

Executive Summary

What is the aim of this open space, sport and recreation study?

The study aims to provide a clear picture of existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation in Harborough and the current ability to meet those needs in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility.

The study sets local standards based on assessments of local needs, demographics and audits of existing open spaces. It is the basis for addressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process and should form the basis of the development of an open space strategy for Harborough DC.

Scope of the open space and sport and recreation study

The study includes all open space and recreation types identified within the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002). These include parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural areas, green corridors, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people, outdoor sports facilities, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards and civic spaces. The study also considers the provision of sport and indoor recreation facilities.

What is the need for the study of open space, sport and recreation?

A local assessment of open space and open space needs will enable the Council to:

- plan positively, creatively and effectively in identifying priority areas for improvement and to target appropriate types of open space required
- ensure an adequate provision of high quality, accessible open space to meet the needs of community
- ensure any accessible funding is invested in the right places where there is the most need
- conduct S106 negotiations with developers from a position of knowledge with evidence to support.

Where no assessment exists, developers can undertake their own independent assessment to demonstrate that open space is surplus to requirements. It is therefore desirable for the Council to have robust data to protect and develop open space within the District.

Methodology of the assessment

The methodology and development of the study has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).

The PPG 17 Companion Guide sets out a 5 step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space and recreation. This process was used in developing this study using our own appropriate mechanisms that meet the requirements of the council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of open space within the District.

The 5-step process is as follows:

- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs

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- Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
- Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
- Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
- Step 5 – Drafting Implementation and Action Plan.

Research, consultations, a detailed and comprehensive audit and analysis including quantity, quality, accessibility, usage and value have culminated in the production of this study, report and recommendations.

Provision Standards

The local provision standards justified through the analysis are detailed below. The methodology for setting these standards has been followed in accordance with PPG17 and using both qualitative and quantitative information sources both from the audit and consultation. Standards have been developed in terms of both accessibility and quantity.

Open Space Type	Suggested Quantity Provision Standard
Parks and Gardens	0.5 ha per 1000 population
Natural and Semi-natural areas	8.5 ha per 1,000 population (rural area) 1.5 ha per 1,000 population (urban area)
Green Corridors	PPG17 suggests quantity standard not required due to the nature of the typology. It states that " <i>there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard</i> "
Amenity Greenspace	0.9 ha per 1000 population
Provision for Children and Young People	0.3 ha per 1000 population
Outdoor Sports Facilities	It is inappropriate to set a standard for this typology due to the nature. Consideration should be given to developing a standard for formal sports pitches based on the playing pitch methodology "towards a level playing field". Other sports should be demand led.
Allotments and Community Gardens	0.35 ha per 1000 population
Cemeteries and Churchyards	PPG17 suggests quantity standard not required due to the nature of the typology.
Civic Spaces	No standard set. Usually provided on a opportunity basis rather than demand led.

In addition, the overall supply and demand of indoor sports and recreation provision, consisting of sports halls, swimming pools, health and fitness facilities and village halls have been assessed. This assessment concluded that:

- provision of additional sports hall space should be a priority.

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- existing swimming provision marginally exceeds demand, hence there is no immediate need (or future need based on current participation rates) for additional facilities
- there is an undersupply of health and fitness provision within the District
- the village halls have an important role to play with regards to indoor sport and recreation provision within the District.

Where are we now? - Audit and Analysis

Prior to undertaking the study there was a general viewpoint that there is a relatively good quality of open space and recreation facilities within the District. There is potential to develop additional open space through S106 agreements. The detailed and comprehensive audit and analysis undertaken reaffirms this viewpoint.

Quantity

When applying the quantity provision standards the following key points were extracted:

- **Parks & Gardens** : there is a deficiency of parks and gardens within all areas of the District, the largest of which is in Kibworth, Fleckney and Great Glen. There are only a small number of parks and gardens within the District
- **Natural and Semi-Natural**: as a result of the predominantly rural nature of natural and semi natural open space, and the vastly different levels of provision between the more urban areas of the District (Market Harborough and Lubenham, and Lutterworth and Broughton Astley) two standards were set. Overall, there is considered to be an oversupply of natural and semi natural open spaces, and only Market Harborough and Lubenham is perceived to have shortfalls in natural and semi natural provision
- **Amenity Greenspace**: only the Market Harborough and Lubenham areas have a surplus of amenity greenspace, all other areas are currently considered to have a shortfall of provision
- **Provision for Children and Young People**: there is a total deficiency of provision across the District equating to over 10 hectares of provision, and there is a deficiency in each of the analysis areas, the largest of which is in Market Harborough and Lubenham
- **Allotments**: there is an overall deficiency of allotments within the District, however there is a small oversupply of provision within the Peatling and Bosworth analysis area

Quality

There are many high quality open spaces provided within the District of Harborough with the majority of sites rated as average or above and more sites than any other rated as 'good' or 'very good'. Very few sites were considered to be poor or very poor.

The quality of cemeteries and churchyards, outdoor sports facilities and parks and gardens was considered to be particularly good. There was less overall satisfaction however with the quality of indoor sports provision.

The main quality issues within the District were perceived to be:

- dog fouling
- parking
- toilets

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In addition to making general comments and providing information, Parish clerks were asked to provide examples of good and bad practice. Using these examples, and the reasons highlighted for decisions made, the following quality vision was developed:

“a clean, litter and dog fouling free area that is well-lit and provides a level of varied vegetation and biodiversity, including well-kept grass and other natural features where suitable. The site should be regularly maintained and have suitable parking in close proximity where appropriate. “

Accessibility

Most open spaces within the District are accessible to the public, with the majority of sites considered to be good or very good in terms of accessibility. The main area of concern appears to be public transport links, which are felt to inhibit the usage of some sites.

The study allowed the development of accessibility standards. These are illustrated in table below.

Open Space Type	Suggested Accessibility Provision Standard	
	Time	Distance
Parks and Gardens	10 mins (drive)	4km
Natural and Semi-natural areas	20 mins (walk)	1.6km
Green Corridors	20 mins (walk)	1.6km
Amenity Greenspace	10 mins (walk)	800m
Provision for Children and Young People	5-10 mins (walk)	400m – 800m
Outdoor Sports Facilities	10 mins (drive)	4km
Allotments and Community Gardens	10 mins (drive)	4km
Cemeteries and Churchyards	5 mins drive	2km
Civic Spaces	no standard set due to nature of typology	

Value & Site Specific Priorities

Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. However there are deviations to this, which suggests that there are specific priority sites that would need some further analysis and investigation.

Given that such large numbers of sites have been audited within the District there are very few sites that are questioned whether the primary purposes is the most beneficial with the main issues being of quality or accessibility of the existing site.

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Each type of open space has been assessed separately and specific sites detailed within the appropriate sections. There are many sites of high quality and high accessibility that are very well-used within the district and these should of a high priority to protect. However a summary of the priorities in terms of low quality, low used and/or low accessible sites is provided in the table below :

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Open Space Type	Site Priorities	Reasoning	Recommended Action
Parks and Gardens	Byways Garden (Stoughton)	Good quality and accessibility but despite this usage is low.	<p>Investigate whether primary purpose of open space site is appropriate due to low usage</p> <p>Consider change of open space use</p> <p>Maintain the high quality and accessibility features of the site if usage can be addressed either through change of open space or other means.</p>
Natural & Semi-Natural	<p>Manor Field (Thurnby and Bushby)</p> <p>Milestone Hollow (Claybrooke Magna)</p>	Despite high usage, both quality and accessibility are perceived to be poor – any enhancement would increase user satisfaction.	<p>Enhance quality and accessibility where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience</p> <p>Protect open space as value is high in terms of high usage rates by the local community.</p>
	<p>Fleckney Open Space</p> <p>Warfield Nature Reserve</p> <p>Fleckney Industrial Area Natural Open Space</p>	Poor quality and poor accessibility with no or low usage.	<p>Enhance quality & enhance value – address accessibility issues</p> <p>Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase value (usage) – refer to demand for other open spaces</p> <p>If not possible, maybe surplus to requirements.</p>

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Open Space Type	Site Priorities	Reasoning	Recommended Action
<p>Green Corridors</p>	<p>Disused Railway Line (Shawell)</p>	<p>Poor quality and poor accessibility with no or low usage.</p>	<p>Enhance quality & enhance value – address accessibility issues</p> <p>Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase value (usage) – refer to demand for other open spaces</p> <p>If not possible, maybe surplus to requirements.</p>
	<p>Footpath in Dag Lane (Husbands Bosworth)</p>	<p>Frequently used with high accessibility but is of poor quality</p>	<p>Enhance quality where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience</p> <p>Protect open space as value is high</p>
	<p>Disused Railway line (Medbourne)</p>	<p>Frequently used despite poor quality and poor accessibility assessments.</p>	<p>Enhance quality and accessibility where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience</p> <p>Protect open space as value is high in terms of high usage rates by the local community.</p>
<p>Amenity Greenspace</p>	<p>Monroe Close (Market Harborough)</p> <p>Stablegate Way Open Space (Market Harborough)</p> <p>Fleetwood Gardens (Market Harborough)</p> <p>Village Green (Smeeton Westerby)</p> <p>St Catherines Green (Houghton on the Hill)</p>	<p>Usage is low, despite good quality and accessibility.</p>	<p>Investigate whether primary purpose of open space site is appropriate due to low usage</p> <p>Consider change of open space use</p> <p>Maintain the high quality and accessibility features of the site if usage can be addressed either through change of open space or other means.</p>

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Open Space Type	Site Priorities	Reasoning	Recommended Action
<p>Provision for Children and Young People</p>	<p>Cottage Lane Play Area Childrens Play Area (Lubenham)</p>	<p>High usage of these sites and good accessibility, but rated poor in terms of quality.</p>	<p>Enhance quality where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience Protect open space as value is high</p>
	<p>Village Hall and Small Play Area (Little Stretton) Folly Field Play Area (Mowsley)</p>	<p>Low usage and are of poorer quality but accessibility is good</p>	<p>Enhance quality – may increase usage with no problems with accessibility. Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase usage – refer to demand for other open spaces If not possible or not required, maybe surplus to requirements.</p>
	<p>Tilton Play Area Orchard Road (Lutterworth) Public House Garden and Play Area (Swinford) Hog Lane Play Park (Hallaton)</p>	<p>Usage is low, despite good quality and accessibility. Possible analysis should be undertaken as to whether the primary purpose of the site is appropriate.</p>	<p>Investigate whether primary purpose of open space site is appropriate sue to low usage Consider change of open space use Maintain the high quality and accessibility features of the site if usage can be addressed either through change of open space or other means.</p>
<p>Allotments and Community Gardens</p>	<p>East Norton Allotments Gravel Hole Allotments Walton</p>	<p>Poor quality and poor accessibility with no or low usage.</p>	<p>Enhance quality & enhance value – address accessibility issues Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase value (usage) – refer to demand for other open spaces If not possible, maybe surplus to requirements.</p>

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Open Space Type	Site Priorities	Reasoning	Recommended Action
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Lodge Road Sports Ground	Poor quality and low used site despite high accessibility rating.	Enhance quality – may increase usage with no problems with accessibility. Re-delegate to other purpose to try and increase usage – refer to demand for other open spaces If not possible or not required, maybe surplus to requirements.
	Gilmorton Tennis Courts	A highly valued and well used site, despite its shortcomings with regards to quality.	Enhance quality where possible – will increase user satisfaction and experience Protect open space as value is high
	School Playing Fields (Gilmorton) Fernvale School Playing Fields (Thurnby and Bushby) St Lukes School Playing Fields (Thurnby and Bushby)	Despite the high quality and usage of most of the sites, a number of facilities, primarily school playing fields, have low accessibility.	Address accessibility issues as a priority – increase and/or maintain usage at a high level Protect due to high usage value and quality of the site.
Cemeteries and Churchyards	There are many sites that have High quality and accessibility but despite this usage is low		These sites are probably not appropriate to designate to as other open space types. Promote the usage and natural benefits of these sites.

Planning Guidance

To date, the Government has not provided any statutory procedures for the preparation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance. This will change with the introduction of new planning legislation and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

Through the analysis of existing open space guidance, it can be concluded that:

- all new housing developments (even single dwelling developments) should contribute towards open space provision;
- local standards should be set for different open space typologies
- consideration should be given to the application of different local standards for urban and rural locations and between areas of over provision and under provision
- consideration should be given to providing formulas and worked examples within SPD to show the scale of off-site financial contributions;
- if financial contributions are insufficient to provide new recreation space beyond the ability of individual developments, special area based open space funds should be considered to contribute towards District wide projects. A list of projects and estimated costs contained within the SPD, which can be regularly updated, should be considered.

Summary

It is clear that Harborough has predominantly good quality and accessible open spaces. However there are some areas that have quantitative deficiencies as well as lying outside the recommended catchment areas although these tend to be pre-dominantly rural areas. Details of shortfalls by type of open space and area are detailed within sections 5-13 of the main report.

Very few areas have a surplus of provision particularly when undertaking a local area needs analysis not taking into account the larger District-wide provision.