	6,700	3,280	49%	51%
Liscard	7,086	3,433	48%	52%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	6,220	4,908	79%	21%
New Brighton	7,231	6,861	95%	5%
Oxton	7,152	3,670	51%	49%
Pensby & Thingwall	6,100	1,643	27%	73%
Prenton	6,142	1,502	24%	76%
Rock Ferry	7,114	5,260	74%	26%
Seacombe	7,326	4,985	68%	32%
Upton	7,355	4,636	63%	37%
Wallasey	6,587	4,482	68%	32%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	5,809	2,586	45%	55%
Total	147,070	82,674	56%	44%

3.79 Analysis of the data in Figure 3.18 highlights the following key points:

- 95% of all households in New Brighton are within 400m of an amenity green space site.

- Only 9% of households in Heswall have access to amenity green space within 400m of where they live.
- 12 Wards have a higher percentage of households within 400m than the Borough average of 56% of households.
- 9 Wards fall below this average for the percentage of households within the 400m threshold.

Standards

- 3.80 The National Playing Fields Association recommended a provision of 0.6-0.8ha per1000 of children's playing space including fixed play within housing areas. Applying an expected provision of 0.7ha (mid point between 0.6 and 0.8) would require a provision of 219ha of Amenity Green Space and Provision for Children and Young People.
- 3.81 The Council needs to consider how amenity green space is provided in the future .The Council should not consider accepting small fragmented insignificant spaces provided by developers in new residential development as they are often difficult to maintain, have the potential to become nuisance sites for residents and provide limited recreational value. The preference should be to seek investment from developers to improve existing space rather than inherit more of the same, If the need is to provide more it is best if the space is consolidated to form a large enough site of recreational purpose as part of the residential layout and development design, ideally if this can be linked to existing space to create a larger site overall this would be more valuable.

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	0.38 ha per 1,000 population across Wirral MBC as the minimum Future provision to be no less than 1ha in size
Quality	To achieve 46% or above as the minimum standard for Amenity Green Space in the Borough
Accessibility	To provide amenity green space within 400m of where people live

Provision for Children and Young People

- 3.82 Provision for Children and Young People (CYP) consists of areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, multi-use games areas (MUGA), teen shelters, BMX tracks and skateboard parks. The provision of facilities for children and young people is important in facilitating opportunities for play and physical activity and the development of movement and social skills. (See Map 1)
- 3.83 A variety of types of open space can provide children and young people with these opportunities, but the audit has used the principle of 'primary purpose' to define the main typology within which each site should fall.

Quantity – Children and Young People

- 3.84 The audit has revealed a total of 99 sites occupying 25.79 ha or a provision of 0.08ha per 1000 population.
- 3.85 The sites can be classified as follows;

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

- 73 public play areas (14.34 ha or 0.04ha per 1,000)
- 38 Mugas
- 4 Skate parks
- 1 BMX Track

3.86 A number of facilities for Children and Young People are provided in sites falling within other open space typologies. The breakdown of total space, by ward, is shown in Figure 3.19 below:

Figure 3.19 Provision for Children and Young People by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Bebington	15,424	3	0.38	0.02
Bidston & St James	14,225	10	2.66	0.19
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14,149	3	0.67	0.05
Bromborough	13,822	5	1.21	0.09
Clatterbridge	14,701	4	0.39	0.03
Claughton	14,615	1	0.51	0.03
Eastham	13,988	5	1.19	0.09
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14,569	2	0.47	0.03
Heswall	13,723	4	0.63	0.05
Hoylake & Meols	13,337	5	0.82	0.06
Leasowe & Moreton East	14,368	10	1.91	0.13
Liscard	14,602	1	0.17	0.01
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13,932	2	0.30	0.02
New Brighton	13,969	7	3.16	0.23
Oxton	13,841	1	0.19	0.01
Pensby & Thingwall	13,386	2	0.59	0.04
Prenton	14,032	3	0.47	0.03
Rock Ferry	13,959	7	0.81	0.06
Seacombe	14,504	13	3.68	0.25
Upton	15,737	5	0.50	0.03
Wallasey	15,030	3	3.93	0.26
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13,166	3	1.15	0.09
Total	313,079	99	25.79	0.08

3.87 An analysis of the data in Figure 3.19 illustrates the following key issues:

- Three wards have only one identified site; Claughton; Liscard; and Oxton.
- Only three Wards have provision that runs into double figures – Bidston & St James; Leasowe &

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Open Space Assessment

Moreton East; and Seacombe.

- The average number of sites per ward is five.
- The average site size across the Borough is 0.26ha.
- In terms of land provided, four wards have significantly greater provision (New Brighton 3.16ha, Seacombe 3.68 ha, Wallasey 3.93ha and Bidston and St James 2.66ha).
- Sites in Wallasey are larger than elsewhere averaging 1.31ha.

3.88 The Council need to consider moving away from the provision of small sites with limited equipment in favour of larger sites that provide more opportunity and greater play value.

3.89 The provision identified is outlined below by type and by ward

Figure 3.20 Provision by Type by Electoral Ward

WARD	Play Area	MUGA	SKATEPARK	BMXTRACK
Bebington	3	2	0	0
Bidston & St James	6	6	0	0
Birkenhead & Tranmere	5	3	0	0
Bromborough	3	2	0	0
Clatterbridge	3	0	0	0
Claughton	1	1	0	0
Eastham	3	3	1	0
Greasby Frankby & Irby	2	0	0	0
Heswall	4	0	1	0
Hoyle & Meols	4	1	0	0
Leasowe & Moreton East	10	3	0	0
Liscard	1	0	0	0
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	2	0	1	0
New Brighton	5	3	1	0
Oxton	1	0	0	1
Pensby & Thingwall	2	1	0	0
Prenton	1	0	0	0
Rock Ferry	3	5	0	0
Seacombe	7	3	0	0
Upton	2	1	0	0
Wallasey	2	2	0	0
West Kirby & Thurstaston	3	2	0	0
Total	73	38	4	1

3.90 Figure 3.20 identifies a significant variation in the provision of play facilities for children and young people across the Borough:

- Every ward has a fixed play provision Liscard has the least provision with a solitary site whereas Leasowe and Moreton East has 13 different facilities for children and young people.
- 6 Wards are not provided with a MUGA whereas wards such as Rock Ferry have (5) and Bidston and St James have (6).
- There are 4 skate facilities and 1 BMX track provided in the Borough.

3.91 The audit has identified approximately 473 pieces of fixed play equipment in the Borough. The spatial distribution of equipment is outlined in Figure 3.21.

Figure 3.21 Number and Percentage of Equipment by Electoral Ward

WARD	Total	% of Equipment
Bebington	15	3%
Bidston & St James	30	6%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	32	7%
Bromborough	22	5%
Clatterbridge	21	4%
Cloughton	13	3%
Eastham	20	4%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	15	3%
Heswall	25	5%
Hoylake & Meols	35	7%
Leasowe & Moreton East	49	10%
Liscard	6	1%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	14	3%
New Brighton	34	7%
Oxton	6	1%
Pensby & Thingwall	16	3%
Prenton	5	1%
Rock Ferry	16	3%
Seacombe	42	9%
Upton	18	4%
Wallasey	11	2%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	28	6%
Total	473	100

3.92 From the table above:

- Leasowe and Moreton East has by far the greatest percentage of the overall fixed play equipment within the Borough, Seacombe also has a relatively high provision compared to other wards.
- Three wards have 1% or less of the total equipment (Liscard, Oxton and Prenton).
- Provision in Cloughton is in Birkenhead Park which represents 3% of the total across the Borough.

3.93 The above provision per ward can be used as an indicator to compare against the population of children and young people aged 0-19 to establish the ratio of equipment per child. Improved results would be available if this analysis was based on the local population of children within each Ward.

Quality – Provision for Children and Young People

3.94 Quality Inspections were undertaken as part of the site visit to each of the sites with fixed play equipment. The quality assessment for play areas has been based on the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) "Play Value Assessment" and looks at a variety of criteria including the overall appearance of the site, other ambience and the type of equipment by age range. The quality inspections consider a number of factors, which have been used to rate the quality and value of each local play facility (See Map 2).

3.95 It is important to note that good quality play provision is not simply about providing equipment. It is also about the environment that equipment is situated in. The audit has therefore included elements which best practice play areas have been found to promote, including factors such as diversities in texture, use of wildflowers and landscaping. In supporting a 'sense of place' it considers whether the play area is locally related to reflect some aspect of local significance. For example, where the site is near a railway whether the design reflects the theme of trains and railways. The key criteria are outlined below:

- Balancing
- Climbing
- Crawling
- Gliding
- Group Swinging
- Single Swinging
- Ball Play
- Jumping
- Rotating
- Sliding
- Rocking
- Agility Bridges
- Viewing Platform
- Wheeled Play

3.96 Site scores not only consider the condition of the equipment, they also consider the play value of the entire designated play area. This includes consideration of the different types of activity that the play area would allow including:

- Overall site features including access gates, whether the area is pollution and noise free, presence of shade, access for the disabled, appropriate signage, locally related features and seating
- Equipment for toddlers, juniors and teenagers has been assessed as discrete elements within the overall play value assessment.

3.97 A summary of the quality scores for each Ward is shown in Figure 3.22, below

Figure 3.22 Children and Young People Summary Quality Scores by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Bebington	15424	3	30%-43%	43%
Bidston & St James	14225	10	12%-35%	35%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	3	21%-38%	38%
Bromborough	13822	5	31%-40%	37%
Clatterbridge	14701	4	27%-35%	32%
Claughton	14615	1	39%	39%
Eastham	13988	5	26%-42%	34%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	2	29%-38%	33%
Heswall	13723	4	16%-32%	22%
Hoylake & Meols	13337	5	22%-37%	31%
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	10	15%-48%	31%
Liscard	14602	1	42%	42%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	2	31%-35%	33%
New Brighton	13969	7	27%-47%	36%
Oxton	13841	1	38%	38%
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	2	13%-33%	23%
Prenton	14032	3	40%	40%
Rock Ferry	13959	7	26%-38%	33%

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Seacombe	14504	13	24%-49%	33%
Upton	15737	5	31%-38%	34%
Wallasey	15030	3	27%-29%	28%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	3	24%-35%	28%
Total	313,079	99	12%-49%	32%

3.98 Analysis of the data in Figure 3.22 illustrates the following key issues:

- Across Wirral MBC as a whole, provision for children and young people sites scored an average of 32%, in the lower middle range of possible scores.
- There is significant variation in the quality scores – from 12% (very low) to 49% (middle range).
- Heswall has the lowest overall quality rating (22%). A further three Wards – Pensby & Thingwall; Wallasey and West Kirby and Thurstaston - all score 30% or less.
- Liscard obtained the highest overall score (42%) but this was based on only one site – the Urmson Road Play Area, which was the best marked site of all.
- Bidston and had the poorest scoring site in the Borough (Bidston Village Road) which scored only 12%.

3.99 Factors that affect the quality score of the provision for children and young people identified that basic elements such as signage, seating, litter bins, self closing gates on play areas were lacking and these are summarised below:

- 43 Play Areas (59% of the Borough Total) have no signage.
- 12 Play Areas (16% of the Borough Total) have no seating provided.
- 22 Play Areas (30% of the Borough Total) have no litter bin provision.
- 10 Play Areas (14% of the Borough Total) have limited access for wheelchairs and 7 sites (10%) are considered non accessible to people with disabilities.

Accessibility – Children and Young People

3.100 In considering the accessibility threshold Figure 3.23 identifies that 63% of the total number of households in the Borough are within 400m of a site with fixed play equipment, Figure 3.23 also identifies the breakdown within each of Ward and the percentage of households within 400m of fixed play equipment sites. (See Map 9).

Figure 3.23 Accessibility Threshold by Ward Area

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Bebington	6,709	4,263	64%	36%
Bidston & St James	7,461	6,097	82%	18%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	8,069	6,346	79%	21%
Bromborough	6,844	3,926	57%	43%
Clatterbridge	6,041	1,692	28%	72%

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Open Space Assessment

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 400m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Claughton	6,740	3,517	52%	48%
Eastham	6,153	4,456	72%	28%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	6,176	2,838	46%	54%
Heswall	6,015	2,957	49%	51%
Hoylake & Meols	6,040	4,705	78%	22%
Leasowe & Moreton East	6,700	5,806	87%	13%
Liscard	7,086	4,195	59%	41%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	6,220	3,947	63%	37%
New Brighton	7,231	5,708	79%	21%
Oxton	7,152	3,241	45%	55%
Pensby & Thingwall	6,100	3,373	55%	45%
Prenton	6,142	4,047	66%	34%
Rock Ferry	7,114	5,720	80%	20%
Seacombe	7,326	7,089	97%	3%
Upton	7,355	3,686	50%	50%
Wallasey	6,587	2,286	35%	65%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	5,809	3,141	54%	46%
Total	147,070	93,036	63%	37%

3.101 From Figure 3.23 the key issues in relation to the accessibility of provision for children and young people can be summarised as follows:

- Seacombe has 97% of all households within 400m of a site with provision for children and young people (Seacombe also has the highest percentage of households within 400m of a park and garden).
- Only 28% of households in Clatterbridge have access to provision for children and young people within 400m of where they live.
- 11 Wards have a higher than average percentage of households within 400m than the identified average of 56% of households.
- 10 Wards fall below this average for the percentage of households within the 400m threshold.

Standards

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	0.08 ha per 1,000 population across Wirral MBC
Quality	To achieve 46% or above as the minimum standard and to provide a range of fixed equipment and natural play to meet the needs of children and young people in each Ward.
Accessibility	To provide fixed play facilities for children and young people within 400m of where they live.

Allotments and Community Gardens

- 3.102 This section considers the provision of both public and private allotments across the Wirral. Most sites are managed by the Council, but some are also privately managed, either by trust, or by another type of private organisation. Allotments and Community Gardens provide areas with natural features for cultivation of fruit, flowers and vegetables that involve working with people, plants and, in appropriate circumstances, animals.
- 3.103 The value of allotments is being reappraised at a local and national level. Traditionally provided in urban areas, which are poor in accessible space, to allow people space to grow their own fruit and vegetables, public interest in allotments has increased due to increased concerns about the links between health and food and the desire to grow home produce.

Quantity – Allotments

- 3.104 The audit revealed a total of 45 sites, occupying 53.9 hectares of land, providing a current standard of **0.17ha for every 1,000** residents across the Borough as a whole – the equivalent of 7 plots) for every 1,000 residents (based on the recommended plot size of 250m² . (See Map 1). These sites can be classified as follows:
- Council managed allotments – 39 sites (total 50.21 hectares).
 - Trust/private managed allotments – 6 sites (total 3.69 hectares).
- 3.105 A number of allotments are provided in Parks and Gardens and in sites falling within other typologies.
- 3.106 The breakdown of total space by Ward is shown in Figure 3.24 below.

Figure 3.24 Provision of Allotments by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Bebington	15424	2	4.95	0.26
Bidston & St James	14225	6	4.04	0.28
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	1	0.37	0.03
Bromborough	13822	5	2.02	0.15

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Total hectares	Hectares per 1,000
Clatterbridge	14701	2	0.46	0.03
Claughton	14615	4	2.97	0.20
Eastham	13988	3	5.35	0.38
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	1	1.35	0.09
Heswall	13723	0	N/A	N/A
Hoylake & Meols	13337	1	2.21	0.17
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	0	N/A	N/A
Liscard	14602	2	2.3	0.16
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	0	N/A	N/A
New Brighton	13969	1	0.21	0.02
Oxton	13841	2	2.07	0.15
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	1	0.79	0.06
Prenton	14032	2	6.55	0.47
Rock Ferry	13959	4	8.55	0.62
Seacombe	14504	2	4.71	0.32
Upton	15737	2	1.44	0.09
Wallasey	15030	2	1.27	0.08
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	2	1.99	0.15
Total	313,079	45	53.9	0.17

3.107 An analysis of the data in Figure 3.24 illustrates the following key issues:

- The average site size is 1.20 hectares.
- No allotments are provided in three Wards – Heswall, Leasowe & Moreton East and Moreton West & Saughall Massie.
- The next lowest level of provision is in New Brighton, which has just one site of 0.21ha.
- Four Wards have four or more allotment sites - Rock Ferry; Claughton; Bidston & St James and Bromborough.
- Rock Ferry has the greatest overall level of provision.
- Bidston & St James has the greatest number of sites (6).

Quality – Allotments

3.108 Quality inspections have been undertaken at each of the allotment sites across the Borough. The key criteria are set out in Figure 3.25. (See Map 2)

Figure 3.25 Assessment Criteria for Allotments

Allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance areas • The presence of water supply • Whether the site is served by toilets • Secure fencing around the site • Signage to identify management, usage arrangements, special events and the availability of plots • The presence of facilities such as composting bins, a shop and car parking.
-------------------	--

3.109 A summary of the quality scores for each Ward is shown in Figure 3.26 below.

Figure 3.26 Allotment Summary Quality Scores by Electoral Ward

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
Bebington	15424	2	30-53	41%
Bidston & St James	14225	6	12-31	20%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	14149	1	25	25%
Bromborough	13822	5	4-40	20%
Clatterbridge	14701	2	40-46	43%
Claughton	14615	4	10-31	21%
Eastham	13988	3	35-43	28%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	14569	1	20	20%
Heswall	13723	0	N/A	N/A
Hoylake & Meols	13337	1	30	30%
Leasowe & Moreton East	14368	0	N/A	N/A
Liscard	14602	2	28-45	37%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	13932	0	N/A	N/A
New Brighton	13969	1	27	27%
Oxton	13841	2	18-34	26%
Pensby & Thingwall	13386	1	24	24%
Prenton	14032	2	33-49	41%
Rock Ferry	13959	4	16-24	20%
Seacombe	14504	2	18-30	24%
Upton	15737	2	37-42	39%
Wallasey	15030	2	31-40	36%

Ward	Area population	Total sites	Quality range (%)	Average quality score
West Kirby & Thurstaston	13166	2	38-52	45%
Total	313,079	83	2-52	30%

3.110 Analysis of the data in Figure 3.26 illustrates the following key issues:

- Across the Borough as a whole, the average quality score for allotment sites was classified as low.
- There is a reasonable level of variation in the quality scores – from 4% (very low) to 52% (upper middle) but the majority of the typology falls within the lower middle and lower range of possible scores.
- Bromborough; Rock Ferry and Greasby Frankby & Irby have the lowest overall quality rating.
- The poorest site overall is in Bromborough – Shore Drive allotments, which scored just 4%.
- None of the sites obtained an upper middle or better score – 12 Wards obtained a low score with the remaining seven obtaining lower middle scores.
- West Kirby & Thurstaston scored the highest overall – recording an average of 45% across two sites.
- Of Wards with four or more sites, West Kirby & Thurstaston scored the highest (40%), with several sites of a consistently average standard (25-64% range) while Upton scored worst (18%) with scores ranging from 6% to 35%.

National Standards - Allotments

- 3.111 Guidance on assessing allotments is vague and informal. The 'Growing in the Community' guidance advocated by the Local Government Association and guidance from the National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners identifies some of the issues that need to be considered.
- 3.112 Privately owned and temporary allotments are not afforded protection under the Allotments Acts, but are however recognised in PPG 17 which requires local authorities to undertake robust assessments of need including demonstrating the demand for allotments.
- 3.113 The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of 0.2 ha per 1,000 population. It is, however, unclear whether this was ever adopted as a national recommendation. Applied to the Wirral, the Thorpe recommendations would require 62.6 hectares (an additional 8.7 hectares) to be provided.
- 3.114 The assessment of supply and demand should, however, be based on the number of plots across the Borough and the number of people on waiting lists.
- 3.115 The National Society for Allotments and Leisure Gardeners identifies a provision of 20 allotment plots per 1,000 households. PPG 17 advocates the development of local standards based on local needs rather than the application of national standards.

Accessibility – Allotments

- 3.116 Figure 3.27 identifies that 68% of the total number of households in the Borough are within 1000m of an allotment site, Figure 3.27 also identifies the breakdown within each Ward and the percentage of households within 1000m of allotment sites. (See Map 10)

Figure 3.27 Accessibility Threshold by Ward Area

Area	Number of households in Area	No. of households within 1,000m catchment	% of households within catchment area	% of households outside catchment area
Bebington	6,709	6,234	93%	7%
Bidston & St James	7,461	5,736	77%	23%
Birkenhead & Tranmere	8,069	5,566	69%	31%
Bromborough	6,844	5,976	87%	13%
Clatterbridge	6,041	1,808	30%	70%
Claughton	6,740	4,416	66%	34%
Eastham	6,153	5,261	86%	14%
Greasby Frankby & Irby	6,176	3,542	57%	43%
Heswall	6,015	0	0%	100%
Hoylake & Meols	6,040	4,462	74%	26%
Leasowe & Moreton East	6,700	2,683	40%	60%
Liscard	7,086	6,206	88%	12%
Moreton West & Saughall Massie	6,220	1,598	26%	74%
New Brighton	7,231	5,350	74%	26%
Oxton	7,152	5,222	73%	27%
Pensby & Thingwall	6,100	198	3%	97%
Prenton	6,142	5,021	82%	18%
Rock Ferry	7,114	7,115	100%	0%
Seacombe	7,326	5,671	77%	23%
Upton	7,355	7,355	100%	0%
Wallasey	6,587	5,705	87%	13%
West Kirby & Thurstaston	5,809	4,713	81%	19%
Total	147,070	99,838	68%	32%

3.117 From Figure 3.27 the key points in relation to the accessibility of provision for allotments can be summarised as follows:

- Only 2 Wards (Rock Ferry and Upton) have all their households within 1000m of an allotment site.
- Heswall has no identified allotment provision.
- Pensby & Thingwall has only 35% of households within the 1000m of an allotment site.
- 12 wards have a higher percentage of households within the defined catchment than the Borough

wide average.

- 7 Wards fall below this average for the percentage of households within the 1000m threshold.

Standards

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	0.17 ha per 1,000 population across Wirral MBC as the minimum (plots per 1000 residents?)
Quality	To achieve 46% or above as the minimum standard for Allotments in the Borough
Accessibility	To provide an accessible allotment site within 1000m of where people live

Cemeteries and Churchyards

- 3.118 Cemeteries and churchyards can provide a valuable additional contribution to the portfolio of open space provision within an area. For many, they can provide a place for quiet contemplation in addition to their primary purpose as a final resting place.
- 3.119 They also often have wildlife conservation and biodiversity value. Although many have restricted access, they still provide a useful resource for the local community. A wide variety of habitats can be often be found supporting the other open space types such as areas of semi-natural and natural areas. In the context of this study, it is, however, important to acknowledge that cemeteries are not created with the intention of providing informal or passive recreation opportunities.
- 3.120 Within rural communities they often provide a strong link to local history and heritage.

Quantity – Cemeteries

- 3.121 The audit revealed a total of 9 sites, occupying 87.8 hectares. This equates to **0.28ha per 1,000** population across Wirral MBC. As the primary function of cemeteries is for the burial of the dead no further quantitative analysis has been undertaken as part of this review.

Quality – Cemeteries

- 3.122 Site assessments were undertaken at the nine cemeteries across the MBC area.
- 3.123 The quality scores key criteria against which the sites are assessed include:
- Main entrance safety and cleanliness
 - Signage
 - Upkeep and safety of graves/memorials
 - Quality of roads and pathways
 - Provision of bins and seats.

- 3.124 Whilst the quality of cemeteries may be of relevance, they are not treated as local parks and it is not

thought necessary to reflect the variance in quality at the ward level The overall average quality for cemeteries was found to be 65% and of high quality.

Standards

Recommended Standard	
Quantity	No standard set
Quality	To maintain 46% or above as the minimum standard for Cemeteries and Churchyards in the Borough

Section 4

Resourcing the Borough's Green Space

4 Resourcing the Borough's Green space

Introduction

- 4.1 The Borough Council has endeavoured whenever possible to invest in its green space provision. It is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain sites let alone develop them through significant improvement. Improved revenue funding with increased capital support from central Government is not likely and as such more creative financing methods including partnerships will be required to help continue to improve maintenance and green space improvement initiatives.

Revenue Funding

- 4.2 The Borough Council maintains its Green spaces within cash limited budgets and due to financial pressures faced by the Council year in year out, revenue funding for the Borough's green space has not increased for a number of years with parks budgets remaining static for some time. Rising maintenance costs and sustained lack of capital means that this is beginning to show in the condition of the Borough's green spaces in particular in the condition of the infrastructure including buildings, walls, fences, paths, benches, bins and playground equipment.. The range and diversity of green space provided across the Borough means that it is essential that resourcing and financial planning follow a strategic framework of priorities. Wirral like many authorities across the country has its fair share of problems associated with its green spaces. Vandalism, illegal tipping and abuse are often difficult to predict and increasingly drain resources, resources which could be better spent providing safer cleaner higher quality green space for local people.
- 4.3 It is important to note that it will be necessary to assess the financial implications for each typology of provision.

Capital Funding

- 4.4 The capital required to improve the infrastructure within the Borough's green spaces is not within the financial resources held by the Council. There's a need to maximise the capital opportunities held by national governing bodies and government agencies.
- 4.5 CABI Space supports the idea of a strategic framework. The CABI manifesto states that political support is essential, as is making the case for high quality green space both internally within the Council and externally with the Borough's many partners, regional bodies and national governing bodies. The key starting point for Green space is to secure 'Buy In' across the Council. The development of a Parks Champion is increasingly seen as a means of driving forward the green space agenda and the Council can develop this initiative by inviting interest from the elected members.
- 4.6 In order to deliver a vision for a network of good quality, accessible clean and safe green space across the Borough it will be essential to direct financial support at both external and internal funding sources to secure the improvement of new and existing provision.
- 4.7 The development of partnerships will be fundamental to the delivery of good quality green space. The Borough has already made great inroads into partnership working in green space through the establishment of community initiatives such as The Friends of Parks and the Wirral Allotments Federation.
- 4.8 Partnership with the private sector could also bring benefits and funding to improve the Borough's green space. Authorities such as Halton Borough Council have increasingly forged partnerships with the private sector and are the first local authority to have a Starbucks coffee shop in Victoria Park, rejuvenating day time and weekend use of the park and associated facilities and driving out the undesirable elements and anti social behaviour by packing the park with people.

- 4.9 Oldham Borough Council have transformed former redundant bowls pavilions into vibrant community focussed cafés by working in partnership with local business enabling reinvestment in tired and redundant buildings, revitalising the bowling greens and bringing people back into the parks.
- 4.10 Wholesale commercial sponsorship is very difficult to obtain but working in partnership with third parties may prove more attractive to local, regional or nationally recognised commercial sector investors.

Lottery Funding

- 4.11 The Council has already had success in securing available Lottery funding for a number of projects, from a number of Lottery funding pots.
- 4.12 Lottery funds vary in grant size and funding criteria. The most known for improving green space is the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Funds are particularly available for projects that include works carried out to sites or facilities of outstanding interest and importance to the national heritage. Funding is provided for complete projects in relation to parks or for conservation and restoration of park features and grants can vary from £50,000 to £5 million. Securing funding relies on sustainability, stakeholder involvement and demonstrating the heritage and value of the park. The Council has recently used this funding stream to maximise the opportunity for the restoration of Birkenhead Park.

Big Lottery Fund

- 4.13 Initially developed from the combined resource of the Community Fund (providing funds for charities, community and voluntary sectors) and the New Opportunities Fund (funds for environmental, health and education projects). The BLF provides funding opportunities in relation to Green space. A key funding source was the Children's Play Fund and the Council successfully secured £750,000 to improve play provision across the Borough. This funding is not just for outdoor play. The funding identified for outdoor play aims to provide more adventurous play space. Other BLF funding streams that are available include:
- 4.14 The Young People's Fund- aimed at providing support to projects and initiatives that improve opportunities for young people in local communities. Funding is available to groups and community organisations to enable them to run and develop local initiatives with and for young people. Funding is also available for individuals to help make a difference in their local community.
- 4.15 Changing Spaces – funding is available until 2009 to enable communities to undertake environmental improvements that include community space or improving accessibility to the natural environment. The parks programme focuses on the following objectives:
- To provide better more accessible parks that are relevant to the local community they cater for
 - To increase community and pride in parks through greater involvement
 - To improve safety in parks
 - To ensure the long term maintenance and management
 - To increase the number of skilled rangers conservation officers and volunteers
- 4.16 The Well Being Fund- to promote healthy lifestyle initiatives that increase participation in physical activity, educate communities about the benefits of healthy eating or develop early intervention programmes to common mental health programmes

Lottery Small Grants Scheme

- 4.17 The Small Grants Scheme offers 'Awards for All' funding between £500-£5000 for small scale projects and initiatives that involve local people in their community, these small scale projects can include park improvements or local environment work.

Land Fill Tax Credit

- 4.18 Landfill operators can contribute 6.5% of their landfill tax liability to environmental bodies that are approved by ENTRUST. The funding projects include environmental, community and social initiatives that comply with a set of specified objectives such as the maintenance and provision of public amenity or the restoration and repair of buildings open to the public that have historical or architectural significance in a local environment. Initiatives have to be within a defined distance of landfill or extraction operations.

Barclay's Site Saver

- 4.19 A grant mechanism to transform derelict land through community based projects into leisure and recreational facilities, the funding available varies between £4000 and £10000 per project

The Esmee Fairburn Foundation

- 4.20 Funding is available for initiatives or projects that are primarily focussed on improving the quality of life of people who face disadvantage. Projects that are eligible include the enhancement or preservation of open space, good management of allotments, woodlands or gardens. The grants available appear to have no limits and the average grant size for environmental based initiatives in 2008 was £69,000.

Governing Bodies - Sport England

- 4.21 Sport England support two funding streams aimed at encouraging people to start, succeed or stay in sport, the funding sources available are national funding or community level.
- National Funding- £130 Million is being invested by Sport England in 30 key sports with 10 English priority sports identified, 10 UK/GB priority sports and 10 English development /world class sports.
 - Community Investment Fund- Sport England is investing in the North West Region over the next five years. Funding is linked to the Regional Plan for Sport with priority given to projects that deliver the best returns on investment through increased participation in sport on existing facilities and infrastructure, projects need to have 65% partnership funding of the total cost.

Football Foundation

- Facilities Scheme- provides money to develop new or improve facilities for community benefit. These include changing rooms or clubhouses, grass or artificial pitches and multi-use games areas. Applicants in most cases are expected to provide 50% match funding but in certain circumstance up to 90% funds are available
- Community Scheme-aims to create opportunities and build communities by funding projects that use football and sport as a force for social change, to address social exclusion and inequalities in education and health.
- Goalpost Safety Scheme- provides grants for the replacement of unsafe goalposts
- Small Grants Scheme- for small projects that aim to increase participation by both players and volunteers in grass roots football by supporting the costs associated with providing new activity.

Conclusion

- 4.22 There is a range of funding streams available to develop and improve Green space across the Borough. Securing the funds is not easy and requires time and effort as well as robust evidence and reasoning for the investment. A co-ordinated approach is needed to secure these funds, by the Council, its partners and its communities. The appointment of a parks development officer and parks champion could improve communication regarding green space initiatives and opportunities.

Developer Contributions

- 4.23 Success will require the internal commitment to buy into initiatives such as Section 106 funding and developer contributions linked to the growth or regeneration aspirations for the Borough. Ensuring that appropriate revenue funding is in place to sustain capital investment in green space should be a key long term management objective.
- 4.24 This Open Space Assessment provides evidence on the quantity, quality and accessibility of publicly accessible green space across the Borough. This evidence needs to be used to strengthen existing planning policies and support the Local Development Framework through the development of appropriate Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Documents and to use the evidence to generate clear and transparent negotiation with developers to generate significant investment. The Open Space Assessment provides the evidence that will enable the Council to move to the next stage and prioritise the need for local investment through community and stakeholder consultation.
- 4.25 When considering the implementation of planning policy that entails developer on or off site contributions it is worthwhile reviewing how other authorities determine when provision should be on or off site. Outlined below are examples of other local authority approaches:
- Fareham Borough Council - Favour on site contribution, dependent upon a number of factors that include the size of the development site and the proximity to existing good quality provision. A matrix identifies when on or off site contributions are appropriate in accordance with the number and type of dwellings proposed.
 - Stockport MBC - Commuted sum payments are sought even for small scale developments, with the funds being held in an investment / interest earning account to accrue funds to enable improvements
 - Harrogate Borough Council – Seek provision on site whenever possible. Where provision would fall below a specified size the Council will seek off site contributions
 - Worcester City Council - Shortfalls in provision not accommodated on site are met through commuted sum payments that are then allocated and spent on identified projects
- 4.26 Maintenance sums are an important consideration when dealing with developer contributions. Research shows that the approach varies significantly across local authorities:
- Fareham Borough Council – Maintenance payments are required 12 months after a site or provision is transferred to the Council. Maintenance is calculated by the number of bed spaces and the type of provision and is updated annually
 - Stockport MBC – Maintenance payments are required 12 months after handover. Maintenance sums are calculated using current rates with a multiplier and are for 15 years
 - Harrogate Borough Council - The Council revise the maintenance payments required on an annual basis by adding 10% contingencies to the annual cost and multiplying by the number of years. Maintenance is normally required for 5 years
- 4.27 PPG17 identifies that the simplest way to express the requirements for future maintenance is to express it in terms of a sum per unit of provision such as £/ hectare or £/ sqm.
- 4.28 The general approach, which has become the norm for many local authorities, has been to multiply the typical cost of annually maintaining a facility by an agreed number of years. The guidance advocates that a fair way to negotiate with developers is to calculate the net present value of the anticipated revenue payments. The commuted sum payment is then based on:
- The estimated cost of annual maintenance - established on a cost adequate to maintain the provision to the standards required.
 - It is good practice to work to use an appropriate benchmark cost with an assumed rate of inflation.
 - An agreed time period for which payment is to cover (research shows that the time period expected varies from 5-25 years)

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Open Space Assessment

- 4.29 The Council should ensure that developers with permission for new developments make contributions towards the capital expenditure that is initially required to provide and enhance provision and towards the ongoing revenue cost of maintaining the provision.
- 4.30 The Council already requires developers to provide 60 square metres of new accessible public open space, including specific provision for safe children's play which is normally provided as play equipment, in new housing developments of more than 35 family houses and to provide a sum equivalent to 10 years maintenance. This is, however, only applied where the development would be more than 400m walking distance from an existing accessible public open space of 1.5 hectares or above (see Unitary Development Plan Policy GR6).
- 4.31 The Council should use the audit findings as a means of identifying where provision and quality improvements require further investment.
- 4.32 Analysis of existing guidance on open space leads to the conclusion that:
- The Council should establish and set standards for the different typologies of open space provision within the Borough.
 - The Council should ensure that all new housing development contributes to open space provision, including the development of single dwellings and flats.
 - A list of priority projects should be maintained, wherever possible to contain costing details which can be annually updated. Initial priorities should be linked to the priorities identified in the audit to bring sites up to a good standard.
- 4.33 The Council, through local planning policies, should ensure that the adopted standards demonstrate the principles of value for money and the requirement to consult communities, to ensure that local people will have access to a network of good quality facilities within their local area.
- 4.34 The Council should consider the development of a Borough wide green space fund (pooled fund), especially for significant sites more remote from the urban areas, such as Country Parks, that may have fewer developments to generate the funds necessary for significant improvements but which will nevertheless still incur additional demand from developments elsewhere within the Borough. This would ensure contributions are always sought to support these sites as well as create the means to enhance and improve existing provision or provide new provision to address more local deficiencies and needs.
- 4.35 Circular 05/2005 states that contributions from developers should only be sought where they are directly related to the proposed development. Pooled funds will therefore need to be carefully administered to be ring fenced to particular areas or settlements, based around the accessibility standards identified earlier within this report.
- 4.36 The improvements that can be provided to open space should be supported by an appropriate Development Plan policy and detailed within an adopted Supplementary Planning Document. This could include improvements to access to facilities. While the exact improvements to provision may not be identified at the outset, it may be more appropriate to use the township level to ring fence pooled funds for the more rural areas. In urban areas, the accessibility thresholds can be applied.
- 4.37 The pooled funds could be used to secure additional investment in green infrastructure, either by using monies direct from the fund to undertake improvements or as a source of match funding to secure greater levels of external investment.
- 4.38 One of the assets available to the Borough is land, some of which is not used to its maximum capacity. The Council is naturally reluctant to release green space for disposal. However, the benefits of reinvesting a substantial part of the proceeds from any sale could be considerable, particularly when realistic alternatives to close the funding gap are not available. A number of larger Councils, such as Bristol and Leeds, are going down this route to enable them to improve their green infrastructure to a standard more fit for local needs.

Section 5

Generic Recommendations for consideration

5 Generic Recommendations for consideration

Design of Green space

- 5.1 The design of green space has a major role to play in the delivery of sustainable communities. Good design can develop a stronger sense of local community and responsibility. CABE Space has outlined the need for good design in a number of publications and guidance documents. It is possible to design and create green infrastructure to meet people's aspirations to enable people to take greater pride in their local area and help preserve facilities for future generations.
- 5.2 The following principles are taken from best practice and although not exhaustive, give an indication as to what is necessary to secure the long term sustainability, value and management of green spaces. Green space design should therefore:
- Maximise positive use by the community.
 - Be accessible for all members of the community.
 - Provide facilities that are accessible to all.
 - Be part of a wider network that provides traffic free routes through residential areas and links to other areas via bus stops and cycle ways.
 - Provide a sense of place for local people and reflect local history or culture.
 - Facilitate high quality and effective management and maintenance.
 - Facilitate local community involvement in new or future provision.
 - Minimise the opportunity for anti social behaviour and design out opportunities for crime.
 - Have clear vistas and sight lines across the site, maximising personal safety and casual surveillance.
 - Provide a setting for adjoining buildings, whilst minimising any detrimental effect on local amenity.
 - Be designed and managed to benefit wildlife, provide integrated habitat areas and support and allow the movement of wildlife, plants and animals. The site should ideally provide a range of habitat types.
 - Have an appropriate mix of mown grass areas and indigenous planting with mown areas that are large enough to facilitate informal kick about and mini soccer.
 - Safeguard the integrity of any existing open space or space of heritage value and where appropriate enhance the setting of listed features.
 - Wherever possible implement flood storage or sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to negate flood risk and other local land drainage problems.
 - Provide for local children - it is important that facilities match the age range of children and young people within each locality.
 - Provide adequate litter bins that are in keeping with the area, set into a concrete surface for ease of maintenance.
 - Provide adequate seating that is in keeping with the area. Seating in children's play areas should be set into appropriate safety surfacing. Seating should be linked to paths, provided in both sunny and shaded areas and allow for wheelchairs and pushchairs to park alongside off the path.
 - All sites should have signage to inform people of the site name, ownership and contact details
 - Site specific management plans should be prepared for larger sites, especially for new provision.
- 5.3 In order to identify the series of actions that should be taken by the Council, a number of recommendations have been made. The recommendations include the use of the information gathered as part of this assessment and the further development of this analysis in future years. The following recommendations are made:
- a) Audit the quantity and quality of sport, leisure and open spaces on a regular basis (at least every five years) and publish the findings. This will allow trend data to be collated and improvements to be tracked. It is important that findings are published to enable wider stakeholders to track progress.

- b)** Develop a central record of all open space to include the findings of the assessment undertaken. Currently many different sections of the Council hold this information; this information is not always consistent. The central record should include access to GIS mapping.
- c)** Establish a central consultation database for the Council, using the data and contacts gathered through this assessment. This information is held currently by a number of different sections in the Council and is, again, not always consistently maintained. Establishing a central database, which is regularly updated, will address these issues for the future.
- d)** Address the current fragmented responsibilities for the management, development and future provision of open space across the Borough through the establishment of a consultative Steering Group, involving representatives from both sport and leisure, planning and grounds maintenance, from both the public, voluntary and private sector, to consider specific site development proposals relating to existing, former and proposed sport and leisure provision. This inter-departmental group should be established to share, and utilise the expertise of leisure and planning officers, to ensure that specific site development issues are fully considered, and the implications shared, before decisions on maintenance and new facilities are made.
- e)** Continue to develop the marketing information produced for parks and open space facilities, key activities accommodated and access arrangements. The Council should seek to work with key partners in future marketing, such as the Primary Care Trust (PCT), the wider voluntary sector, education, the Youth Service etc to ensure that open space fulfils a valuable role in meeting wider social objectives (e.g. health improvement, increased active participation).
- f)** Develop an access standard regarding physical access for users and potential users with limited mobility.
- g)** Review maintenance standards in consultation with local people. Report on performance annually. Quality standards should be set for each of the open space typologies.
- h)** Develop and fund a programme of up-to-date signage installation, a key weakness of many sites audited. Develop a consistent approach to the provision of signage at all sites, through a rolling programme of installation and improvement. All sites should have a sign with site details, ownership and contact numbers. This can address a number of issues including helping with the reporting of vandalism and improving community safety.
- i)** Continue to work towards reducing the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces and to establish and implement a programme of action to address the actual, and perceived, issues of safety in parks and open spaces. This could take the form of installing CCTV at identified sites, or investing in park/open space infrastructure to encourage increased use, which in turn may have a positive impact on the fear of crime because more people are likely to be around.

Parks and Open Space

- 5.4 The Borough has achieved success at the Green Flag Award. This needs to be continued. However, success should not be at the expense of other sites and the Borough needs to use the audit underlying this Assessment to improve all sites Parks and Gardens to a Good Standard, paying particular attention to sites classified as Country Parks and Local Parks. Up-to-date management plans are needed for all major formal green spaces to identify a list of fully costed, priority projects which can be regularly updated.
- 5.5 The recommendations below have been drawn up in response to the Assessment undertaken and need to be viewed as complementary to any further policies developed. This principle applies to all managed open space. The recommendations are focused on addressing facility deficiencies, as the first priority:

- a) Use the results, issues and recommendations of the audit to develop locally responsive policies and practices.
- b) Ensure that any identified deficiencies in provision are addressed as a priority in the Local Development Framework.
- c) Continue to develop and support Friends Groups for key parks and open spaces to increase local involvement and ownership.
- d) Continue to review, develop and improve site Management Plans and extend the practice of management planning to a greater range of parks and open spaces.
- e) Continue to test the quality and “performance” of formal spaces through entering externally judged competitions and quality recognition schemes (e.g. Green Flag/ Britain in Bloom).
- f) Raise the benchmark standard of provision by improving all sites to a good standard.
- g) Develop an asset register of facilities within sites such as benches, bins, location, date installed, lifetime expectancy, replacement timeframe etc.
- h) Develop quality standards for each typology of open space that are achievable and realistic.
- i) Continue to recognise the importance of Gateway Sites as a means of raising the image of the Borough and address the quality issues identified in this Assessment.
- j) Ensure that any future provision is well designed, serves a clearly defined purpose and is appropriate in size (anything below 0.2ha is not readily useable by children and young people without the potential for conflict with neighbours).

Natural and Semi Natural Green Space

5.6 Recommendations for Natural and Semi Natural Green Space include:

- a) Use the results, issues and recommendations of the audit to develop locally responsive policies and practices.
- b) Ensure that any identified deficiencies are addressed as a priority in the Local Development Framework.
- c) Develop a rolling programme of renewal and improvements for bins, signage and seating etc.
- d) Develop a walking strategy to set out how existing walking networks link together and develop the footpath network to link into wider networks outside the Borough.
- e) Increase the awareness of opportunities for walking in the Borough.
- f) Link the use of open space and sport and recreation facilities with travel awareness initiatives.
- g) Take a strategic approach to the development and provision of cycling routes across the Borough given the importance and health benefits of this mode of transport in a congested area linked to the provision of quality open spaces.
- h) Develop the Biodiversity Action Plan for the Borough to include urban open spaces.
- i) Adopt appropriate management and maintenance programmes for nature conservation sites to better reflect their natural characteristics.
- j) Develop an education resource to develop a better local awareness and understanding of open space and of nature conservation sites in particular.
- k) Protect all existing nature conservation sites.
- l) Develop a Green Infrastructure plan for the Borough.
- m) Develop site specific habitat management schedules.

Provision for Children and Young People

5.7 The following recommendations are made in relation to provision for children and young people:

- a) Quantify existing sites against FIT categories LEAP/ NEAP to establish appropriate size and equipment threshold.
- b) Provide ‘Good’ quality sites as a minimum standard.
- c) Expand signage on all sites with site details and contact numbers.
- d) Develop equipment that caters for children and young people with disabilities.
- e) Involve young people in the design and choice of provision.
- f) Aspire to deliver a hierarchy of provision and continue to directly address the surplus/deficiency imbalance across the Borough.

- g)** Consider moving away from only providing fixed play equipment as a means to catering for children and young people.
- h)** Improve provision for Young People, especially Teenagers and Toddlers, throughout the hierarchy by making the provision within the Borough's main parks larger and more adventurous in terms of the range of equipment and the element of reasonable risk.
- i)** Ensure that the recommended accessibility thresholds are implemented.

Outdoor Sports Facilities

5.8 The following recommendations are made in relation to outdoor sports provision:

Bowling Greens

- a)** Work with the local Bowls Clubs to improve the quality of both existing greens and ancillary facilities.
- b)** Priority should be given to the improvement of 'below average' sites.
- c)** Work with the local Bowls Clubs to promote the sport in the Borough, and encourage participation by younger as well as older people.
- d)** Review security measures at greens located in parks, in light of the reduction in staff presence on some sites.
- e)** Improve the publishing of information at parks about opportunities to play bowls.

Tennis Courts

- a)** Retain the current provision of tennis courts and work with key partners and private clubs to maintain their quality and improve access for potential new participants.
- b)** Develop a programme of court improvement in the parks.
- c)** Ensure public courts have appropriate quality nets and equipment that are regularly inspected.

Allotments

5.9 The following recommendations are made in relation to allotment provision and the continued establishment of a working group between the Borough and the Allotment Secretaries :

- a)** Identify the number of plots and established waiting list to understand demand and future need.
- b)** Establish a programme of facility development.
- c)** Establish a programme that will develop facilities for users/potential users with limited mobility.
- d)** Review the mechanism for the allocation of vacant plots to reduce the number of empty plots, and address the local demand for allotments.
- e)** Work with Allotment Societies to develop, improve and enhance the existing allotment provision.
- f)** Develop partnerships to increase the value and accessibility of allotments, to include schools (where sites are close enough) and the further development of health-related projects.



Making your Vision. . . . Reality



Strategic Leisure
3rd Floor
Rutherford House
Warrington Road
Birchwood Science Park
Warrington
WA3 6ZH

Tel: 01925 855 550
Fax: 01928 585 769

w.strategicleisure.co.uk
w.strategicleisure.co.uk