# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Introduction and background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Undertaking the study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Strategic context</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td>Identifying local needs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5</td>
<td>Parks and gardens</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6</td>
<td>Natural and semi-natural</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7</td>
<td>Amenity green space</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8</td>
<td>Provision for children and young people</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 9</td>
<td>Sports facilities</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 10</td>
<td>Allotments</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 11</td>
<td>Green corridors</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 12</td>
<td>Planning overview</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 13</td>
<td>Resourcing open space</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 14</td>
<td>Overall summary and conclusions</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDICES

Appendix A  Demographics
Appendix B  Benefits of Open Space
Appendix C  Open Space Typology – Definitions
Appendix D  Household Surveys
Appendix E  Site Assessment Sheets
Appendix F  Database by Typology
Appendix G  Open Space Provision by Ward
Appendix H  Setting and Applying Standards
Appendix I  CABE Space Publications
Appendix J  Other Open Space Publications
Appendix K  Quality Standards
Appendix L  Quantity Standards
Appendix M  Accessibility Standards
Appendix N  Sport and Recreation Supply and Demand Models
Appendix O  Glossary
SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
Introduction and background

Introduction and scope

1.1 Surrey Heath Borough Council (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake an Open Space and Recreation Study across the Borough of Surrey Heath (the Borough). The work undertaken by PMP has provided a basis for the completion of the Study. The study aims to create an information base and strategy for the adequate provision of accessible, high quality open spaces, green spaces and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the local community. It will provide a clear vision, establish priorities for future open space and sports facility provision and set out a direction for the allocation of resources.

1.2 This main focus of the study was to:

• provide a strategic focus for the Council enabling the best use of existing and future designated open spaces
• identify local demand for the various types of open space through a series of consultations
• identify specific needs, surpluses or deficiencies both now and in the future, with recommendations for resolving any key issues
• provide a basis for improving the quality of planning policies, the decision making in relation to any development pressures on open space and feed into the review of open space as part of the emerging Local Development Framework.

1.3 The study is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17, Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).

“Assessing Needs & Opportunities” National Planning Policy Background

1.4 PPG17 states “the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of need and audits of open space and sports and recreational facilities”.

1.5 The major change in the policy guidance from the previous version is the requirement for local authority decisions regarding open space, to be informed by local needs assessments and an audit of existing provision. Such audits should incorporate qualitative, quantitative and accessibility considerations as well as the overall non-monetary value of the land including the level of use. National standards are no longer considered to meet local needs, although they may be used as benchmarks.

1.6 Other subsequent changes in this planning policy document are:

• the definition of open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals and lakes which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation
• a greater emphasis is placed on qualitative considerations – this is particularly important as it will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and/or maintenance of open space
it advocates the setting of local standards appropriate to the local area rather than assessment by national standards although these can be used as benchmarks – the Government believes that national standards are inappropriate, as they do not take into account the demographics of an area, the specific needs of residents and the extent of built development

it provides further guidance on the constituent elements of open space typologies

it clearly acknowledges the multiple functions that open spaces can perform.

1.7 The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:

- assessing needs and opportunities – undertaking audits of open space, sport and recreational facilities
- setting local standards
- maintaining an adequate supply of open space
- planning for new open space.

1.8 The Companion Guide sets out the process for undertaking local assessments of needs and audits of provision. It also:

- indicates how councils can establish the needs of local communities and apply provision standards
- promotes a consistent approach across varying types of open space.

1.9 PMP and the Council have followed the recommendations of PPG17 throughout the study. Following this methodology maximises the potential the resulting strategy has to make a real difference to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces in Surrey Heath.

**Need for local assessments**

1.10 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 the local community
- ensure any accessible funding is invested in the right places where there is the most need
- conduct Section 106 negotiations with developers from a position of knowledge with evidence to support.

1.11 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 open space within the Borough.
Outcomes of local assessments

1.12 A local assessment of open space will enable the Council to plan effectively and achieve some desirable key outcomes required by PPG17. These are:

- provision of networks of accessible, high quality open space for sport and recreation that meet the needs of residents and visitors
- provision of open spaces that are ‘fit for purpose’ – the right type in the right place and of the right size
- provision of open spaces that are economically and environmentally sustainable
- provision of an appropriate balance between new open space and enhancement of existing provision
- setting locally derived provision standards
- provision of clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and land owners.

Demographics

1.13 Surrey Heath is located in North West Surrey. The total population of the Borough in 2001 was 80,213. Analysis of the demographic profile showed that 51% of the population were female, 29.7% below 25 years of age, 18.7% aged 60 or over and 12.6% retired. The total population has risen by 5.4% since 1991. This is significantly higher than the national average (+2.5%). Further information on the demographics of Surrey Heath can be found in Appendix A.

Why public open space?

1.14 Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:

- supporting an urban renaissance
- supporting a rural renewal
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
- health and well being
- promoting more sustainable development.

1.15 Open space and recreation provision therefore has an important role to play within the Borough and there are a number of specific important issues to understand:
i) Function of open space

Open spaces can provide a number of functions within the urban fabric of cities, towns and villages. For example, the provision for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between the built environment and/or a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity. Each type of open space has many various benefits, which depend on the type of open space, for example allotments for the growing of own produce, play areas for children’s play and playing pitches for formal sports events.

ii) Balance of provision

There is a required need to provide a balance between different types of open space in order to meet local needs. For example, not all open space should be in the form of playing pitches or allotments. Some local needs will demand ‘green corridor’ sites such as nature walks or bridleways and others will require small informal recreation areas such as ‘amenity greenspace’.

In accordance with PPG17, this balance of provision should be based on local needs and the requirements of ensuring the provision of an attractive environment for people to live, work and play.

1.16 Changing social and economic circumstances have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers including sport and leisure.

1.17 There are, however, new opportunities to develop the role of open spaces. They can promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector.

1.18 Public open space cuts across many people’s lives and is a source of local concern for a variety of reasons:

• issues like anti-social behaviour, litter and dog fouling, graffiti and the condition of parks and play areas impacts greatly on the quality of people’s daily lives

• the design, management and maintenance of open spaces directly influences perceptions of safety and actual public usage

• local publicly accessible open space is often of worse quality for people already suffering from other forms of deprivation

• the involvement of local people and partnership working is crucial in reaching the right solutions.

1.19 The Government recognises through its publication of ‘Our Towns and Cities’: The Future Delivering an Urban Renaissance’ (November 2002) that there is an overwhelming need to develop a vision for the future of parks and open spaces and that there is a need to improve information on quality and quantity of parks and open spaces and the way they are used and maintained.

1.20 This study considers open space sites and how they can meet the needs of the resident population both now and in the future.
Benefits of open space

1.21 Open spaces, including parks, playgrounds, amenity greenspace, nature reserves and the countryside, are diverse locations that provide opportunities for a range of formal and informal leisure, passive and active sport, recreation and play.

1.22 Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wider range of people than sports and leisure facilities and are better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation provision is also key to an ideal community.

1.23 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality ‘public realm’ facilities such as parks and open spaces can assist in the promotion of an area as an attractive place to live, and can result in a number of benefits. These are highlighted in Appendix B.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

1.24 CPA is an assessment mechanism, announced by the Government in 2001, to assess the performance of councils across the country. It is not a service inspection but a corporate assessment of a council to deliver improvement using universal cross-cutting themes including:

- balancing housing markets
- public space – clean, green and safe.

1.25 Using public space (that includes open space as defined within this study) as a key assessment indicator demonstrates the importance of developing this strategy. CPA will assess what the Council has or has not achieved in terms of improvements in the area of public open space specifically against targets set by the Council.

Summary

1.26 This study:

- provides an evaluation and summary of the local needs assessment, which has assisted in identifying areas of surplus and deficiency throughout the Borough
- provides an analysis of existing provision and appropriate policies and actions for each type of open space – to enable the Council to plan effectively the provision of open space to meet the current and future needs and enhance existing open spaces where required
- enables the Council to ensure the most effective and efficient use of open spaces within the Borough and plan and respond appropriately to any pressures of immediate and future developments
- provides the necessary information to be used in developing a strategy for the future management and development of open space.
SECTION 2

UNDERTAKING THE STUDY
SECTION 2 – UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

Undertaking the study

Introduction

2.1 As previously mentioned, this study was undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its Companion Guide. The 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 four 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 PPG17 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 the Council.

Types of open space

2.3 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”.

2.4 The PPG17 Companion Guide identifies nine typologies of open space. These categories include eight types of open space and one category of urban open space.

2.5 The open space audit and analysis for Surrey Heath considers eight typologies excluding Cemeteries and Churchyards. The study takes into account open spaces provided and managed by other organisations giving a more accurate picture of current provision within the Borough. Full details of these typologies, their definitions and primary purpose are outlined in Appendix C.
PPG17 – 5 step process

2.6 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five 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 Borough. Although presented as a linear process below, in reality, many stages were undertaken in parallel.

2.7 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 – Implementation and Action Plan

Our process

2.8 The following steps indicate how the study has been undertaken in accordance with PPG17.

Step 1 - Identifying local needs

2.9 In order to identify the local need, a series of consultations were carried out, these included:

- 5,000 household questionnaires disseminated across the Borough (users and non-users) with responses sent back in 2005.
- Press releases, specific email address and text messaging service were set up to allow the general public to provide comments on open space
- Internal one-to-one consultations with Council officers
- Consultation with Parish clerks
- Consultation with external agencies.
- The provisional audit of open spaces and facilities for each ward was checked with all Surrey Heath Borough Councillors and the audit reviewed in 2006.

2.10 Specific details on the process adopted for Step 1, along with relevant questionnaires, can be found in Appendix D.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

2.11 A detailed desk exercise was completed using existing data, for example, current Council strategies, the Local Plan, Ordnance Survey and street maps and other sources, to establish exact locations and types of all open spaces within the Borough.

2.12 A total of 262 sites were identified across the borough. 22 sites were visited and assessed on quantity, quality, accessibility and value using a standard matrix and
definitions. Other sites were assessed on by Council officers and through discussions with Parish clerks.

2.13 As part of the site assessment a cross checking exercise was undertaken to ensure the audit was as comprehensive as possible. This included ensuring consistency of categorisation of open space sites into the PPG17 typologies used for this study.

2.14 Each open space site was then digitised using GIS software and its associated ratings and characteristics were 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.

**Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and applying provision standards**

2.15 Within the analysis of the significant amount of data collected and site ratings in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility and value of the sites we are able to:

- determine provision standards
- apply such standards
- to identify gaps in provision and therefore the areas of priority.

2.16 The analysis has therefore been undertaken by type of open space looking at different areas of the Borough (called analysis areas in this report), which were discussed and agreed by the Council. These analysis areas (three discrete areas across the Borough) have been devised using clearly identifiable neighbourhoods. Analysis areas one and two, both residential areas on the west of the borough. These areas are separated by a major physical boundary, the M3. Analysis area three contains the wards located in the rural east of the borough. The use of analysis areas allows examination of data at a more detailed level, and provides a geographical background to the analysis.

2.17 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.

2.18 Further detail regarding the process for setting and application of each type of provision standard is outlined in Appendix H.

**Step 5 – Implementation and Action Plan**

2.19 Finally policy recommendations and guidelines have been drafted. Recommendations and priorities identified throughout the report are the result of this detailed local assessment of need for the Borough.
Strategic context

3.1 This strategic review sets in context the study and analysis of a local needs assessment by reviewing:

- the current situation regarding the provision of open space nationally
- the range of national and local strategic documents and organisations that may have a direct or possibly indirect influence and/or impact upon the provision of open space within Surrey Heath.

The National Situation

Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (October 2002)

3.2 The Government stated that parks and green spaces need more visible champions and clearer structures for co-ordinating policy and action better, and at all levels.

3.3 Several existing national bodies have responsibilities or programmes with impact on various aspects of urban green spaces – including English Heritage, Sport England, Groundwork, Natural England, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the Countryside Agency, and the Forestry Commission.

3.4 Instead of setting up a new body, the Government will take action on three levels to improve co-ordination of policy and action for urban parks and green spaces. It will:

- provide a clearer national policy framework
- invite CABE to set up a new unit for urban spaces (CABE Space)
- encourage a strategic partnership to support the work of the new unit and inform national policy and local delivery.

3.5 CABE Space and its publications now provide this advice on policy frameworks and local delivery.

CABE Space

3.6 CABE Space is part of the Commission for the Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and is publicly funded by the ODPM. CABE Space aims “to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in towns and cities”.

3.7 Through their work, they encourage people to think holistically about green space, and what it means for the health and well being of communities, routes to school and work, and recreation through play and sport. Their ultimate goal is to ensure that people in England have easy access to well designed and well looked after public space.

3.8 Lessons learnt for some of CABE Space’s case studies include:

- strategic vision is essential
- political commitment is essential
• think long-term
• start by making the case for high quality green spaces in-house (persuading other departments is key – high priority)
• a need to market parks and green spaces
• a need to manage resources more efficiently
• work with others - projects are partnerships
• keep good records: monitor investments and outcomes
• consult widely and get public support for your work.

3.9 CABE Space has published a number of publications, including:

• Manifesto for better public spaces, CABE Space (2003)
• Green Space Strategies – a good practice guide CABE Space (May 2004)
• The Value of Public Space, CABE Space (March 2004)

3.10 The summaries of these publications can be found in Appendix I.

Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions

3.11 The former Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) has been responsible for the publication of several papers on urban green spaces, including:

• Improving urban parks, play areas and green space, DTLR (May 2002).

3.12 The main findings of Green Spaces, Better Places recognises that parks and green spaces are a popular and precious resource, which can make a valuable contribution to the attractiveness of a neighbourhood, to the health and well-being of people and expand educational opportunities of children and adults alike.

3.13 In 2002 the DTLR produced a linked research report to Green Spaces, Better Places which looked at patterns of use, barriers to open space and the wider role of open space in urban regeneration.

3.14 The main messages from these reports can be found in Appendix J.
Sport England

3.15 Sport England provides the strategic lead for sport in England and is responsible for delivering the Government's sporting objectives.

3.16 Sport England draws together the large body of research and good practice on the subject of open space and focuses on the revised PPG 17 and its companion guide.

3.17 Sport England has been responsible for several publications relating to open space:
- Planning for Open Space, Sport England (Sept 2002).

3.18 The organisation aims to ensure that there is no further reduction of supply of conveniently located, quality playing fields to satisfy the current and likely future demand.

3.19 Other key messages from these two documents can be found in Appendix J.

Local strategic documents

3.20 A review of local strategic documentation has been undertaken and points of key relevance summarised below. This section is an overview setting out points relating broadly to open space and recreation provision. Key references applying to specific open space types are covered under the subsequent section for each individual typology.

Surrey Heath Local Plan (Adopted December 2000)

3.21 Local Plans set out a local planning authority’s detailed policies and proposals for the future development and use of land in their area. The Local Plan will protect urban and rural open spaces.

3.22 The Surrey Heath Local Plan has three main functions – to apply the broad principles of the Surrey Structure Plan, to set out the Council’s policies for the control of development and to make proposals for the development and use of land and to allocate land for specific purposes.

3.23 A review of the current adopted Local Plan is underway and is will take the form of a Local Development Framework (LDF). The submission document for the Core Strategy is due to be sent to the Government Office of the South East next year. Other documents which are currently being prepared of relevance to the provision of open space are:– the Camberley Town Centre Area Action Plan Development Plan Document (DPD), the DC Policies DPD and the Lightwater Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document.

3.24 The Local Plan has policies and guidance under the following relevant categories:

General policies

3.25 The Council will seek to retain trees and recognises the importance of retaining open landscape with the urban and rural areas. Local Plan Policy G4 seeks high quality designs from new development proposals that enhance the attractiveness of the
environment. Policy G24 sets out the need to retain trees which make a significant contribution to the environment.

**Urban Environment**

3.26 Green spaces within settlement areas are considered to be of great significance. The loss or reduction of these spaces will not be permitted, as set out in Policy UE1. The development and improvement of the amenity green spaces will be encouraged.

3.27 Open space, in general, should be protected from fragmentation or incursion from development. Support for improved management of these areas and extending public access is also recognised to be equally as important.

**Rural Environment**

3.28 Inappropriate development within the Green Belt and the Countryside Beyond the Green Belt will not be permissible. However, under Policy RE2, essential facilities for outdoor sports and other recreation, cemeteries and other uses of land that preserve the openness of the green belt will be permitted.

**Recreation**

3.29 The loss or reduction of existing leisure and recreation facilities will not be permitted under Policy R1 unless alternative provision is being provided. This policy also relates to the provision of outdoor play space. Policy R2 encourages development for public or private recreation.

3.30 Policies R3 and R4 will seek to secure better use of informal open space, including access for people with disabilities. These open spaces will also be preserved.

3.31 Policies TC3, TC4 and TC10 protect and encourage open space provision within the Surrey Heath town centre to ensure access to pleasant shopping areas, safe places for children to play and landscape and townscape quality.

**Transportation**

3.32 It has been noted that public transport within Surrey Heath is limited. Although there are three stations at Camberley, Bagshot and Frimley, there are no main line railway stations within the borough. There are bus services, run by different contractors, some on behalf of the County Council.

**Leisure and Cultural Strategy 2003 - 2008**

3.33 The vision of the Borough Council’s Leisure and Cultural Strategy is underpinned by some key “cross-cutting” themes:

- Healthy Living - achieving mental and physical well-being
- Access for All - removing obstacles and enabling all to take part
- Community Involvement – Surrey Heath is a place where you belong
- Life Long Learning – Self-development throughout life
- Sustainable Environment – Protecting and enhancing the green heritage.
3.34 After thorough consultation with the public, the strategy identified the following findings and subsequent actions under the following key themes:

**Parks and countryside – Environmental Sustainability and Youth**

- high levels of satisfaction
- more publicity and promotion of parks and countryside needed
- more activities / events required – greater community involvement
- more initiatives linked to education about sites of ecological importance and environmental interest
- improve play provision for over 8’s (more sites provided like Lightwater Country Park)
- modernise / improve infrastructure eg replace older toilet blocks, provide more dog bins etc.
- more publicity / signage eg for self-guided walks
- increase refreshment facilities.

**Sport, Leisure and recreation**

3.35 The main findings in relation to sport and leisure are:

- more facilities
- promotion of healthy lifestyles
- price improvements
- provision and location of youth facilities.

3.36 The strategy Action Plan outlines the strategic aims and actions that need to be carried out to achieve these objectives and reflect the cross-cutting themes identified. The aims are outlined below:

- **Mental and physical well-being of residents:**
  - identify proposals to introduce target groups into new active sports, arts and recreational pursuits

- **Enable self-development throughout life, through both formal and informal means**
  - investigate and encourage the wider use of school facilities for local groups and general public leisure activities
  - promote after school and out of school activities for children, including Action Holidays ie Children’s Holiday Playscheme.
• Improve access for all to leisure and cultural activities

Access:
- encourage sports clubs and facility managers to endorse the principles of sports equity as defined by Sport England
- identify initiatives to assist societies and clubs to attract new members and to build links between those organisations
- consult with all groups.

Young people:
- encourage the involvement of young people in leisure and cultural activities and courses
- encourage the development of casual user access and affordable prices for leisure and cultural services targeted at young people
- consult with young people on leisure and cultural services in the Borough
- encourage the development of youth sections in all clubs, societies and venues active in the leisure and cultural field where unmet demand may be clearly identified.

• Protecting and enhancing Surrey Heath’s natural environment
- support local policies for the protection and improvement of the green environment, the Countryside, and recreational open space
- support green issues and consider adopting a formal Agenda 21
- maintain support to projects and organisations protecting the environment and developing interest through marketing and education
- support initiatives to reduce motor vehicle traffic
- link key sites and major residential/work areas with cycle routes and public transport and encourage walking
- produce a partnership plan with local landowners including SCC, Ministry of Defence, and the Council to facilitate a co-ordinated approach
- produce a Green Action Plan for the parks and countryside
- continue a programme of drafting management plans for major parks
- continue to support allotment providers
- carry out feasibility studies into updating public toilet provision in parks.
The Sport and Recreation Plan

3.37 A Borough Council Sport and Recreation Plan is being developed through consultation with the public and sports clubs. Six main areas have been identified that require to be addressed. These include sports development, school development, indoor facilities, outdoor facilities, healthy living and play.

3.38 There are several aims within the mission statement. The main aims relating to this study are as follows:

- assess the local need for sports and recreation facilities both indoor and outdoor and identify deficiencies in provision
- identify affordable opportunities to develop sport and recreation facilities in Surrey Heath and utilise partnership opportunities and external funding where possible
- identify priority target groups in Surrey Heath to reflect the needs of different users
- identify how sport and recreation can deliver cross cutting issues including public health, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, regeneration, lifelong learning and community safety.

External agencies

3.39 There are a number of external agencies that impact on the provision of open space within the Borough of Surrey Heath.

British Waterways

3.40 British Waterways has the vision of a sustainable and integrated network of waterways throughout Britain, to provide maximum benefit to society both now and in the future.

3.41 British Waterways also recognises the wider role of the waterways and believes that waterways can deliver economic, social and environment/heritage benefits.

3.42 In April 2003 it published its new planning policy document ‘Waterways and Development Plans’. The publication shows how local authorities, in partnership with British Waterways, can maximise the benefits of waterspaces through the planning system.

3.43 The plan responds to Waterways for Tomorrow (June 2000) in which the Government wished to support the development of waterways through the planning system to increase the economic, environmental and social benefits offered by waterways.

Natural England

3.44 Natural England is a government agency concerned with wildlife and geology and is a key partner of the Countryside Agency, which aims to achieve an improved understanding of the relationship between access and nature conservation. Natural England is responsible for selecting and designating Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
3.45 Natural England attempts to:

- facilitate and encourage access to National Nature Reserves
- support initiatives aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of open cohabitats
- monitor the effects of access on wildlife sites across the country
- stress the value of local sites and recommend that local authorities develop partnerships for the provision of local sites and SSSIs.

3.46 Although the Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) are under review, the standards still require:

- that no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 ha in size
- provision of at least 1 ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population
- that there should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2km from home
- that there should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5km
- that there should be one 500 ha site within 20 km.

3.47 The standards were justified in the following ways:

- everyday contact with nature is important for well-being and quality of life
- everyone should be able to enjoy this contact, in safety, without having to make any special effort or journey to do so
- natural green space in towns and cities can play an important role in helping safeguard our national treasure of wildlife and geological features
- accessible natural green spaces give everyone an excellent chance to learn about nature and help to protect it in practical ways
- adequate provision of vegetated areas helps to ensure that urban areas continue to function ecologically.

3.48 In 2001 a review of the standards was commenced as Natural England was concerned to find that its accessible natural green space standards seemed to be little used.

3.49 The key recommendations of the review include:

- that **Natural England** should provide additional support to the model by providing practical guidance, implementing an outreach strategy to raise the profile of the model
- that **local authorities should develop green space strategies** as a means of ensuring balanced green space planning, and should set locally appropriated green space standards
that central government should work towards the development of a single framework for integrated green space planning.

**The Environment Agency**

3.50 The Environment Agency is the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. Its remit covers air, land and water.

3.51 The main pressures on the Thames region are identified by the Environment Agency as being:

- the growing demand for new homes in the region
- increasing calls on essential water resources, especially providing drinking water for the increasing population
- the need to remove increasing volumes of waste properly and safely, and to reduce the amount of waste produced.

**Wildlife Trust**

3.52 The Wildlife Trust is the leading conservation charity dedicated exclusively to wildlife. It advises local authorities, community groups and landowners on nature conservation issues and has a major input into decision making on planning matters and other issues.

**National Children’s Bureau – Children’s Play Council**

3.53 A review of children’s play was undertaken between October 2002 and April 2003. This review takes into account the needs and aspirations and “play” of children between the ages of 0 and 16. The report identified four principles of successful projects:

- they are centered on children and young people – it was suggested that the most successful play spaces focus on a neighbourhood rather than catering for a whole town
- they have an attractive location with high quality play opportunities
- they fit in well with local circumstances
- they give both children and young people and parents a sense of security.

3.54 In addition, the report promotes the use of school facilities out of hours, as this offers additional play opportunities and space for young people. Young people were questioned as to the type of facility that they would like to see, and it was concluded that young people appreciated both sites that were not staffed by adults and sites where adult helpers were present.

3.55 Suggestions for facilities included:

- adventure playgrounds
- play centres
- youth cafes
- bike tracks
3.56 The report discusses the appropriate size of provision for young people and children, and consultation questioned the benefits of providing a small number of large-scale sites in comparison to a larger number of smaller local sites. Findings indicated that young people prefer a larger number of smaller facilities that are closer to their home where they are able to meet with friends on an informal basis.

Summary

3.57 There is real concern regarding the state of parks and open spaces within the country, particularly a lack of investment.

3.58 The provision of open spaces supports wider governmental objectives such as social and community cohesion, urban renaissance and promoting a healthy and enjoyable life.

3.59 Any development of open spaces either new or enhancement of existing areas should take into account the biodiversity and nature conservation opportunities and develop an increasing environmental awareness.

3.60 Many organisations are willing to work in partnership together to manage and develop existing open spaces and share similar aims and objectives eg. protecting, enhancing and maximising usage and nature conservation value of open spaces.

3.61 There appears to be a general consensus that involving the community in managing and designing open space sites creates a sense of ownership and will assist in maintaining the quality and maximising the usage of open space sites.

3.62 Specifically in Surrey Heath the main issues are:

- the need to protect the provision already provided within the Borough
- the cross-cutting themes of health, education, crime and disorder and social inclusion
- the need to provide spaces that are both accessible and inclusive of children and young people, especially in providing quality areas for play
- to maintain the high quality of open space and build on areas of best practice, such as Lightwater Country Park
- the possibility of providing additional provision to ensure any new development is well provided for.

3.63 In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the importance of maintaining and improving open space sites within the Borough. This local needs study and resulting strategy will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.
SECTION 4

IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS
Identifying local needs

Introduction

4.1 Consultation was undertaken as part of the local needs assessment to establish the views on open space and recreation provision amongst both users and non-users in the Borough.

4.2 The information gained from these consultations has been used to help understand:

- needs and requirements of local residents
- attitudes and expectations of open space and recreation facilities within the borough
- strengths of current provision
- key issues/problems facing the Council and external agencies.

4.3 A variety of consultation methods have highlighted a series of consistent themes across the district which are summarised below and cover in more detail in the following section.

Summary of consultation

There is a high level of satisfaction amongst local residents in relation to open space and this provision is highly valued.

The main issues emerging are the lack of provision for young people, with the need to cater for this age group in order to prevent the minor, sporadic vandalism of the children’s play areas and anti-social behaviour.

There are some issues with the quality of open spaces, but this is generally limited to children’s play provision and some specific sites which suffer from littering and dog fouling. The maintenance of the ancillary sports facilities is a problem for some clubs.

In terms of accessibility, consultation indicates that open space sites are generally believed to be within reach of the majority of residents.

In terms of sport and recreation, there is a perceived demand for more football pitches, at both senior and junior level.

4.4 This section provides an overview setting out points relating broadly to open space and recreation provision. Key findings applying to specific open space types are covered under the subsequent section for each individual typology.
Household survey

4.5 5000 questionnaires were disseminated across the Borough and received in 2005. Each household was selected at random and the person in the household with the next birthday (but over the age of 10) was asked to complete the questionnaire. 728 questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 15%. This response rate gives a statistically significant 95% confidence level. A copy of the household questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

4.6 Household survey responses have been analysed following data entry into a Microsoft Access database. A summary of the views of Borough residents with regards to quantity, quality, accessibility and usage of open space and sport and recreation leisure provision is provided below. The findings of more detailed analysis by geographical area (see Map 4.1 below of the Analysis Areas) and open space typology have been used to inform the following sections.

Map 4.1. Analysis Areas

Respondent profile

- 43% of respondents were male and 57% female
- respondents reflected the following age profile:
  - under 16: 3%
  - 16-24: 2%
  - 25-39: 20%
  - 40-59: 38%
  - 60-75: 25%
- 75+: 12%.

- 95% of respondents describe themselves as white British

- 34% of respondents reported children under 16 living in their household.

**Quantity**

- a significant proportion of residents (85%) felt all the open space typologies were important to them

- Parks and Gardens and Natural / Semi Natural greenspaces were considered the most important with 93% of respondents considering natural and semi natural sites important and 91% considering parks and gardens important

- 45% of residents felt that allotments were important, however, a further 35% did not agree, making this the least important type of open space

- only 36% considered civic spaces to be important and a further 22% stated it was not important. However, nearly a quarter of all respondents do not have an opinion on the importance of civic spaces

- provision for children and young people was considered the least well provided for, with 46% of respondents feeling the current provision was ‘too little’. Provision for amenity green space and outdoor sports facilities was also considered to be ‘too little’ by 35% of respondents

- on average, only 1% of residents felt there was ‘too much’ provision across the typologies, with marginally more, (2%), considering there to be too much provision for allotments and civic spaces. However, it should be noted that 46% had no opinion on the provision of allotments and 39% on the provision of civic spaces

- the majority of respondents considered provision across all types ‘about right’: parks - 62%, natural open spaces – 62%, green corridors – 62%, amenity greenspaces – 48%, play spaces – 39%, outdoor sports facilities – 50%, allotments – 29% and cemeteries and churchyards – 37%.

**Quality**

- when considering open space in general, any problem factors identified were considered minor issues

- litter (37% of respondents) was stated as the most common minor problem across open spaces

- dog fouling is also considered a minor problem across the Borough by 34% of respondents

- noise and smells are the least significant problem across the Borough’s open spaces with 63% not considering these to be problems at all

- when rating the quality factors that residents were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with, the majority of respondents were ‘satisfied’ with each factor
however, the factors that are most unsatisfactory is the provision of toilets (7%) and litter bins (5%) and 4% are very unsatisfied with lighting

the factors that respondents are most satisfied with include maintenance and management (15%), pathways (14%) and planted and grassed areas (15%)

respondents were asked to indicate their top five features they would like to see in open spaces. The five highest scoring features are listed below:
- clean / litter free (63%)
- toilets (35%)
- nature features (34%)
- well kept grass (31%)
- flowers / trees and shrubs (28%).

Accessibility

when asked about the accessibility to their chosen site, quite a high proportion of respondents chose to answer ‘not applicable’ to some questions. This suggests that there is a mix of transportation being used to access open space

accessibility by foot was considered the most satisfactory with 80% satisfied and only 8% unsatisfied

40% of respondents were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ that their chosen site was accessible by cycleways and 12% are not

of those using public transport, 22% were satisfied and 12% were not (large proportion indicating ‘not applicable’)

accessibility for pushchairs and wheelchairs was considered the most unsatisfactory, with only 42% satisfied and 15% unsatisfied

70% of respondents were ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ with visibility of the site entrance with only 14% considering this unsatisfactory

80% of people were ‘satisfied’ and ‘very satisfied’ with the signage of the site and 56% satisfied with opening times of their chosen open space area

the top three things that would make users feel safer in open space are:
- adequate lighting (34%)
- using the facility during daylight hours (27%)
- reputation of area / open space (24%).

the majority of users walk or drive to open space. The transportation to each type is shown below:
- parks and gardens: 69% walk, 17% drive, 2% cycle, 2% use the bus
- natural green space: 57% walk, 23% drive, 7% cycle, 1% use the bus
- green corridors: 52% walk, 19% drive, 12% cycle, 1% use the bus
- amenity green space: 73% walk, 4% drive, 2% cycle, 1% use the bus
- play areas: 73% walk, 6% drive, 3% cycle, 1% use the bus
- outdoor sports: 38% walk, 36% drive, 7% cycle, 3% use the bus
- allotments: 29% walk, 23% drive, 4% cycle, 1% use the bus

respondents generally travel up to 10 minutes to reach the different types of open space. However, more are prepared to travel further to natural and semi natural open space (15 minutes walk), outdoor sports facilities (15 minutes drive) and allotments (10-15 minutes walk). Respondents are less likely to travel farther to visit amenity green space (5-10 minutes walk).

**Usage**

- all types of open space have been used by respondents in the last 12 months. However, some types are used more than others, for example, natural and semi natural spaces are used by 96% of respondents and parks and gardens by 94% of respondents. The percentage of respondents **not** using the different types of open space are outlined below:
  - allotments (80%)
  - civic spaces (50%)
  - outdoor sports facilities (37%)
  - play spaces for children and young people (35%)
  - amenity green space (21%)
  - green corridors (7%)
  - parks and gardens (6%)
  - natural and semi-natural (4%).

- the majority of users, do not use open space on a daily basis. However, 15% of respondents use amenity green space daily and 17% use natural semi natural spaces daily
- the majority of respondents visit parks and gardens (32%), green corridors (29%), play spaces (21%) and allotments (3%) on a weekly basis
- natural and semi natural spaces, despite being the type of open space considered most important and the type visited most frequently, are visited by the majority (34%) on a monthly basis
- amenity green space and outdoor sports facilities represented the highest amount of occasional use across all types. This shows, for amenity green space, that the usage is split between those who visit regularly and those who visit less often
natural and semi natural open space is the type of open space used most frequently by respondents (35%)

the most popular reasons for using open space was ‘to walk’ (80% of respondents), ‘to walk’ (76%), ‘for fresh air’ (75%) and ‘to take exercise’ (50%)

7% of respondents stated that they had not visited any type of open space in the last 12 months

the main reasons stated for non usage of open space included ‘lack of interest’ (41%), ‘lack of time’ (26%) and too far from home (19%).

Parish Council consultation

4.7 The four Parish Councils within Surrey Heath own and manage a significant number of open spaces and sports facilities within the Borough. As important land stakeholders, consultations were carried out with the clerk of each Parish.

4.8 Each parish clerk provided a list of sites owned by the Parish Council and these lists were incorporated into the overarching audit of open spaces. Quality and accessibility factors were also discussed. The findings from each parish consultation are outlined below:

Bisley Parish Council

Quantity

- the Parish Council owns and manages a variety of different open spaces
- different types of open space include amenity green space (eg the village green), outdoor sport facilities (cricket, football and a multi-use games area), provision for children and young people and natural and semi natural (small wooded area)
- there is no indoor sport facility within the parish, although there is good provision for outdoor sport
- it is generally considered by the clerk, that the parish is well provided for in terms of the quantity of open space.

Quality

- in general, the open spaces in Bisley are well maintained
- there is a rolling maintenance procedure which keeps the spaces in good condition
- the multi-use games area is locked every night to protect it from misuse
- more seating is required in all open spaces (funding sources are currently being investigated by the Parish Council)
- there is some limited, sporadic vandalism, but this is dealt with quickly when it occurs
• there have been break-ins of the multi-use games area, but these are rare occurrences.

Accessibility

• the clerk considers that the vast majority of residents within Bisley are within easy access of open space
• the recreation ground has no lock, so is always accessible
• the signage to open spaces is poor, and in most cases not present at all
• there are proposals to erect wooden bollards around the village green, complementing ditches already in place, to deter the settlement of traveling communities
• amenity green space, outdoor sport facilities and children’s play are reasonably accessible to pushchairs and wheelchairs, with a well maintained path around the perimeter of the main outdoor sport facility (Bisley Recreation Ground).

Chobham Parish Council

Quantity

• the parish owns and manages a number of sites in the area, including all the different types of open space (except green corridors)
• the sites are generally used on a regular basis by local residents
• current outdoor sport facilities are at demand and there is little room for expansion
• there are no specific facilities for young people
• good use is made of the provision provided by the parish council.

Quality

• there is a minor litter problem at the memorial shelter, but this is managed well by the parish council
• there has been glass in the play area on the recreation ground, but this is sporadic and cleared up quickly
• the all weather surface at recreation ground is planned to be resurfaced and the panelling around it replaced.

Accessibility

• most sites are easily accessible
• there is little signage to open spaces, with word of mouth and local knowledge being the only way of promoting the spaces
the memorial gardens were designed specifically to enhance access to disabled and pushchair users.

West End Parish Council

Quantity

- the Parish owns and manages a range of open space within the area including amenity greenspace, outdoor sports facilities and provision for children and young people
- it is generally considered by the parish clerk that the area has enough provision and that the vast majority of residents are within easy access of open space
- there is a lot of accessible heathland around the parish.

Quality

- there is a health and safety inspection of open space on a monthly basis
- an external contractor is employed to carry out a rolling maintenance programme
- more planting and provision of seating is currently underway.

Accessibility

- open space in the parish is considered to be reasonably accessible to all users
- gates in the play areas are all wide enough for pushchair and wheelchair access and have paths to reach them
- there is limited signage in place to identify open spaces.

Windlesham Parish Council

Quantity

- the parish covers a large percentage (circa 20%) of the land area and population within Surrey Heath
- the parish owns and manages many sites including, outdoor sport facilities, amenity green space, provision for children and young people and natural and semi natural open space
- it is considered that there is enough open space within the area
- Lightwater County Park is in the immediate area and provides a huge resource.
Quality

- the open spaces are well maintained and good quality
- dog and litter bins are provided in most open spaces
- fly-tipping is removed quickly
- there is a monthly inspection of children’s play areas
- School Lane open space, designed by professional landscapers, is well maintained and used by many, including schools for nature studies.

Accessibility

- School Lane open space was designed specifically with all year round disabled access in mind
- all areas are within easy access of an open space
- many of the open spaces have paths.

Internal consultations

4.9 Council representatives (Officers and Members) were consulted with regard to the current provision of open spaces and sport and recreation facilities and local need:

- John Dawson – Principal Planning Officer
- Eamon Ryan – Head of Leisure Services
- Dave Sanger – Parks and Countryside Manager
- Derek Truman – Leisure Manager
- Councillor Terry King.

4.10 The following points summarise the main issues emerging from these consultations.

Strategy and vision

4.11 The focus of the Council centres around providing good quality resources for sport and recreation activities to take place and to promote healthy living and get the community active.

4.12 A range of initiatives is in place to underpin achievement of the Council’s key objectives. Examples of these schemes are summarised below:

- successful application for a three year Active England revenue grant to fund a Multi-Sport Officer post (to be based at Lightwater Leisure Centre)
- emphasis on long term athlete development and the development of basic skills and co-ordination
- innovative schemes to get people active
Two feasibility studies are being undertaken by the private leisure management operator to examine the potential introduction of:

- A web-based booking system
- A leisure card system

Management of an ongoing basic maintenance programme to ensure open space is neat, tidy and safe, but with certain limitations due to budget restrictions.

**Aspirations/expectations**

4.13 It is generally considered that the open space within Surrey Heath is very well maintained and that a high quality service is provided by the Council. The Best Value Review and Residents Panel consultation for the Leisure and Cultural Strategy generated very positive feedback. Public expectations in relation to these services are therefore reasonably high.

4.14 The need for certain improvements at open space sites has been identified:

- Enhanced youth facilities offering more exciting play opportunities
- Improved catering facilities
- Increased toilet provision
- Wider calendar of events.

**Quantity**

4.15 Some areas are considered deficient in informal open space and children’s play space, in particular St Michael’s ward.

4.16 There is perceived to be a shortage of green space in the town centre catering for the needs of those working locally. The potential to introduce more planted walkways and benches in the town centre was identified.

**Quality**

4.17 Research and consultation has indicated that public satisfaction levels with the quality of open spaces in the Borough are high.

4.18 Incidences of vandalism of children’s play areas have been reported and this is generally considered to be due to the lack of appropriate provision for older children, which leads to the misuse of play space for younger age groups with damage, decreased quality and safety issues. Vandalism and anti-social behaviour are common in St Michael’s.

**Accessibility**

4.19 Access to heathland and natural open spaces within the Borough is considered good, with most residents believed to be within walking distance of a green space.

4.20 Other accessibility factors such as signage and disabled access were also considered good.
Weaknesses

4.21 Isolation tends to be a problem factor associated with open space and issues can be accentuated by development at the heart of open space sites rather than at the periphery.

4.22 In areas of identified deficiency, such as St Michael’s, available space to accommodate the development of required provision is limited.

4.23 There is a significant problem with dog walkers and associated issues of dog fouling, particularly at outdoor sports facilities.

Future plans and suggested improvements

4.24 Identified areas for improvement were:

- need for more football pitches, particularly for juniors and minis.
- increased off road provision for cycling
- installation of ramps at bowling greens.

4.25 The potential for creation of a multi-sport hub site at Watchetts Recreation Ground was also raised.
SECTION 5

PARKS AND GARDENS
Parks and gardens

Definition

5.1 This type of open space includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events.

5.2 This typology also has many wider benefits. Parks provide a sense of place for the local community, some form of ecological and education benefits, help to address social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide some form of structural and landscaping benefits to the surrounding local area.

National strategic context

5.3 A national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage was undertaken during 2003, looking at the provision of parks within England. The aims of the survey were to establish:

- how many adults in England use parks
- what activities take part in when visiting parks
- the reasons people visit particular parks
- the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
- why non-users do not use parks.

5.4 The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks, recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land. It should be highlighted that these open spaces are classified under separate typologies under PPG17 and are not considered collectively as ‘parks’.

5.5 The findings of the study were:

- just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months
- there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups, with almost three quarters of adults from the higher social group visiting a park compared with only half of those from the lower social group
- people from black and ethnic minority communities also have relatively low participation as well as those with a disability
- over eight in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring and summer with almost two thirds visiting a park at least once a week, and women tended to visit parks more often than men
- it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits to parks during the spring and summer months and 600
million visits during the autumn and winter months – a total of 1.8 billion visits a year

- the most popular type of park visited was an urban or city park.

Current position and local context

5.6 A number of open spaces within the Borough are titled as parks, for example, Lightwater Country Park, Frimley Lodge Park, Tekels Park, Krooner Park and Camberley Park. However, in line with guidance set out in the PPG17 Companion Guide, these open spaces have been classified by means of their primary purpose and, as such, have been designated as natural and semi-natural open spaces, outdoor sports facilities and amenity green spaces rather than parks and gardens.

5.7 In this context, Surrey Heath is therefore considered to have no formal provision of parks and gardens, although the Council is currently transforming a former putting green into an ornamental pond within the London Road Recreation Ground. Further formal areas will be considered as funding becomes available.

5.8 However, household survey responses indicated that local residents consider parks provision in its broadest sense, with those identifying parks and gardens as the type of open space they visit most frequently naming popular destinations as:

- Frimley Lodge Park (16%)
- Frimley Recreation Ground (10%)
- Lightwater Country Park (10%)
- Windlesham Field of Remembrance (5%).

5.9 Views were found to be mixed with other respondents classifying these sites under alternative typologies.

5.10 Parks and gardens are highly valued, with 91% of household survey respondents stating that parks and gardens were an important type of open space, and 26.5% identifying them as the type of open space they visit most frequently. Analysis of comments from those respondents using parks and gardens most frequently highlighted the following key points:

- the most common reasons for visiting this type of provision were to walk, to exercise and to get fresh air
- around 30% consider dog fouling to be a significant problem, and a further 35% view it as a minor problem
- one in four people consider litter to be a major problem whilst one in five view vandalism and graffiti as an issue
- 27% of frequent users are dissatisfied with seating provision at these sites.

5.11 Supporting consultation highlighted that there is considered to be lack of formal parks provision in the Borough. There are believed to be opportunities to develop managed
park space within sites such as Camberley Park. It was suggested that Camberley Park is currently perceived to be somewhat detached from the town centre and that changes to the landscaping and a more visually appealing entrance would encourage greater use of this location by those working in Camberley.

**Setting provision standards**

5.12 In setting local standards for Parks and gardens open space there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, sites assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices K, L and M.

**Quantity**

5.13 The household survey indicated that residents generally consider current provision of parks and gardens to be 'about right'. Although there are no sites within the Borough classified as parks and gardens under their primary function for the purposes of this study, this opinion is based on public perceptions of sites such as Frimley Lodge Park, Frimley Recreation Ground and Lightwater Country Park as this type of open space.

5.14 Overall 61% suggested current levels of provision were 'about right' versus 32% considering it 'not enough'. Whilst around 65% of people in Analysis Areas 2 and 3 viewed provision to be satisfactory, levels of dissatisfaction were found to be higher in Analysis Area 1 with 54% feeling provision was appropriate against 40% who considered it too low. Wider consultation reinforced this view, identifying a need for more formal parks provision in Surrey Heath, which could take the form of small, pocket parks.

5.15 There are no national standards to provide guidance on parks and gardens provision but local standards set in other local authority PPG17 studies would suggest that a standard of between 0.5 ha and 1.5 ha per 1,000 population would be appropriate.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL STANDARD

0.35 ha per 1,000 population (urban)

5.16 On this basis, we would recommend a local standard of 0.35 ha per 1,000 population is set for the urban area, in line with local authority benchmark data, to allow local deficiencies to be addressed.

5.17 Lightwater Country Park is a huge resource for the east of the Borough and a wider catchment providing informal recreation space for a large number of people, with nature trails and walks through woodland and meadow areas as well as adventure play facilities for children and young people. The Local Plan 2000 outlined the Council's commitment to improve facilities and in particular to:

- manage the park for its full recreational and amenity potential
- protect, create and maintain the diverse natural habitats
- promote the educational value and use of the park.
Quality

5.18 Green Flag criteria set out the benchmarks for parks as a welcoming facility, healthy, safe and secure environment, well maintained and clean, sustainability, heritage, conservation, marketing and community involvement. Frimley Lodge Park has successfully attained Green Flag status.

5.19 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for parks and gardens were clean and litter free, toilets, well kept grass, flowers, trees and shrubs, seating, litter bins and provision for children and young people.

5.20 A suggested Quality Vision standard for parks and gardens needs to take into account public aspirations and identified areas for development.

5.21 The recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision.

5.22 It is important to note that several recreation grounds in the Borough also serve a ‘civic space’ type function. Chobham Recreation Ground, Frimley Recreation Ground, Frimley Green, Streets Heath Recreation Ground and Bisley Common are used for civic events as they are in close proximity to village centres.

Accessibility

5.23 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards.

5.24 Of those household survey respondents identifying parks and gardens as the type of open space they use most frequently, 83% and 41% were found to be satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility on foot and accessibility by cycleway respectively. 55% were either satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility for pushchairs or wheelchairs.

5.25 With respect to other accessibility factors, 79% of respondents were found to be satisfied or very satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance and 59% satisfied or very satisfied with signage.

5.26 The general perception to emerge from the household survey is that a travel time of between 10-15 minutes is considered reasonable. The majority of people indicated a walking time rather than a drive time with the 75% level being up to 10 minutes in two of the three analysis areas.

5.27 On this basis, we recommend a local accessibility standard of a 10 minute walk time is set, a standard in line with other local authority benchmarks.
SECTION 6

NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL
Natural and semi-natural open space

Definition

6.1 This type of open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons and meadows), wetlands, open and running water, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Current position and consultation

6.2 A review of the current position with respect to natural and semi-natural open space highlighted that:

- there are a significant number of designated nature conservation sites across the Borough including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC), National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)
- the major habitat within the Borough is heathland but there is also a good variety of woodland
- although extensive areas of this type of open space are owned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) or the Crown Estates, many are accessible to the public
- the entire Blackwater River Valley is linked by a footpath and cycleway route and includes the development of informal parks on reclaimed land at Blackwater Park and Watchmoor Reserve
- Diamond Ridge Woods forms an important landscape feature, providing a natural buffer between the A30 and the residential area of Old Dean as well as a wildlife corridor linking with the adjacent Bagshot Heath
- Frimley Lodge Park has successfully attained Green Flag status and comprises areas of mature woodland and meadow alongside outdoor sports facilities
- Lightwater Country Park offers the Heathland Visitor Centre as well as two colour-coded trails taking walkers across open areas of natural heath and through pine and birch woodlands, including a nature trail and a Trim Trail fitness circuit set among pine trees. A large adventure play area is situated in the park and offers play opportunities for children and young people. A mobile ranger patrol operates within the park ensuring the site is well kept and protected.

6.3 Consultation comments with regard to such sites included:

- opportunities exist for increased community involvement
- there is potential to increase the range of educational initiatives
- natural and semi-natural open space is most highly valued by local residents, with 93% of household survey respondents considering this typology to be most important to them
35% of household survey respondents stated that this is the type of open space they use most frequently, the majority doing so on a monthly basis, and the most popular sites being Lightwater Country Park (18%), Chobham Common (11%), Frimley Fuel Allotments (6%) and Frimley Lodge Park (5.6%)

The most common reasons people choose to use natural open space are to walk, take exercise and to get fresh air

One in four people who use this type of open space most frequently consider dog fouling to be a problem, whilst a further 34% consider it to be a minor problem

One in five people consider litter to be a problem, whilst a further 43% consider it to be a minor problem

Approximately one third of people using natural and semi-natural open space most frequently stated that they are unsatisfied with the provision of seating and of litter bins.

**Setting provision standards**

6.4 In setting local standards for Natural and Semi-natural open space there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, sites assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices K, L and M.

**Quantity**

6.5 The provision of natural and semi-natural open space amounts to 1,944 hectares in total across the Borough. However, two thirds of this area is concentrated in the rural east of the Borough, Analysis Area 3, with the two largest sites comprising Chobham Common (674 ha) and Bagshot Heath (184.45 ha). A full breakdown of Natural and Semi-Natural spaces by ward is included in Appendix G. It is recognised that some of these spaces will have access points such that the spaces mainly serve the population of other wards.

6.6 Due to the distinct difference in the geographical profile of the west (Analysis Areas 1 and 2) and east (Analysis Area 3) of the Borough, it is important to give separate consideration to provision in the urban and rural areas with significant variance in the area per 1,000 head of population. This ranges from 11.53 ha in the urban area to 47.72 ha in the rural area.

6.7 The only definitive national standards for natural and semi-natural areas is the Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). This suggests that there should be at least 2 ha of accessible natural open space per 1,000 population. However there is no national or local standard that covers the whole of this typology of open space although Natural England does approve other open space standards set by other organisations.

**Urban area**

6.8 Although overall opinion suggests that current provision of natural and semi-natural open space in the urban area is 'about right' with 54% stating this view, there is a division of opinion with 36% considering provision to be 

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDED LOCAL STANDARD</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11.53 ha per 1,000 population (urban)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>47.72 ha per 1,000 population (rural)</strong></td>
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'not enough'. This would indicate that there may be local deficiencies and a more detailed analysis of responses by analysis area supports this view.

6.9 In Analysis Area 1 opinion is evenly split with 48% considering current provision to be 'about right' and 43% suggesting provision of 10.79 ha per 1,000 population is too low. In contrast, residents within Analysis Area 2 feel strongly that current provision of 12.11 ha per 1,000 population is sufficient, with 62% considering levels to be 'about right' or 'too much' and only 29% 'not enough'.

6.10 National standards suggest around 2 ha per 1,000 population and this was also the average of all local authority applicable standards in the 'Rethinking Open Space Report'. In addition, local standards set for urban areas in other local authority PPG17 studies have been between 1.5 and 2.5 ha per 1,000 population.

6.11 Current provision in the urbanised areas of Surrey Heath therefore appears high in comparison to benchmark data. However, a review of site specific data highlights a number of dominant large sites.

6.12 For example, Old Dean Common at 184 ha equates to 76% of the overall natural and semi-natural open space in Analysis Area 1. If this site is excluded from calculations, area per 1,000 population falls to 2.63 ha. The feedback received from the household survey indicating that provision is insufficient may therefore be linked to issues of accessibility. In Analysis Area 2, two MoD sites account for 73% of overall natural and semi-natural open space, Blackdown Hill (121 ha) and Land off Mytchett Place Road (140 ha). Similarly, if these sites are excluded from calculations, area per 1,000 head population falls to 3.23 ha.

6.13 We recommend a local standard of 11.53 ha per 1,000 population, a standard in line with current levels of provision in the urban area and one which will allow local deficiencies to be drawn out.

**Rural area**

6.14 Overall opinion strongly indicates that current levels of provision are considered to be appropriate, with 70% of household survey respondents considering it to be 'about right'. Only 1% consider it 'too much' and only 24% 'not enough'.

6.15 On this basis, we suggest that a local standard of 47.72 ha per 1,000 population be set, in line with current provision.

**Quality**

6.16 There are no definitive national or local quality standards although the Countryside Agency states that such land should be managed to conserve or enhance its rich landscape, biodiversity, heritage and local customs.

6.17 The overall quality of natural and semi-natural open space across the Borough is considered reasonable. Of those sites rated almost half are considered good (35%) or very good (13.5%) quality. The highest quality sites are stated to be:

- Brentmoor Heath (Site ID 132)
- Turf Hill Park (Site ID 133)
- Camberley Park Woodland (Site ID 178)
- Frimley Recreation Ground Open Space (Site ID 208)
SECTION 6 – NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- Tomlins Pond (Site ID 41).

6.18 However, multiple sites within Analysis Area 3 comprising common land owned and managed by Surrey County Council are considered to be of poor quality.

6.19 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for natural and semi-natural open space were clean and litter free, nature features (eg wildlife), clear footpaths, nature conservation areas and flowers, trees and shrubs.

6.20 Public consultation carried out by the Council to inform the Community Strategy highlighted the potential for development of ‘educational initiatives to raise awareness of sites of ecological and environmental interest’ as well as the use of parks and countryside as venues for a greater level of community activity and ‘intra-village’ involvement.

6.21 A suggested Quality Vision standard for natural and semi-natural open space needs to take into account public aspirations and identified areas for development.

6.22 The recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing natural and semi-natural open space to achieve in terms of enhancement.

Quality Vision

“A spacious, clean and litter free site with clear pathways and natural features that encourage wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness as well as informal recreation and play where appropriate. Management of local sites should involve the community if at all possible.”

Accessibility

6.23 With regards to accessibility the definitive national standard has been produced by ANGST, which recommends 2 ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1,000 people. There are no existing local standards.

6.24 Accessibility across natural and semi-natural open space sites within the Borough is variable. Of those sites rated, 44% are considered to have good (22%) or very good (22%) accessibility whilst 41% are considered to have poor (22%) or very poor (19%) accessibility.

6.25 The sites considered to have high accessibility are:

- Tomlins Pond (Site ID 41)
- Greenhill Road (Site ID 221)
- Turf Hill Park (Site ID 133)
- Camberley Park Woodland (Site ID 178)
- Frimley Park Recreation Ground Open Space (Site ID 208)
- Frimley Lodge Park Meadows (Site ID 238)
- Spruce Drive Open Space (Site ID 226)
- Brentmoor Heath (Site ID 132).
6.26 Multiple sites within Analysis Area 3 comprising common land owned and managed by Surrey County Council are considered to have poor accessibility. The land rear of Horseshoe Crescent (Site ID 19) is also reported to have low accessibility.

6.27 Of those household survey respondents who selected natural and semi-natural open space as the type of open space they use most frequently, 81% and 39% were found to be satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility on foot and accessibility by cycleway respectively. Although one in five people stated that they were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with accessibility for pushchairs or wheelchairs, this is likely to reflect the nature of this typology as opposed to suggesting poor maintenance or provision.

6.28 With respect to other accessibility factors, 71% of respondents were found to be satisfied or very satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance and 48% satisfied or very satisfied with signage.

6.29 The general perception to emerge from the household survey is that a travel time of between 15-20 minutes is considered reasonable.

6.30 The majority of people indicated a walking time rather than a drive time with the 75% level being up to 15 minutes in two of the three analysis areas, a response consistent with current behaviour patterns. Of those who use this type of open spaces most frequently, 63% walk and 57% walk up to 15 minutes.

6.31 We therefore recommend an accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk.

6.32 Land management agreements and alternative areas of natural open space may need to be sought where existing natural semi-natural areas are designated SPA and cSAC sites. Public access to some sites may result in conflict between land users and ecological interests. Under the selection criteria for SPA sites, areas comprising natural or semi-natural habitats are favoured for selection over those which do not. As a general rule, sites having a low degree of naturalness will not meet the criteria for SPA classification. An appropriate balance between encouraging public access to these sites and protection of their ecological interests will need to be sought.

### Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas

6.33 In order to identify geographical areas of importance to those areas with required local needs we apply both quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

6.34 There are many large, well-distributed natural open spaces within the urban and rural areas of the Borough. In addition to the urban natural and semi-natural open spaces there are significant areas of established Green Belt over the eastern half of the Surrey Heath. These areas serve a primary function as natural open space, providing residents of Surrey Heath with visual, recreational and landscape benefits. Acting as natural barriers to urban sprawl, natural open space provides spatial variation to residential areas.

6.35 The applied accessibility standards appear to support this perception. Map 6.1 shows that the vast majority of the Borough’s population is within 1.2 km of a natural semi-natural area.
6.36 There is however a small area comprising most of the western area to the west of The Avenue and Frimley Road (in St. Michaels Ward), which is more than a 15 minute walk (1.2km) of natural and semi-natural open space. It includes Vale Road, Victoria Avenue and Woodlands Road. This area is shown in Map 6.2 below.
6.36 Residents living to the east of York Town Industrial Estate also fall outside of the recommended catchment for provision for young people and only have access to a small amenity green spaces at Sullivan Road and Wey Close.

6.37 Improvements to accessibility of existing sites should be considered as a priority as this is not an easy type of open space to develop. For example, development of green corridor networks should become a priority so that all communities can access other open space sites. This approach is essential to provide valuable amenity areas to the local public.

6.38 In addition, there is an area of open space of significant size in close proximity to the York Town Industrial Estate. This site, currently designated as a conservation area, is situated opposite Osnaburgh Hill and is not currently permissible to the public as the site is used by the Royal Military Academy. This site could provide ample provision within a 15 minute walk time of the identified area of deficiency, if accessibility issues were to be addressed. Public access to this area is a long-term goal and the degree of public access to this area would need to be negotiated with the Academy.

6.39 Consideration could also be made for the formalisation of disused land east of the York Town Industrial Estate. Areas of disused land that are currently inaccessible to the public could be identified and opportunities for access considered.

6.40 There is also a small lightly populated area to the north of Hatton Hill in Windlesham which is outside of a catchment area. The area lying outside of a catchment area to the west of Bisley corresponds to MOD training land where no access is currently allowed due to safety reasons.

6.41 In general, from a quantity and accessibility perspective, the Borough is well provided for in terms of natural and semi-natural open space. Issues surround the quality and accessibility of certain sites and priorities should lie with the enhancement of existing natural open spaces as opposed to the provision of new sites.

**Value Assessment – Identifying Specific Sites**

6.42 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.

6.43 There are five sites of natural and semi-natural open space within the Borough which score highly in terms of quality, accessibility and level of usage:

- Brentmoor Heath (Site ID 132)
- Turf Hill Park (Site ID 133)
- Frimley Recreation Ground Open Space (Site ID 208)
- Camberley Park Woodland (Site ID 178)
- Frimley Lodge Park Meadows (Site ID 238)

6.44 A further seven sites are high quality, have good access and are used often. These are:

- Tomlins Pond (Site ID 41)
- Greenhill Road (Site ID 221)
6.45 All of the above sites need to be protected as sites of high value to the local community.

6.46 There are four sites which are high quality, have reasonable access and are used often, these are:
- Wendover Drive Wood (Site ID 59)
- Warren Wood (Site ID 52)
- The Obelisk (Site ID 175)
- Lynwood Drive Open Space (South) (Site ID 88)

6.47 These sites need to be protected as sites of high value to the local community. Accessibility to these sites should be enhanced and their primary function further promoted to improve the potential for increased usage.

6.48 Lightwater Country Park is considered to have good quality, average accessibility, and a high/significant level of use. One site, the Land Rear of Horseshoe Crescent (Site ID 19), is rated as high quality and is used often but has poor accessibility. However, due to high SPA status of this land, along with Birch Close, improving accessibility may not be appropriate.

6.49 Accessibility at the Land Rear of Horseshoe Crescent should be addressed as a matter of priority to support optimum usage. However, the SPA status of the site needs to be taken into consideration, as optimising public access may be to the detriment to the site’s ecological value.

6.50 There are a number of natural and semi-natural open space areas, which have good accessibility and are used often but are rated average in terms of quality:
- MOD Whitehill ('Whitehill') (Site ID 224)
- Ivy Drive Pond (Site ID 225)
- Spruce Drive Open Space (Site ID 226)
- Briar Avenue Woodland (Site ID 227)

6.51 The above sites are frequently used despite their average quality. The quality and features of these open spaces should be enhanced to further increase functionality and usage.
6.52 One natural and semi-natural open space, Land Rear of Birch Close (Site ID 158), is considered average in terms of quality and accessibility but has low usage.

6.53 The Land Rear of Birch Close directly adjoins the SPA land rear of Horseshoe Crescent. Any improvements to the quality and accessibility at Birch Close must take into account the access issues relating to the SPA land, as discussed in section 6.52.

6.54 Common Land owned and managed by Surrey County Council across Analysis Area 2 is generally considered to be low quality, low accessibility and to have low levels of usage.

6.55 The quality and accessibility of these sites needs to be improved to enhance their value and increase levels of usage. If improved quality and accessibility does not bring about increased usage, consideration should be given to changing the primary purpose of these sites. However the wider purpose and benefits of these open spaces must be evaluated before any action is taken. Regard must be given to careful consideration of improving public access to protected natural areas with important ecological values. There is potential conflict in optimising public access to the Surrey County Council areas that have SPA status. The conflicts in balancing environmental protection and enhancing public access to these areas needs to be resolved.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

6.56 Of the total stock of natural and semi-natural open space in the Borough, 1292.8ha is within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), equivalent to 66.5% of all provision. The SPA predominantly comprises heathland and woodland and is designated as the habitat for a number of endangered bird species, namely the nightjar, woodlark, and Dartford warbler. Natural England is concerned about disturbance being caused to the rare bird populations within the SPA from increased recreational use and the impact of cats and dogs frequenting the heathland. Since the resident survey was conducted, from November 2005 the Council has therefore refused virtually all planning applications for an increase in net dwellings unless a convincing case is presented to prove that the proposed housing will not cause harm to the SPA. It is also likely that future management of those areas of natural and semi natural open space in the SPA will emphasize the need to manage the areas as habitat for birds and may seek to prevent any increase in recreational disturbance. However, it is very likely that some level of recreational use of the SPA will continue.

6.57 The local standard for natural and semi natural space acknowledges that some visitor use of the SPA will remain. At the current time, it is envisaged that any additional visitor use of land that falls within the SPA should not be encouraged except where it can be demonstrated that ample capacity for increased use exists.
SECTION 7

AMENITY GREEN SPACE
SECTION 7 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

Amenity green space

Definition

7.1 This type of open space is most commonly found in housing areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and green spaces in and around housing, with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancing the appearance of residential or other areas.

Strategic context

7.2 The Planning Policy and Conservation Division carried out a Green Space Survey in 1989. This survey identified those green spaces within the urban areas which have a value for visual amenity, recreation and nature conservation. The results informed the designation of Green Spaces in the Surrey Heath Local Plans of 1994 and 2000 which are protected from inappropriate development.

Consultation and current position

7.3 Consultation comments with regard to such sites included:

- amenity green space sites can be large useful areas of land but also can be small pieces of land within housing estates that may be too small to have any significant recreational value but will have an important aesthetic value
- these areas are recognised as making a significant contribution to the casual play facilities available for children
- 83% of respondents rated amenity green space as important, although only 5% identified this as the type of open space they use most frequently
- the most commonly stated reason for people using amenity green space was to get fresh air, walk and take exercise
- an identified need for better provision for dog walking to allow this type of use to be displaced from heathland areas
- a deficiency of informal open space in St Michael’s ward
- a dearth of green space in the town centre serving those working locally.
SECTION 7 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

Setting provision standards

7.4 In setting local standards for Amenity Green Space there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, sites assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices K, L and M.

Quantity

7.5 Due to the distinct difference in the geographical profile of the west (Analysis Areas 1 and 2) and east (Analysis Area 3) of the Borough, it is important to give separate consideration to provision in the urban and rural areas in light of the variation in the balance of open space provision and the role played by amenity green space.

7.6 The provision of amenity green space amounts to just under 53 hectares in total across the Borough. This gives a total provision of amenity green space of 0.66 ha per 1000 population in the Borough. This equates to 0.77 ha per 1,000 population in the urban area (Analysis Areas 1 and 2) and 0.47 ha per 1,000 population in the rural area (Analysis Area 3). The breakdown of this amenity green space by ward is contained in Appendix G.

7.7 The only national standard for amenity green space provided is by the Rethinking Open Space Report – an average of all local authority applicable standards, which is 2 ha per 1,000 population.

7.8 Other national standards make reference to amenity green space, including National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) which states 2 acres (0.8 ha) per 1,000 population for ‘children’s playing spaces’, which include areas designated for children and young people and casual or informal playing space within housing areas. Some local authorities in the past have added an extra one acre (0.41 ha) per 1,000 population intended for residential areas.

7.9 National guidance suggests that a standard could range from 0.5 to 2 ha. In terms of more robust local standards set for other local authorities through PPG17 studies, these have ranged from between 0.6 ha to 1.2 ha per 1,000 population for urban areas depending on local needs and have been generally 0.5 ha per 1,000 population for rural areas.

7.10 Overall there is almost an equal division of opinion in the urban area with 44% of household survey respondents considering provision to be ‘about right’ but 38% suggesting it is ‘not enough’. This would indicate that there may be local deficiencies and a more detailed analysis of responses by analysis area supports this view.

7.11 In Analysis Area 1 opinion suggests that current provision does not meet local need with 43% of respondents considering levels of 0.8 ha per 1,000 population to be ‘not enough’ whilst 36% suggest it is appropriate. In contrast, 51% of respondents within Analysis Area 2 feel that current provision of 0.73 ha per 1,000 population is sufficient, with 51% considering levels to be ‘about right’ and only 33% ‘not enough’.

7.12 It is suggested that these comments may be attributable to the fact that one site, Barossa Common, accounts for 18% of amenity green space within Analysis Area 1. If this dominant site is excluded, the current level of provision falls to 0.66 ha per 1,000 population. On this basis it is possible that a similar level of provision may meet local needs if a more equal distribution

RECOMMENDED LOCAL STANDARD

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<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
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<tr>
<td>0.9 ha per 1,000 population</td>
<td>0.5 ha per 1,000 population</td>
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were to be achieved.

7.13 In addition, it should be noted that Analysis Area 2 has over twice the area per 1,000 head of population of outdoor sports facilities than Analysis Area 1. Since outdoor sports facilities are commonly considered to serve as an amenity green space resource as a secondary purpose, this is a further factor that could be influencing local opinion regarding the adequacy of local provision of amenity green space.

7.14 Opinion within Analysis Area 3 suggests that current provision is 'about right' with 51% of respondents of this view against 33% who consider it to be 'not enough'.

7.15 We would suggest that a separate urban and a rural standard be set to reflect differences in the balance of open space provision within these areas and the associated impact on the function of amenity green space.

7.16 We would recommend a provision standard of around 0.9 ha per 1,000 population in the urban area and 0.5 ha per 1,000 population in the rural area. This standard will draw out local deficiencies and is in line with current levels of provision, local authority benchmarks and national guidelines.

Quality

7.17 There are no national or local quality standards for amenity green space. The Council states that amenity areas are particularly important for informal play and make a contribution to the character of an area, its recreational value, nature conservation value and provide a break in the built environment.

7.18 The overall quality of amenity green space across the Borough is considered good. Of those sites rated, only one, Turf House Lane Open Space (Site ID 258), is considered low quality. 60% of amenity green space sites are considered to be good (50%) or very good (10%) quality and the remaining 37% to be reasonable. The highest quality sites are stated to be:

- Southcote Park (Site ID 50)
- Copped Hall Open Space (Site ID 47)
- The Green (Site ID 74)
- Crabtree Park (Site ID 6)
- Burrell Road Open Space (Site ID 28)
- Camberley Park (Site ID 176)
7.19 Through the consultation and household questionnaires the highest rated aspirations for amenity green space were clean and litter free, well-kept grass, flowers, trees and shrubs (ie appropriate landscaping), seating, toilets and litter bins.

7.20 A suggested Quality Vision standard for amenity green space should reflect these aspirations to ensure that the needs of the public are met. The vision should also be consistent with other local and national standards.

7.21 The recommended local standard sets the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing amenity green space to achieve in terms of enhancement.

**Quality Vision**

“A clean and well-maintained green space site with well-kept grass, easily accessible with clearly marked footpaths and large enough to encourage informal play. Sites should have appropriate ancillary facilities (benches, litter bins, toilets etc) and landscaping in the right places to provide a spacious outlook and to enhance the overall appearance of the local environment.”

**Accessibility**

7.22 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards.

7.23 Accessibility across amenity green space sites within the Borough is good. Of those sites rated, 92% are considered to have good (70%) or very good (22%) accessibility. Only one site, Bain Avenue Amenity Space (Site ID 9), is considered to have poor access. The following four sites were given an average accessibility rating:

- Sutton Road Open Space (Site ID 162)
- Longmeadow Open Space (Site ID 51)
- Holly Hedge Play Space (Site ID 54)
- Kenmore Close Open Space (Site ID 174).

7.24 Of those household survey respondents who selected amenity green space as the type of open space they use most frequently, 94% were found to be satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility on foot. 64% were found to be satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility for pushchairs or wheelchairs.

7.25 The general perception to emerge from the household survey is that a travel time of between 5-10 minutes is reasonable. The majority of people indicated a walking time, with a 75% level of up to 10 minutes in two of the three analysis areas. However, the 75% was up to 5 minutes in the third analysis area, based on a similar number of responses.

7.26 Of those who use these open spaces most frequently, 89% walk, with 56% walking up to 5 minutes and 75% up to 10 minutes.

7.27 On this basis, we would recommend a local accessibility standard of 5 - 10 minute walk time. This is consistent with the behaviour pattern of existing users and is in line with local authority benchmarks.
Applying provision standards – Identifying geographical areas

7.28 In order to identify geographical areas of importance to those areas with required local needs we apply both quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards while the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

7.29 Only 5% of household survey respondents stated that amenity green space was the type of open space they used most frequently. This suggests that these types of open spaces may have a more visual benefit rather than an actual functional usage benefit to the local community.

7.30 From a quantitative perspective there is an adequate supply of amenity green space in the rural east of the Borough. The urban part of the Borough, particularly the north, is well provided and this may offer opportunities for re-designation of some sites to address shortfalls in other typologies. This has already been discussed in Section 6 (Natural and Semi-Natural) and Section 8 (Provision for Children and Young People).

7.31 Analysis Area 2 has the most quantitative deficiency, and although accessibility to existing sites should be considered as a priority, further analysis may be required to determine where this quantitative deficiency is located within this part of the Borough. However, it is important to examine shortfalls in amenity green space within the context of the distribution of outdoor sports facilities, which may provide a local amenity open space as secondary purpose.

7.32 From a geographical perspective the distribution of amenity green space is evenly spread with most of the residential areas within access of such open spaces, as shown in Map 7.1 below.

Map 7.1: Overview of access to amenity green space in Surrey Heath

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Surrey Heath Borough Council 100018679
7.33 However, there are several areas lying outside the recommended accessibility catchment for amenity green space. These are illustrated in more detail in Maps 7.2 below and 7.3 overleaf.

**Map 7.2: Areas falling outside of a 7.5 minute walking catchment for an amenity green space site (Analysis Area 1)**

7.33 The residential area bisected by Crawley Ridge and Grange Road and comprising Marlborough Rise, Belton Road, Walkers Ridge and Tekels Avenue falls outside of the average 7.5 minute walk time (600m) of amenity green space. In addition, some of this area falls outside of the catchment for provision for children and young people. However it is suggested that this part of the Borough is well provided for by private gardens.

7.34 There are two residential areas in Heatherside Ward and one in Frimley Ward that are not within the recommended walking catchment of an amenity green space site, as illustrated in Map 7.3 below. These are:

- Area east of Heatherside and Wellingtonia Avenue, including Ravenstone Road, Bracken Wood and Rydall Close
- Old Bisley Road and The Ridings including Westerdale Drive
- Area either side of Field Lane and Alphington Avenue including Melville Avenue, Thorton Close and Hermitage Close

7.35 However, the first area is within a 7.5 minute walk of Heatherside Recreation Ground. The latter two areas border the Frimley Fuel Allotments, a natural and semi-natural open space (26 hectares) offering a valuable visual and informal recreation amenity. These sites are also close to Pine Ridge golf course and the Old Bisley Road and The Ridings is adjacent to the playing fields of Ravenscote County Middle School and Cordwaffles School.
As would be expected there is lower provision of amenity green space in the rural east of the Borough. Although there is a good concentration of provision around each of the residential areas, the accessibility catchment mapping has identified four key areas falling outside of the recommended walk time of amenity green space:

a. Area between Mount Pleasant Close and Guildford Road (Lightwater North)

b. Area west of Guildford Road and east of A322 (Lightwater East)

c. Castle Green Area including Scotts Grove Close and Grosvenor Road (Chobham).

All of the above referenced areas, or a significant proportion of each, also fall outside of the recommended catchment for provision for children and young people and allotments.
7.38 However, the two sites within Lightwater Ward are close to Lightwater Country Park, an important natural and semi-natural open space providing a range of informal recreational opportunities for the local community, as well as a recreation ground (Site ID 116), which serves as an amenity green space in its secondary purpose. The first area is close to the playing fields behind Hammond School and Lightwater Village School. The second area is also within a 7.5 minute walk of Lightwater Recreation Ground. The area which contains Scotts Grove Close and Grosvenor Road is however more isolated from other typologies that could reduce this deficiency although Chobham Recreation Ground could be reached within a 15 minute walk.

7.39 Open spaces such as football pitches are classified under outdoor sports facilities as their primary purpose. In a number of instances, however, pitches do provide an amenity green space function in areas where there is limited amenity green space. There are playing fields located in Lightwater Playing Fields, Briar Avenue Recreation Ground and Lightwater Sports Centre.

Value assessment – Identifying specific sites

7.40 Many amenity green space sites offer a visual benefit in addition to providing space for informal recreation. It is therefore less relevant to assess the level of use in conjunction with the quality and accessibility of the site in order to determine the overall value as the accessibility and in particular the quality are more important, particularly from a visual and general amenity perspective.

7.41 There are ten sites of amenity green space within the Borough which score highly in terms of quality, accessibility and level of usage:

- Camberley Park (Site ID 176)
- The Green (Site ID 74)
- Burrell Road Open Space (Site ID 28)
- Southcote Park (Site ID 50)
- Library Amenity Green Space (Site ID 179)
- Cheylesmore Open Space (Site ID 61)
- Open Space (Site ID 130)
- Open Space (Site ID 86)
- Open Space North (Site ID 87)
- The Grove (Site ID 171).

7.42 A further twenty-two sites are high quality, have good access and are used often.

7.43 All of the above sites need to be protected as sites of high value to the local community. Those scoring highly in all three areas (in bold) should be recognised as examples of good practice.

7.44 One site is high quality, has reasonable access and is used often, Holly Hedge Play

Open Space and Recreation Study – Surrey Heath Borough Council Page 50
Space (Site ID 54).

### 7.45 Holly Hedge Play Space

Holly Hedge Play Space needs to be protected as a site of high value to the local community. Accessibility to this site should be enhanced and its primary function further promoted to improve the potential for increased usage.

### 7.46 Most sites

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 certain sites require further analysis.

### 7.47 Two sites

Two sites at St Catherines Road amenity space, and Chestnut Avenue are rated highly in terms of quality and accessibility but have low usage. Further investigation is required to examine the reasons underpinning the current low usage levels.

### 7.48 One site

One site, Bain Avenue Amenity Space (Site ID 9), is considered good quality but has poor access and low usage. Accessibility at this Space should be addressed as a matter of priority to promote optimum usage.

### 7.49 There are a high number of amenity green space areas

There are a high number of amenity green space areas, which have good accessibility and are used often but are rated average in terms of quality. These include open spaces at Mitcham Road, Sullivan Road, Gilbert Road, Bagshot Green, Kirkstone Close and Rivermead Road.

### 7.50 The sites referred to in 7.49

The sites referred to in 7.49 are popular despite their average quality. The quality and features of these open spaces should be enhanced to further increase functionality and usage.