

Undertaking the study

Introduction

- 2.1 This study of open spaces and sport and recreation within the whole of the Harborough district was undertaken in accordance with 'PPG17 and its Companion Guide'. This companion guide is a guidance process suggesting ways and means of undertaking such a study. It emphasises the importance of undertaking a local needs assessment, as opposed to following national trends and guidelines. The 4 guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:
- (i) local needs will vary even within Local Authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
 - (ii) as stated in section 1 the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
 - (iii) delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
 - (iv) the value of open space depends primarily on meeting identified local needs and the wider benefits they generate for people, wildlife and the environment
- 2.2 Although these principles apply to both urban and rural areas it must be recognised that rural areas cannot expect to have the same access and range of open spaces as urban areas although rural villages should expect to have some provision. Also, some spaces may be found exclusively in rural areas and some exclusively in urban areas and therefore separate rural and urban standards maybe required.
- 2.3 PPG17 therefore recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each Local Authority will need to be adopted as each area has different structures and characteristics. The resulting conclusions and recommendations of this study are therefore representative of the local needs for Harborough DC.
- 2.4 Harborough is primarily a rural district, and even the larger settlements within the district are relatively rural, with Market Harborough individual settlement containing a population of over 20,000 (20,127 according to the 2001 census).
- 2.5 Where urban and rural areas are differentiated in this report, the urban areas are considered to be the analysis areas of Market Harborough and Lubenham, and the Western area containing Lutterworth and Broughton Astley, which are the largest conurbations in the district. In addition to Market Harborough, Lutterworth and Broughton Astley are the only other settlements with populations of over 7000.
- 2.6 These analysis areas are the only two with populations of over 20,000.
- 2.7 This study is the result of a local needs assessment for Harborough DC

Types of open space

- 2.8 The overall definition of open space within the government planning guidance is:

“all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”.

- 2.9 PPG17 identifies nine typologies of open space. These categories include eight types of green open space and one category of urban open space. Full details of these typologies, their definitions and primary purpose are outlined in table 2.1 overleaf.

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Table 2.1- Open space types and descriptions

| Type | Definition | Primary Purpose/Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Parks and Gardens | Includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal recreation community events. |
| Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces | Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water and wastelands. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wildlife conservation, biodiversity environmental education and awareness. |
| Green Corridors | Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> walking, cycling or horse riding leisure purposes or travel opportunities for wildlife migration. |
| Amenity Greenspace | Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal activities close to home or work enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas |
| Provision for Children and Young People | Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> equipped play areas ball courts outdoor basketball hoop areas skateboard areas teenage shelters and 'hangouts' |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities | Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> outdoor sports pitches tennis and bowls golf courses athletics playing fields (including school playing fields) water sports |
| 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. May also include urban farms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> growing vegetables and other root crops <p>N.B. does not include private gardens</p> |
| Cemeteries & Churchyards | Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> quiet contemplation burial of the dead wildlife conservation promotion of biodiversity |
| Civic Spaces | Civic and market squares and other hard surfaced community areas designed for pedestrians. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> markets setting for civic buildings community events |
| Indoor Sport and Recreation | Indoor facilities either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participation in sport and recreation activities includes sports halls swimming pools health and fitness village halls |

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- 2.10 There are a number of types of land use that have not been included in this assessment as open space and recreation in conjunction with PPG17, namely:
- grass verges on the side of roads
 - small insignificant areas of grassland or trees – for example on the corner of the junction of 2 roads
 - SLOAP (space left over after planning i.e in and around a block of flats)
 - farmland and farm tracks
 - private roads and private gardens.
- 2.11 As a result of the multifunctionality of open spaces (as discussed in section 1) there is a requirement to classify each open space by its 'primary purpose' as recommended in PPG17 so that it is counted only once in the audit. The full detailed list of open space definitions and their associated primary purpose is illustrated in Table 2.1.
- 2.12 This should be taken into account when considering additional provision. For example - in areas of deficiency of amenity greenspace, playing pitches may exist that provide the function of required amenity greenspace but its primary purpose is as an outdoor sports facility.

PPG17 – 5 step process

- 2.13 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a 5 step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space. This process was used in undertaking this study to meet the requirements of the council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of open space within the district. Although presented as a linear process below, in reality, many stages were undertaken in parallel.
- 2.14 The 5 step process is as follows:
- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
 - Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
 - Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
 - Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
 - Step 5 – Drafting Implementation and Action Plan

Our process

- 2.15 The following steps indicate how we have undertaken the study in accordance with PPG17.

Step 1 - Identifying local needs

Research

- desk-based research was undertaken considering national, regional and local policies and strategies that will impact upon local needs for open space and sport and recreation provision within Harborough.

Consultations

- Consultations have been carried out with many organisations and individuals through various methods such as one-to one meetings, telephone calls, questionnaires and by email. Consultations were undertaken with the following:
 - consultation with departments to establish how open space and sport and recreation provision affects each department and the key issues for each section
 - workshop consultation with Harborough District Council members and Harborough Town Councillors, establishing their perceptions of open space and sport and recreation provision within the district
 - consultations with Parish Councils representing the needs, attitudes and expectations of the local communities through two detailed questionnaires taking into account open spaces and sport and recreation facilities and attendance at the February Parish Council liaison meeting. A freephone number was set up and a help desk established to answer queries
 - questionnaire consultations with external agencies and providers
 - drop in sessions located in five dispersed geographical areas of the district to obtain views of the general public
 - consultations with sports clubs regarding the existing facilities and their opinions of such facilities by means of questionnaire
 - further opportunities for comments from the public were provided through a dedicated e mail address and the provision of the freephone number.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

2.16 The following organisations assisted in auditing open space across the district of Harborough:

- **92 Parish and Town Councils**
PPG17 states *“consulting local communities in rural areas is potentially more onerous than in urban ones and by far the best way of doing it is usually through Parish Councils”*. Parish Councils provided the main data and analysis in each rural parish through two detailed questionnaires and a mapping exercise. The questionnaire and guidance notes provided to each parish are provided in Appendix A.
- **District Council**
The District Council provided detailed copies of the local plan. Internal officers were consulted on the audit of the urban area of Market Harborough, and contributed to the ratings of site quality, accessibility and usage
- **External Agencies**
Some agencies have provided details of sites they own or manage across the district
- **PMP and Bob Littler, PPG17 Ambassador for Harborough District Council**
the accuracy of the audit as far as possible was ensured by cross checking all maps received from parishes, completing the audit for areas where no response had been received and undertaking the audit for the Market Harborough Town Centre.

2.17 A number of cross checking exercises were undertaken to ensure the audit was as comprehensive as possible. These included:

- follow up phone calls to parish clerks regarding any ambiguity in sites identified and/or where no open space was indicated
- cross-checking with Harborough District Local Plan particularly where any ambiguity existed in identified open space sites
- cross-checking with a database of sites developed from all sources of documentation in order to ensure all sites had been included within the analysis for this strategy
- ensuring consistency of categorisation of open space sites into the PPG17 typologies.

2.18 Within the audit and in accordance with PPG17, each open space site identified was rated, where possible, within each of the following categories:

- (i) Accessibility
- (ii) Quality
- (iii) Quantity
- (iv) Level of Use.

2.19 Sport and recreation facilities were audited by PMP using a variety of sources in addition to information provided by parish clerks, including PMP's in house database, www.upmystreet.com, www.yell.com and existing information and documentation.

Digitisation and database development

2.20 Each open space site has been digitised using GIS software and its associated ratings and characteristics are recorded on a linked access database. This will enable further updates of open spaces and varying forms of analysis to be undertaken. This allows a dynamic reporting and assessment mechanism and enables individual sites or specific geographical locations to be examined in detail where necessary. Example screens from the linked database can be found in Appendix B.

2.21 The location of indoor sport and recreation facilities and community facilities has also been plotted as a point, using the postcode of the site.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and applying provision standards

2.22 Within the analysis of the significant amount of data collected and site ratings in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility and level of use we are able to:

- determine provision standards
- apply such standards

to identify gaps in provision and therefore the areas of priority.

2.23 The analysis has therefore been undertaken by type of open space and indoor provision, looking at different areas of the district (called analysis areas in this report), which were discussed and agreed by the Council. These sub-areas have

been devised where possible using clearly identifiable neighbourhoods and are separated from adjoining areas using ward boundaries. These are discussed later in this section.

- 2.24 The data collected also enables analysis of open space by catchment. Consultation established the distance that most people are willing to travel to each type of open space and standards have therefore been set. These standards can be applied, enabling the identification of gaps in provision and areas of priority.
- 2.25 Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and audits of existing facilities will form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process.
- 2.26 Further detail regarding the setting and application of each type of provision standard is outlined below.

Quantity

- 2.27 PPG17 advocates that planning policies for open space, including playing fields, should be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local need.
- 2.28 The quantity of provision provided by the audit of open space has assisted in the setting of such local provision standards for the district. These are included for each type of open space in the separate sections and as recommended by PPG17 is undertaken by population to calculate the quantity of provision per person.
- 2.29 However the quantity analysis has also taken into account key issues raised from the consultations with the public, internally within the Council and externally with national, regional and local agencies. This then provides a more objective view rather than relying solely on statistical calculations. A comparison with the community's view on the existing level of facilities required and the current level of provision is made to help establish a reasonable level of provision.
- 2.30 Provision standards are then applied to determine whether there is a surplus of provision, the provision was about right or there is a deficiency.
- 2.31 All standards are based on 2001 census data, and population projections have been calculated to predict the future – 2011.
- 2.32 The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:
- establish areas of the district suffering in deficiency of provision within each type of open space
 - areas of significant surplus where it may be possible to investigate changing the type of open space to types that are deficient in that area.
- 2.33 The standards set for each type of open space in Harborough are summarised in section 19, and the basic calculations are outlined in appendix C.

Quality

- 2.34 Quality and Value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. An example of this could be :
- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Its usage is therefore restricted and its value to the public limited; or

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- a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have some significant wider benefit such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a relatively high value to the public.

Therefore the needs assessment will analyse quality and value separately within each type of open space.

2.35 The overall aim of a quality assessment should be to identify deficiencies in quality and key quality factors that need to be improved within:

- the geographical areas of the district
- specific types of open space
- specific quality factors that ensure a high quality open space

This enables resources to be concentrated on areas that need to be improved.

Accessibility

2.36 Accessibility is a key assessment of open space sites. Without accessibility for the public the provision of good quality or good quantity of open space sites would be of very limited value. The overall aim of an accessibility assessment should be to identify:

- how accessible sites are?
- how far are people willing to travel to reach open space?
- areas of the district deficient in provision?
- areas of the district suffering in accessibility and therefore of priority importance
- key accessibility factors that need to be improved

2.37 Setting accessibility standards for open space should be derived from an analysis of the accessibility issues within the audit and in light of community views.

2.38 In undertaking various consultations we were able to attain the aspirations of people in terms of travel time and also in terms of issues regarding access to sites. The outcome of this analysis is detailed in each section for each type of open space. We can use this analysis to determine suitable and appropriate accessibility standards.

2.39 Distance thresholds (i.e. the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport) are a very useful planning tool especially when used in association with a GIS (Geographical Information System).

2.40 PPG17 encourages that any new open space sites or enhancement of existing sites should ensure accessibility by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and by public transport. There is a real desire to move away from reliability on the car. Distance thresholds that are set should be realistic as well as encouraging a comprehensive provision of accessible open space across the district.

2.41 The consultations both through the detailed parish council questionnaire and neighbourhood 'drop-in' sessions provide specific information to assist in establishing distance thresholds for each type of open space as defined by PPG17.

2.42 Within each section (5-13), the median, mean and mode of responses from Parish Councils regarding the time they are willing to travel to reach open space are identified. These are defined below:

- Mean: the sum of the total responses divided by the number of responses
- Median: the point on above which there are exactly half the scores and below which there are the other half of scores
- Mode: the most frequently occurring score in a distribution.

2.43 In addition, each section recommends distance thresholds, based on the time that 75% of people are willing to travel where appropriate, for each type of open space. The standards set for each type of open space in Harborough are summarised in section 19.

Accessibility standards

2.44 It is not entirely straightforward to set specific distance thresholds for each type of open space for all areas as there are many dependencies. These standards, as PPG17 recommends, provide some guidance in order to identify possible gaps in provision and meet the local needs of the residents within the District of Harborough.

Level of usage and value

2.45 The value of an open space site is entirely different to quality and relates mainly to 3 key factors as described in PPG17 companion guide:

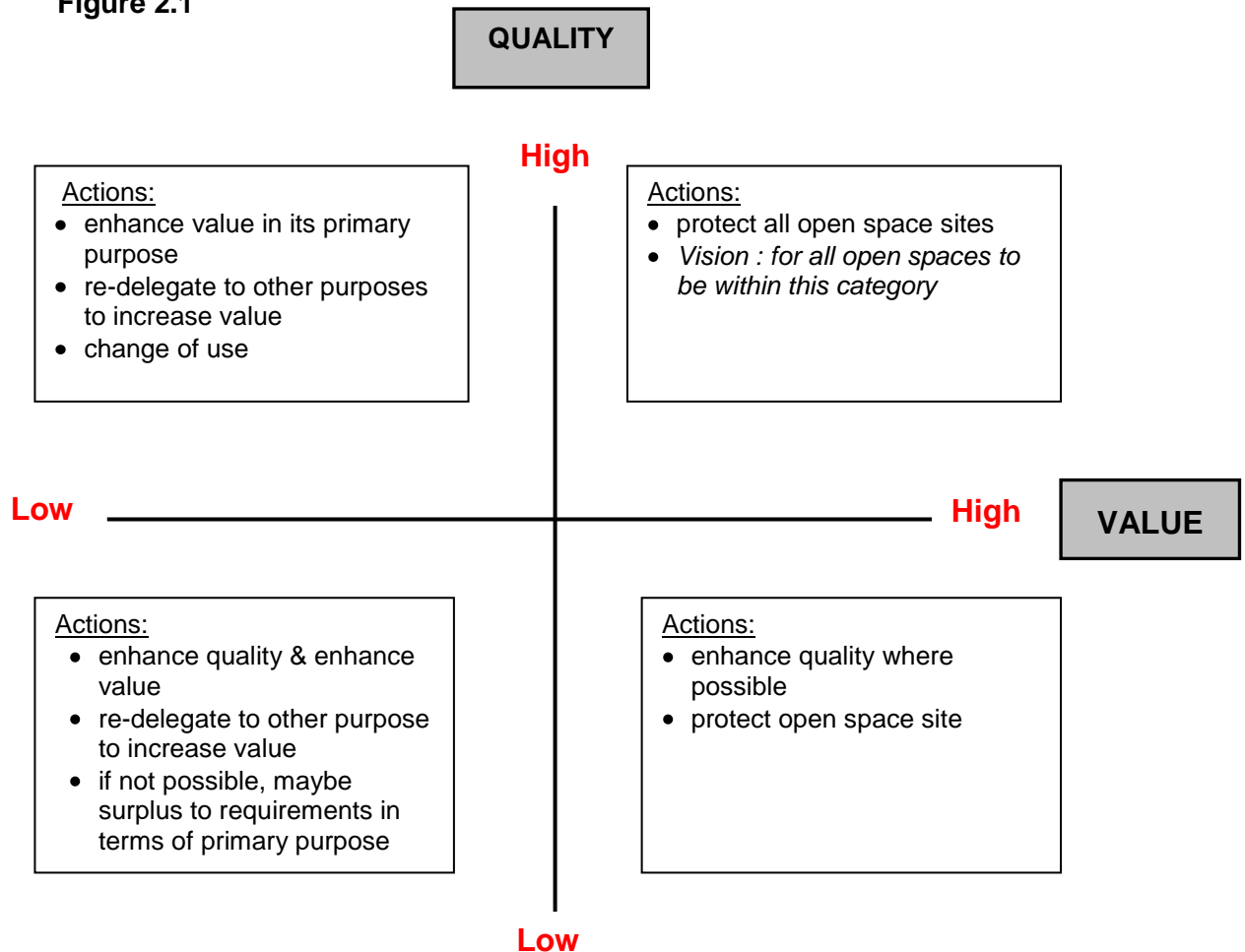
- Context – a site that is inaccessible is irrelevant to potential users and therefore is of little value irrespective of its quality. Also in areas where there are large amounts of high quality open space or more than is actually required, some of it may be of little value. In contrast to this, a site of little quality but in an area of low provision maybe of extremely high value to the public
- Level and Type of Use – poorly used open space sites maybe of little value while highly used sites maybe of high value
- Wider Benefits – there are many wider benefits of open space sites that should be taken into account when analysing the results of particular sites e.g. visual impact, benefits for biodiversity, educational, cultural, economic etc. These benefits are difficult to assess in a systematic way and would require detailed site visits.

2.46 Evaluating value therefore involves attempting to assess these factors, in particular relating the context of the open space site (quality and accessibility) against the level of use of each site.

2.47 From the assessment of the value of sites we are able to start to determine policy options in terms of feeding into a specific action plan. This is fundamental to effective planning:

2.48 Figure 2.1 provides a simple means of determining the most appropriate policy approach to each existing open space site.

Figure 2.1



2.49 Quantity, quality and accessibility of sites will be evaluated within sections 5 – 13, for each specific type and the value of specific sites will also be evaluated.

2.50 The provision of sport and recreation facilities has been assessed using demand models which compare the current supply against the estimated demand. Full details of the demand models and the assumptions used can be found in appendix E.

Analysis areas

2.51 The analysis of the quantity and quality of provision has been undertaken by analysis area in order to extract more specific findings relating to geographical areas within the district of Harborough. The use of analysis areas allows examination of data at a more detailed level, and provides a geographical background to the analysis.

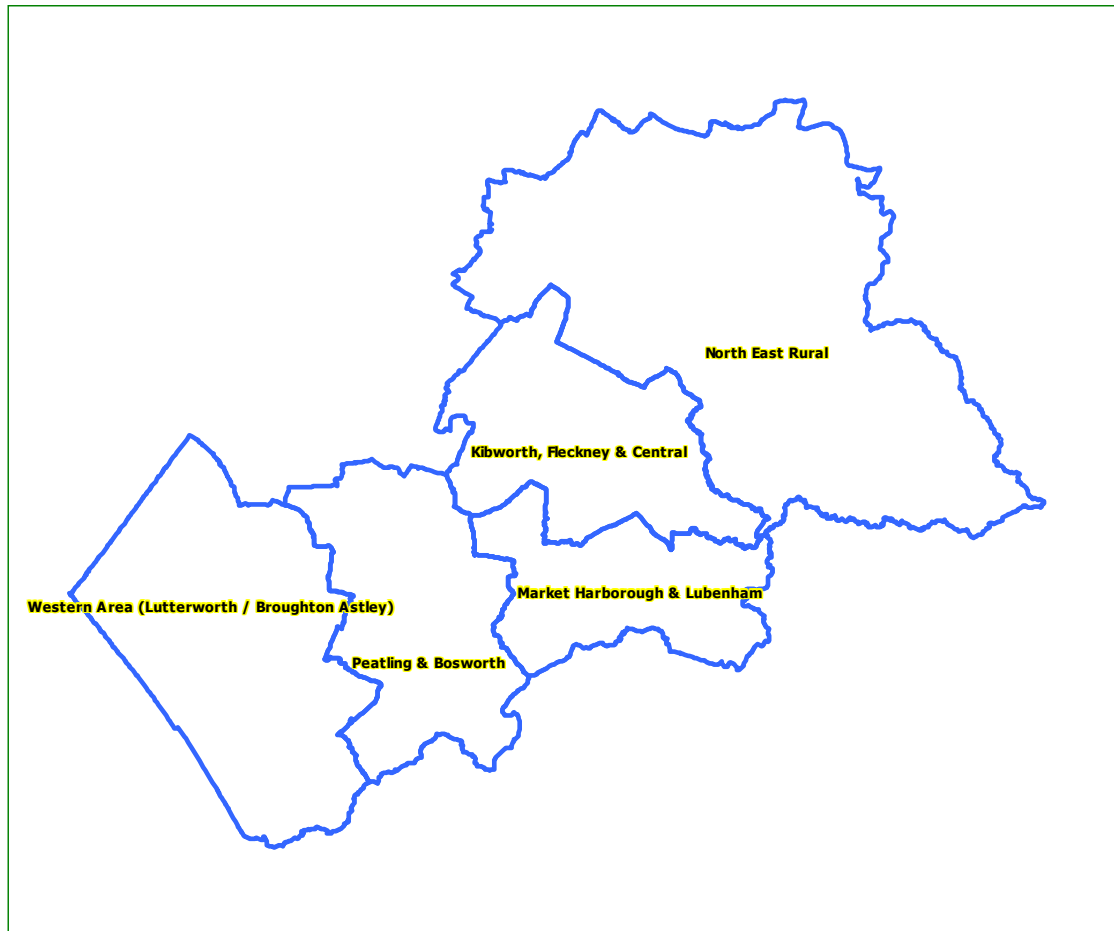
2.52 The five sub areas used in this study are:

- Market Harborough and Lubenham
- North East Rural
- Kibworth, Fleckney and Central
- Western – Lutterworth and Broughton Astley

- Peatling and Bosworth.

2.53 The analysis areas used in this report are illustrated in Figure 2.2 below

Figure 2.2 – Analysis Areas



2.54 However because each site has been digitised on GIS compatible software and its associated ratings and characteristics inputted into a linked access database this will enable further updates of open spaces and varying forms of analysis to be undertaken – a dynamic reporting and assessment mechanism.

2.55 The analysis has been undertaken on the data provided and collected through the process described above. It is acknowledged that some of the 92 parish councils have not returned any data or refused to co-operate within the study. The audit coverage is however 100%, as non responding parishes were audited by Bob Littler. Full details of the parish questionnaire responses can be found in appendix N.

Data quality

2.56 The quality of both the quantitative database data and spatial mapping data was evaluated.

2.57 Database records were assessed on a scale of very good to very poor, using the following criteria:

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1. Very good – excellent data quality
 2. Good – data quality good, all fields completed
 3. Average – some fields not filled in, duplicate entries
 4. Poor – data unclear or poorly completed
 5. Very poor – data incomplete
- 2.58 Spatial data was also rated on a scale of very good to very poor, based on the following criteria:
1. Very good – landline can be followed 100%
 2. Good – landline can be followed reasonably
 3. Average – data involved small amount of interpretation
 4. Poor – open space was difficult to accurately define
 5. Very poor – could not capture data.
- 2.59 The data quality was also combined in order to produce an overall assessment of the data quality for each site.
- 2.60 Spatial data was considered to be good or very good, and only three responses were not rated as good or very good.
- 2.61 Data quality overall is therefore considered to be **good and reliable**.
- 2.62 The digitisation and database development process assumptions are outlined in Appendix B.

Step 5 – Drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities

- 2.63 Finally policy recommendations and guidelines have been drafted, including planning policy advice. Planning policy advice is summarised in section 17, and the full report can be found in appendix K. Recommendations and priorities identified throughout the report are the result of a detailed local assessment of need for Harborough.