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Executive Summary

This Green Space Study for the City of Oxford has been produced by Scott Wilson in partnership with the Planning Services and Parks and Leisure Departments. The conclusions and recommendations are, except where stated, those of Scott Wilson as consultants to the City of Oxford. The report has been prepared in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (ODPM, July 2002) and Companion Guide (ODPM, September 2002).

This report forms one of the key outputs of the City of Oxford's Green Space Study. The other key outputs are the Database and Geographical Information System (GIS) relating to the open spaces of the City. The study has drawn upon this database in its formulation, but is also capable of further interrogation and analysis into the future, and should be used as an active management tool.

The Council's brief required Scott Wilson to undertake:

- An assessment of the supply of open space through qualitative audit;
- An assessment of current needs for open space through community consultation;
- Identification of deficiencies and surpluses in provision through analysis;
- Formulation of policies and strategies for the future, through planning policy review and an Action Plan.

Understanding Supply

A large amount of information has been collected about Oxford's open spaces, initially in 2003, and subsequently in 2005 when some additional sites were identified and audits updated. Information has been incorporated into a comprehensive database of information linked to GIS. Sites have been categorised by Typology, Access, Hierarchy, Quantity, Quality and Value. The database has been analysed at the City level and also by Urban Village. Urban Villages have been used as a basis for analysis, rather than political boundaries, such as Wards, as these are considered to reflect more closely how communities use open space. 16 Urban Villages have been identified within the City of Oxford.

The key findings in terms of supply are:

- Typology – the highest number of sites by Typology are Housing Amenity Land, which is concentrated in the south-east of the City. There are also high numbers of ecological sites, local parks and allotments, distributed throughout the City. In contrast there are only two Civic Squares, in the City Centre.
- Access – there is an uneven distribution of Unrestricted and Limited Access sites across the City. Restricted and Limited Access sites make up almost half of Oxford's open spaces, mainly due to land in the ownership of the University of Oxford and other educational institutions. This is generally of high quality and more than adequately serves the needs of the large student population at these institutions, although Oxford Brookes University has little open space.
- Site Size - there is a large proportion of small sites below 0.4ha in size (45%), mainly consisting of Housing Amenity Land and Playgrounds.
- Hierarchy – sites have been classified according to a hierarchy of City, Neighbourhood and Local sites. The distribution of sites by hierarchy is good with a small number of key City sites and larger numbers of smaller Local sites.

Demographics

25% of the population of Oxford are between 20 and 29 years old reflecting the high student numbers. In terms of ethnic distribution, the majority of the population are White (87%) with Asians and Chinese making up the largest numbers of minority ethnic groups.

Quantity – the City average of Unrestricted Access open space per thousand population is 5.75ha, with wide variation occurring between Urban Villages. Informal provision makes up approximately 66% of open space with formal provision making up the remaining 34%. The split also varies widely by Urban Village. In comparison with other Local Authorities, this is generally a good standard, which is comparable to Wycombe at 6.36ha/1000, but lower than Reading, for example, at 9.7ha/1000. The largest amount of provision occurs in Cutteslowe, Wood Farm and Wolvercote, where there are large tracts of green space and low population. In contrast, Littlemore and Summertown only have around 1ha/1000 population. In Summertown the lack of public open space is compensated for, to a large extent, by the private open space contained in large gardens.

Current population projections indicate an increase of approximately 2.8% to 2011. This will reduce the quantity provision by 0.2ha/1000 if no more open space is created.

Accessibility – In order to assess Accessibility the results of the public consultation were analysed to determine how far people are prepared to walk to Parks at each level of the hierarchy. Accessibility at the Local level has also taken account of severance lines such as major roads, railways, canals and rivers.

In general, accessibility to City level formal sites is good, except an area in North Marston and Headington Villages and including Barton and Sandhills and Risinghurst Urban Villages. Access to Informal sites is good in the west and east of the City but poor in Marston, Headington, Blackbird Leys and Littlemore Urban Villages.

At Neighbourhood and Local level, within Urban Villages, there are wide variations in the Accessibility to unrestricted open space, both Formal and Informal. In Littlemore, for example, there is no access to a formal Neighbourhood site. In Summertown and Wolvercote there is poor access to Local formal sites. In contrast, in the south of Blackbird Leys there is access to a large number of small formal Local sites. Recommendations have therefore been formulated within Urban Villages to take account of the wide variations in Quantity and Accessibility of open space across the City.

Quality - the average score, based on the weighted Quality score included in the database is 48%, with scores ranging from 9-93%. The highest scoring sites with unrestricted access are mainly Churchyards/Cemeteries, Green/Commons and Playgrounds. These highest quality sites appear to be distributed in the central and southern parts of the City, inside the Ring Road. The site achieving the highest quality score in the quality audits is St. Peters Churchyard in Wolvercote. The lowest scoring sites are mainly Ecological sites. There is a concentration of low scoring sites in the eastern parts of the City, especially in Wood Farm. The most vandalised sites are also mainly Playgrounds and Local Parks. The most threatening sites are often those with poor surveillance and include Ecological sites and Allotments, but also Playgrounds and a Local Park. As 70% is considered a 'Good' Quality score this is recommended as the aspirational Quality standard that all sites in Oxford should seek to achieve.

Value – sites have been allocated Value scores based on a number of criteria and the combination of Quality and Value within a matrix has been used to guide recommendations and policy options.

Understanding Demand

In order to assess demand for open space, a number of consultation exercises were undertaken. These included reviewing existing consultation results and a household questionnaire and group surveys to community organisations in 2003. The response rate, at that time, was poor and therefore more consultation was undertaken in 2005 through a Telephone Survey and Young Persons Questionnaire. This yielded some very useful information on demand.

In the Telephone Survey, almost 80% of respondents felt that the amount of open space in Oxford is 'about right'. The Quality of open space was considered to be high, with the City Parks scoring highest, in line with the auditing results. University Parks was considered to be the best open space in terms of Quality.

The most popular improvements were more or better facilities and improved maintenance and cleanliness. Improvements to children's play provision and provision for teenagers were the most popular suggestions.

In terms of assessing Accessibility, the survey yielded good information on the distance people were willing to travel to their most frequently visited open space and this was used to determine the proximity buffers in the analysis. The biggest barrier to use was lack of time, but nearly half of respondents indicated that they did not consider that there were any barriers to their use of parks and open spaces.

The most frequently visited sites were generally the City sites with University Parks being the most popular.

The Young Persons Questionnaire revealed that although over half of respondents felt that the amount of open space was 'about right', nearly two thirds thought that there was insufficient provision for teenagers. They also scored the Quality of sites much lower than those responding to the Telephone Survey, but as this Quality score is identical to the Quality score attributed to play facilities it is thought that they were assessing the quality of play facilities that are most relevant to them.

Recommendations

The principle recommendations of the study are based on achieving the following Vision:

'The open space of Oxford makes an important contribution to its unique character and quality. The vision is to rationalise its extent to more closely meet the needs of local communities, and improve its quality through enhancing its appearance and ecological value and providing a full range of recreational opportunities. Its use by all sections of the community should also be encouraged so as to promote social inclusion, improve health and enhance the quality of life.'

In order to realise the Vision for Oxford, the following objectives have been established on which the Action Plan has been based:

- Maintain a City standard of 5.75 hectares per 1000 population;
- Maintain and enhance the green character of the City;
- Establish a prioritised programme of improvements to the quality of parks and open spaces;
- Maintain and improve access to the open space network;
- Protect and enhance the biodiversity value of open spaces;
- Promote the City's open space and look at ways to increase usage to promote social inclusion, promote health and enhance quality of life;
- Maintain a good distribution of play facilities of good quality to meet the needs of the population;
- Monitor and review performance in meeting the open space Vision.

1. Maintain the Standard of open space of 5.75ha/1000:

Recommended actions include ensuring that High Value, High Quality sites are protected, as well as City and Neighbourhood sites; review Policy HS29 in terms of thresholds for requesting developer contributions towards improving quantity, quality and accessibility of green space. In areas of low Quantity provision it may be appropriate to use developers contributions for open space creation, although an assessment should also be made as to whether improvements to Accessibility or Quality could compensate for lower quantity of available open space. Also in areas of low provision, change of access arrangements to Limited or Restricted access sites should be considered.

Where access to informal open space is poor, consideration should be given to acquiring/ leasing agricultural land adjacent to housing areas.

2. Maintain and enhance the green character of the City:

Recommended actions include supplementing policies to protect open space in areas of deficiency. Consider improvements to open space linkages and networks and street greening, especially in the City Centre. Produce management plans for key sites and apply for Green Flag accreditation as part of a Parks Management Strategy; further targeted consultation should be undertaken on an ongoing basis. A Tree Strategy for the City should also be undertaken.

3. Establish a prioritised programme of improvements to the quality of parks and open spaces:

The database produced as part of this study can be used as an active management tool and therefore will require to be updated and maintained, as further audits are undertaken. All sites should be audited at least every five years with a view to achieving year on year improvements. High Value, Poor Quality sites should be prioritised for improvements. All other sites should also be reviewed in terms of the Quality/Value matrix, which can be used as a guide to determine policy requirements and priorities for improvements.

4. Maintain and improve access to the open space network:

The poor access to sites of City significance in the north-east of the City should be addressed through creation and management of sites together to form a City Park (by combining Court Place Farm with sites 182, 392, 394, 87, 86, 6 and 102 and acquiring additional land to link these together). This will also include enhanced sports facilities.

In Littlemore the lack of a Neighbourhood park could be addressed by expanding site 103 through change of use to part of the adjacent allotment site 184.

In the City Centre there is a need to improve existing civic spaces and provide more high quality, high capacity civic spaces and improve access to the existing open spaces close to the City Centre.

An allotment strategy is also required to establish demand for allotments to determine the required level of provision and access.

5. Protect and enhance the Biodiversity value of open space in the City:

It is recommended that a Biodiversity Strategy is developed and sites assessed to determine if changes to management regimes could enhance biodiversity and contribute to wildlife corridors.

A Countryside Access Strategy should also be undertaken to include an assessment of English Nature's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt).

6. Promote the City's open space and increase usage:

It is recommended that further park user surveys are undertaken to establish clearer patterns of use City wide and within Urban Villages. Issues should be addressed where barriers to access have been identified in priority improvement projects. Parks user surveys should be updated at least every two years for key sites. Actions should be aimed at increasing parks usage to serve the needs of the community though improving communication with user groups, setting up of Friends Groups, engaging volunteers, improving educational facilities, staging of events and providing better publicity. In particular activities should be provided for the 8-15 year old age groups.

For safety and security and contact with the general public, visitors and tourists, City parks should be manned by dedicated park wardens or rangers.

7. Maintain a good distribution of play facilities:

A Play Strategy should be developed to build on the work already done in the Green Space Study, aimed at providing a good distribution and quality of facilities for all age groups. Policy HS30 should be reviewed, regarding provision of new play facilities by developers to determine whether it may be more appropriate in certain cases to improve Quality and Accessibility of existing play space rather than creating small play spaces which are difficult to maintain.

The Play Strategy should include linking hierarchy of site to hierarchy of play facilities, such that Local Parks generally contain LEAPs and Neighbourhood Parks, NEAPs, as appropriate.

The provision of facilities for 12-18 year olds should be reviewed across the City as this was identified as a concern within the Schools consultation.

8. Monitor and Review Performance:

The strategy is a starting point and should be regarded as a management tool, which should be updated and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space is continuously being improved in line with achieving the Vision, and that management evolves to meet changing needs and resources.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Vision

Our vision for the green space study in Oxford is as follows:

The Open Space of Oxford makes an important contribution to its unique character and quality. The vision is to rationalise its extent to more closely meet the needs of local communities, and improve its quality through enhancing its appearance and ecological value and providing a full range of recreational opportunities. Its use by all sections of the community should also be encouraged so as to promote social inclusion, improve health and enhance quality of life.

1.2 The need for an open space assessment

Recent national studies have revealed that there has been a decline in the quality and sometimes the quantity of open spaces in England. Development pressures, declining investment and a loss of appropriate skills are largely to blame for this decline.

Public open spaces can provide many benefits and perform many functions, contributing to the quality of the environment, providing recreational opportunities, encouraging social inclusion and contributing to health, education and the economy.

The government has recognised that the reversal of decline in quality and an end to the loss of open space can make a significant contribution to urban regeneration. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) requires local authorities to carry out an assessment of the supply and demand of open space and to focus resources on the protection, management and enhancement of open space.

The companion guide to PPG17 sets out the following desirable outcomes for an open space assessment:

- Networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities, in both urban and rural areas, which meet the needs of the residents and visitors, are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable;
- An appropriate balance between new provision and enhancement of existing open space;
- Clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and landowners in relation to the requirements and expectations of local planning authorities in respect of open space, sport and recreation provision.

This Green Space Study therefore seeks to provide a robust assessment of the supply of open space within the City of Oxford in terms of quantity, quality, value and accessibility. A public consultation exercise has also been carried out to gauge the demand of the local residents and to ascertain whether their needs are being met. This assessment has led to the development of policy options, an action plan and the establishment of local standards.

The study also includes an assessment of the additional provision that needs to be made during the period up to 2011 as a result of the forecasted increase in population.

The City Council has also undertaken a playing pitch and indoor sport/recreational facilities assessment. This has been taken into account in terms of recommendations for city-wide provision.

1.3 Introduction to Oxford

1.3.1 History

The historic City of Oxford is situated some 60 miles north west of London on the edge of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and covers approximately 46km². Oxford has a population of 134,248 (2001 Census, ONS) of which 87% are white. The next largest ethnic group is Asian or Asian British and comprises 4.8% of the population. Approximately 23% of the population of Oxford are registered as students. The University of Oxford is a major landowner in the city comprising 39 colleges and 6 private halls and with a population of approximately 16,500 students in residence. Oxford Brookes University, based in Headington, is a former polytechnic which became a University in 1992 and has a population of 15,000 students studying a wide range of disciplines.

The origins of Oxford as a town are likely to date back as far as the 8th century with the foundation of a monastery linked to the historical figure of St. Frideswide. The city is mostly famed for its prestigious University. The University has no clear date of foundation but teaching began as early as 1096. The first college, University College was established in 1249 and the most recent, Kellogg College was established in 1990. The waterways of Oxford have played a significant part in the development of the city. The Rivers Thames and Cherwell have both acted to limit development along the floodplain which has resulted in large areas of protected open space such as Port Meadow to the west of the city which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Oxford Canal, which was completed in 1790, placed Oxford at the centre of the canal network between London and the Midlands with the railway following in 1844, which fuelled a growth in population. The heritage of Oxford was miraculously protected during the Second World War as Adolf Hitler intended to use Oxford as his capital in the event of invasion.

1.3.2 Economy and Employment

The city of Oxford remained heavily dependant on the University for employment and tourism during the 20th century. The Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries had barely touched the city until the advent of the motorcar. The Morris Motor Company, subsequently Rover and most recently BMW have based factories in the city and provided much needed employment. The creation of science and business parks on the outskirts of the city has attracted further investment towards the end of the 20th century and at the start of the 21st century. 20.7% of the population are recorded as being economically inactive, due to the large numbers of students compared to an average of 4.7% for England and Wales.

1.3.3 Housing and Deprivation

Approximately 16% of the population of Oxford live in council owned accommodation compared to an average of 13.2% for England and Wales. Much of this council owned accommodation is situated in some of the most deprived wards such as Blackbird Leys where 42% of the city's council tenants live. There is also an above average percentage of one-person households in Oxford (34%) compared to the national average (30%).

1.3.4 Education

There is a wide variation across the city when comparing levels of qualifications obtained. 61% of people living in St. Margaret's ward are educated to first-degree level or above compared to just 8% in Blackbird Leys where 45% of the population have no qualifications at all.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

2.1 National Policy

Legislation

Central to the functioning of the land use planning system is the primary legislation provided in the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). This identifies who is responsible for decision-making (the processing and determination of applications for permission to develop land, property or buildings) and indicates how development proposals are to be determined.

In December 2001, the Government issued a Green Paper – Planning: Delivering a Fundamental Change – as a consultation document, seeking to promote planning as a positive tool and as a process which adds value to communities through encouraging high quality development in the right places to meet local needs, better design and better community involvement. The culmination of 18 months of review and amendment is the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, which was granted Royal Assent on 14 May 2004, and which came into force in September 2004.

One of the key elements of the reforms is the use of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to replace the present system of Structure Plans and Local Plans. The LDF will contain two types of planning policy document; development plan documents that will be part of the statutory development plan and supplementary planning documents that will provide additional guidance.

With regard to planning obligations, the government advocates replacing the present system of negotiated agreements as far as possible with a locally set tariff. No specific detail is provided as to how local tariffs will be set, although there has been debate about Government setting national guidelines and local authorities setting the levels of obligations relevant to local development pressures and local community needs, particularly where these are supported by good quality assessments of need.

Circular 1/97 currently provides key guidance on planning obligations and supports the use of standard charges and formulae as a method for setting clear, predictable and transparent methods for seeking contributions.

2.2 Policy Guidance

Within the legislative framework provided by the various Planning Acts, the Government has issued a number of PPGs which outline the way the planning system should respond and help achieve wider Government policy aims and objectives, particularly those where the land use planning system may play a key part. Such objectives are broadly identified as sustainable development, a prosperous economy, reducing the need to travel, economic growth, and social inclusion, alongside the need to protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, it should be noted that Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) are being replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). They provide more concise policy guidance, supported by companion good practice guides and supplementary reports. However, not all PPGs/PPSs are relevant to this Study. The key policy guidance is *PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (ODPM, July 2002).

PPG17 provides the most recent and up-to-date guidance on the consideration of open space, sport and recreation matters in relation to the land use planning system. The previous version of the guidance, issued in 1991, placed great emphasis upon the quantity of provision in comparison with a nationally agreed standard, 'the six acre standard' (i.e. six acres (2.43 hectares) per 1000 population). The replacement guidance places more emphasis on the quality of open space, rather than the quantity, and the setting of local standards.

Revisions to the guidance recognise the importance that sport and recreation play in the quality of life for people. Furthermore, it highlights that sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives such as the urban renaissance, promotion of social inclusion, community cohesion, health and well being, as well as more sustainable patterns of development. As such, local authorities are required to provide open space and playing pitch strategies.

As a standard, it suggests that assessments should include an audit of existing open space, including:

- Sports and recreational facilities;
- The use of existing facilities;
- Access in terms of cost and location; and
- Opportunities for new facilities and open spaces.

PPG 17 identifies quality audits as a key component of future development plan strategies and policies, as they enable local authorities to identify specific needs as well as qualitative and quantitative deficiencies and emphasis of provision. As such they provide the starting point from which to establish an effective strategy for open space, sport and recreation as well as effective (land use) planning through the creation of policies in local plans.

Once effective policies are in place, PPG 17 advises that the audit can be used to resolve potential conflicts that arise between different uses and users of open space, sport and recreation facilities.

Section 2 of the Guidance note advocates that local authorities should establish their own local standards, although the guidance does not go so far as to identify how these should be quantified. It does indicate that local standards should include:

- A quantitative element, to assess how much new provision may be required;
- A qualitative component to assess whether existing facilities may be enhanced; and
- An accessibility measure.

The Guidance advises that the aim, whenever possible, should be to achieve qualitative improvements to open space, sports and recreational facilities. In providing new facilities, paragraph 13 advocates the use of planning obligations and conditions to ensure correct works are undertaken and that the new facilities are capable of being adequately maintained in the future.

At paragraph 18, the guidance suggests that under-use of facilities does not necessarily indicate a lack of need, but may result from the poor quality of facilities in an area. As such, the guidance advises the enhancement of existing facilities and the use of planning obligations to secure improvements, where there is an identified need.

A number of general principles are listed at paragraph 20 for the provision of new open space, sports and recreational facilities. These include, *inter alia*:

- Promoting accessibility by non-motorised forms of transport;
- Locating intensive forms of use where they can promote town centre vitality and viability;
- Avoiding loss of amenity or biodiversity;
- Improving quality through good design;
- Adding to and enhancing the existing range of facilities;
- Considering security and personal safety; and
- Meeting regeneration needs of areas and social inclusion.

In considering these principles, a number of general criteria can be applied to the provision of new facilities. These include:

- Locating major generators of travel and activity in central locations where they can be accessed by a range of public transport modes;

- Where local facilities are proposed these should be in locations that are well served by public transport; and
- best use should be made of urban fringe land where there is an absence of land within the urban area to meet provision. Again such locations should be accessible and well related to public transport provision.

Planning obligations are discussed at paragraph 33, which states that these tools should be used to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of local open space provision. In so doing, the guidance again highlights the need for a good quality assessment of need and an audit of facilities to justify obligations.

Assessing Needs And Opportunities: the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published A Companion Guide to PPG17, in September 2002. This guide outlines methods for assessing the value of open spaces as well as quality. The concept of value is distinct from that of quality and assess each of the following:

- Context – A site which is unique or rare within its locality can be deemed to be of higher value than a site which is in close proximity to other high quality sites of the same type. There will however, be occasions when a site is not unique but has a formal designation which enhances its value;
- Level and Type of Use – Open spaces which are well used by the local community are considered to be of higher value; and
- Wider Benefits – local, national and international designations such as ecological and historical protection can greatly enhance the value of a site. Standard of living can also be affected by the quality of the surroundings. A more deprived area is likely to derive greater benefit from higher quality open spaces.

Once the assessment of value and quality have been carried out and verified, they can be combined to provide policy options for each site. Quality and Value are plotted against each other over a matrix, identifying sites of high quality and low value, low quality and low value, high quality and high value and low quality and high value. The policy options for each site can be used to determine those sites which should for example, be protected, enhanced or are surplus to requirements.

The companion guide to PPG 17 also considers a hierarchy of provision. It recognises that large or high quality open spaces are likely to attract users from a wider area than small or poor quality sites. The suggested hierarchy has three levels of provision relating to open spaces termed strategic significance, middle order significance and neighbourhood significance. In line with the guidance, the

hierarchy has been adapted to meet the needs of the local area and will use City, Neighbourhood and Local levels of provision.

The Guide seeks to build on examples of existing good planning practice, sets out how local authorities can use the planning system to help deliver accessible, high quality and sustainable open spaces which meet local needs and are valued by local communities (Reference paragraph 1.5).

Moreover the Guide indicates how local authorities can:

- Establish the wishes of their local communities and apply their provision standards in a way, which is equitable to both developers and local communities; and
- Promote a consistent approach across different facility types.

It also provides a framework for determining the need for planning conditions, or the negotiation of planning agreements.

2.3 Local Planning Policy

The Second Draft Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, deposited February 2003, sets out local planning policies in respect of open space provision. The plan sets out the vision for the development of Oxford over the fifteen year period to 2016. The vision aims to build on the high quality of the built and natural environment and as such seeks, *inter alia*, to conserve important open spaces and to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Oxford (reference paragraphs 2.2.1 – 2.2.3). We endorse such an approach, as illustrated in our proposed vision for Oxford's Green space study set out in Chapter 2.

To the east and west of the City Centre, the large tracts of open space form part of Oxford's Green Belt. The Urban Capacity Study for Oxford (September 2002) shows that there is no need for development within the greenbelt to meet the housing requirements of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.

The City Council has identified some areas of open land, which lie between the built up area and the inner edge of the Green Belt, as Safeguarded Land. Under Policy NE.3 planning permission will only be granted for development within Safeguarded Land for uses such as outdoor sport, that will preserve the open character of the area.

Under Policy NE.5 the City Council will not grant planning permission for development that would involve the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Agricultural land has been identified during the open space audit, but has not been taken into account when establishing standards, where access is restricted or limited. However recognition has been given to sites which have unrestricted access, where agricultural uses exist, such as Port Meadow and Iffley Meadows.

Port Meadow, Wolvercote Common, Wolvercote Meadows and Pixey Mead (outside of the city boundary) are designated as part of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Furthermore, Oxford benefits from 12 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These sites have been included in the open space audit. Under Policy NE.18 planning permission will not be granted for development that would have a significant impact upon a SAC or SSSI. Under Policy NE.19 the City Council aims to protect other Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation and Local Nature Reserves from development that would have a significant adverse impact.

Under Policy NE.20 the City Council will not grant planning permission for developments that would sever or harm the viability of wildlife corridors, unless the corridor can be replaced.

Oxford contains 14 historic parks and gardens, many of which are owned by the University of Oxford. Development which would harm the character or setting of a park or garden has been restricted by the Council, in accordance with Policy HE.10.

Under Policy SR.5 of the Local Plan, planning permission will not be granted for development that would result in the loss of public open space, as defined on the proposals map.

An extension to Cuttleslowe Park, incorporating an area of disused allotments and low lying agricultural land, is proposed under Policy SR.6. We understand that planning permission has been granted for the extension, but the agricultural leases have yet to be terminated.

Under Policy SR.7 the City Council will expect suitable public open space to be provided on large scale business, commercial and institutional developments to serve the recreational needs of employees, customers, students and hospital patients. The policy states that provision will be sought where there is a shortage of public open space in the vicinity, or the development would create a significant additional demand for such space.

The policy further advises that as part of major new commercial developments contributions towards the provision, or enhancement, of public squares will be sought by the Council.

Such a policy is endorsed by government guidance in the Companion Guide to PPG17, paragraph 6.7. However, the guide also advises that there is no simple way of deriving a defensible standard for such provision.

One such example of where this has occurred is provided by Cambridge City Council in its Supplementary Planning Guidance – Strategy for the Use of Planning Obligations for the Provision of

Community infrastructure, adopted July 2002, which states that contributions to the improvement of the public realm has been sought from, *inter alia*, commercial developments, which will result in a net increase in daily trip generation by all modes of more than 50 trips. The level of contribution required is £300 per additional trip.

In accordance with Policy SR.8 the City Council will protect allotments in active cultivation from development. Where allotments are no longer cultivated, development will only be permitted where most of the allotments have fallen into disuse, there is no demand for use of the allotments, or there is no need for the allotments to be used for other outdoor recreational purposes. Additional allotments are identified at Spindleberry Park, Blackbird Leys to meet demand arising from residential development.

Under Policy HS.29, the Council will require the provision of a minimum of 10% of a site as public open space, when considering residential developments involving 20 or more dwellings, or on a site of more than 0.4 hectares. The policy will only apply where there is a shortage of open space, or the development will create a significant additional demand for open space, or where the site contains, or adjoins, a feature of recreational, ecological, visual or historic interest, which it is desirable to conserve, or enhance.

On smaller sites, and where the needs of the development would be better served by improving existing areas of public open space in the locality, the City Council will require a financial contribution in lieu of on site provision.

Policy HS.30 relates to the provision of children's play space. Children's play space forms an important part of public open space provision. Under policy HS.30 Children's Play Space in the Local Area Plan, Oxford City Council will require residential developments involving twenty or more dwellings or occupying more than 0.4 hectares, to provide suitable play space for children as part of the public open space provision required under policy HS.29. On smaller sites, where appropriate, and where the needs of the development would be better served by improving children's play space, the city council will seek a contribution in the place of on site provision. Children's play areas should be well designed, suitably located and properly fenced, surfaced and equipped. Adequate arrangements must be made for future maintenance. Where existing play areas are poorly located, the city council will seek opportunities to relocate them.

2.4 Making the Difference, a Cultural Strategy for Oxford

'Making the Difference, a Cultural Strategy for Oxford', published May 2002, has two key objectives: the first, to make sure that Oxford and its surroundings remain as culturally rich for decades to come and the second, to break down barriers, which restrict access to this culture for some of Oxford's residents and visitors.

The strategy confirms the importance of Oxford's major open spaces, by stating that The Botanic Garden, Port Meadow and Shotover all receive several hundred thousand visitors per year.

The strategy sets out 10 themes, covering:

- 1) Life Long Learning;
- 2) Access and Social Inclusion;
- 3) Promotion and Co-ordination;
- 4) Heritage;
- 5) Cultural venues;
- 6) Resources;
- 7) Sustainability;
- 8) Partnerships and collaborative working;
- 9) Children and Young People; and
- 10) Celebration.

The strategic aim of Theme 4 Heritage is to protect and enhance the built and natural environments. The strategy notes that lack of maintenance of waterway and meadow can reduce wildlife value and public enjoyment.

Theme 5 Cultural Venues, which aims to prioritise and fill gaps in cultural facilities, makes specific reference to the need to improve places for play in Oxford.

Under Theme 7 Sustainability, the strategy makes reference to the fact that there are approximately 100 children's play facilities in Oxford, but children have had little involvement in their design and thus the strategy suggests that many are little used for children's play. The strategy therefore, aims to ensure that new public facilities meet local needs and that users are involved in their design.

Under this theme, reference is also made to the need for habitat and species recovery and protection programmes to ensure the survival of nationally rare fauna and flora within Oxford's boundaries, including Creeping Marshwort on Port Meadow, Snakeshead Fritillaries at Iffley, the Black Hairstreak at Shotover and water voles at Barton and Binsey.

The Cultural Strategy identifies the production of a Biodiversity Action Plan for Oxford and its surroundings as a key action.

Theme 8 Partnerships and Collaborative Working aims to achieve more and better partnerships between public, voluntary and commercial cultural organisations.

Under Theme 9 Children and Young People, specific reference is made to the lack of activities for 8-15 year olds, and the need for improved provision for this age group to be a priority. Increased opportunities for informal learning for children through safe play is also identified as an action.

2.5 Oxford Community Strategy

The Oxford Community Strategy published in 2004, has three underlying principles:

- 1) Promoting equity, equality and diversity;
- 2) Sustainable practice; and
- 3) Partnership working and community involvement.

Five key themes have been adopted to reflect the main priorities for people and the City of Oxford:

- 1) A vibrant and inclusive economy;
- 2) Safer communities;
- 3) A better living environment;
- 4) Opportunities for life; and
- 5) Active and healthy communities.

Of particular relevance to the Green Space Study are the priorities to ensure that Oxford is a safe, friendly environment for residents, workers and visitors; the protection and enhancement of Oxford's natural heritage and the promotion of social, cultural and leisure activities.

3.0 Methodology

The assessment of open space in Oxford has been carried out in two stages. A broad, over-arching city assessment has been undertaken with reference to issues affecting the City as a whole. A series of more detailed assessments have then been undertaken for each of the 16 urban villages in order to gain a better understanding of provision at a local level with settlements.

3.1 Methodology for the City Assessment and Analysis

3.1.1 Site Identification

All potential open spaces have been mapped into a GIS with the assistance of aerial photography, Ordnance Survey landline and other data supplied by the City Council. In order to determine which sites to include in subsequent auditing and analysis, the following criteria were used for excluding sites, due to their limited potential for recreation:

- Restricted sites owned by the University of Oxford;
- Institutional land such as schools and hospitals;
- Agricultural land except where unrestricted public access is known to exist; and
- Roadside sites.

All sites comprising the agreed set were visited but sites of the following typologies did not receive a full quality audit:

- Housing Amenity Land;
- Vacant Land; and
- Construction Sites.

For these sites, a comment was recorded.

3.1.2 Typology

The Urban Green Spaces Task Force in “Green Spaces, Better Places” suggests a typology for open spaces that will “provide a more consistent basis for Local Authorities to improve the comparability of information on quality and quantity of open space.” The proposed typology list is based on land-use and intended primarily for strategy development and planning purposes.

The typology developed by the Urban Green Spaces Task Force has been adopted for the Oxford Green Space Study but has been further subdivided in discussion with Oxford City Council. The typologies used are listed below and their definitions are included in Appendix E. Each site has been attributed a typology based on primary purpose and this has been used throughout the analysis, even though some sites may have a number of characteristics and fulfil a number of functions.

- Park - City
- Park - Neighbourhood
- Park - Local
- Playground
- Ecological Site
- Green/Common
- Housing Amenity Land
- Green Link
- Sports Ground
- Vacant
- Construction Site
- Operational Land
- Churchyard/Cemetery
- Allotment
- Civic Square
- Square / Garden

Appendix I details both required and desirable features for each of the typologies. This should be referred to when prioritising improvements.

3.1.3 Access

At the site capture stage, each site was attributed one of three levels of access. The 'traffic-light' colours of green, orange and red represent the availability of access to each site, and are used similarly in the GIS. The definition of these terms is given in Table 3.1

Access Definitions	
Unrestricted	Sites are available to everyone at all times. Some sites may have restrictions between dusk and dawn. Examples: Local Parks, Churches.
Limited	Sites may be publicly or privately owned but access may require an appointment or prior arrangement. Example: Sports Grounds, Schools
Restricted	Sites are out of bounds to the general public although may be accessible to a small group of people. Examples: Construction sites, Operational sites, University Grounds

Table: 3.1 Access Definitions

3.1.4 Site Size and Hierarchy

It is widely acknowledged that larger and higher quality facilities attract users from a greater distance than small sites with a limited range of facilities. The companion guide to PPG17 proposes the use of a hierarchy of provision, tailored to the needs of the local area. Following the guidance, a three tier hierarchy has been used with local, neighbourhood and city levels. Sites have been ordered into the hierarchy based primarily, although not exclusively, on size using the following guides (table 3.2):

Hierarchy Level	Site Size (ha)
City	> 10
Neighbourhood	2 - 10
Local	< 2

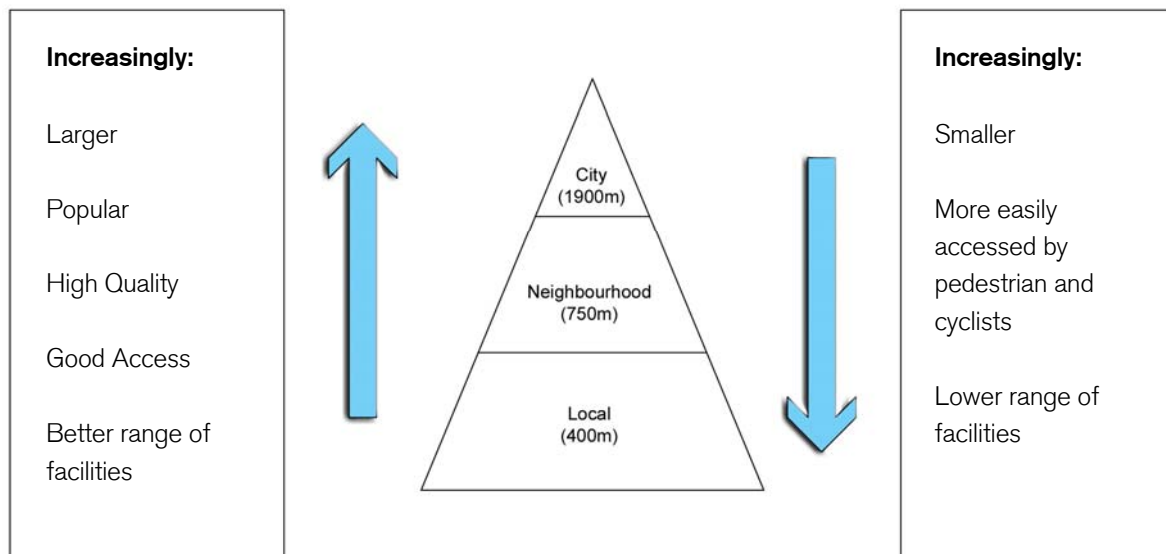


Table: 3.2 Hierarchy of Sites

Where the public consultation has identified sites as being of city importance to users, these have been attributed to the city level of the hierarchy regardless of their size.

3.1.5 Accessibility

Two maps have been produced at the city level of the hierarchy showing access to formal and informal open space and are also referred to within each of the Urban Village assessments. These maps have been analysed to identify any surplus or deficit in terms of access to open space. The formality of a site is based on typology.

For each Urban Village assessment, maps have also been produced to show accessibility to formal and informal local sites and formal and informal neighbourhood sites. These maps have been analysed to identify any surplus or deficit in terms of access to open space. They may also be used to identify suitable areas for the development of new open space where there is a deficiency.

The two maps showing access to city sites produced for the citywide assessment will also be analysed within each Urban Village assessment. All sites perform a local function and all will be included within the assessment of accessibility at the local level. All city sites also have a neighbourhood function and as such, the maps showing proximity to sites at the neighbourhood level will also show proximity to city sites at the neighbourhood level.

Formal sites include:

- Parks – City, Neighbourhood and Local;

- Playgrounds;
- Sports Grounds;
- Square / Garden; and
- Civic Squares.

Informal sites include:

- Ecological sites;
- Green Links;
- Greens and Commons; and
- Churchyards / Cemeteries.

Access to neighbourhood and local sites has been assessed in each of the urban village assessments only. In addition, allotments, construction sites, operational land and vacant sites are not included for the purpose of identifying formal and informal open space provision.

3.1.6 Site Quality Audits

Site quality audits were carried out by trained landscape managers in October and November 2003, using pre-compiled electronic audit forms. An additional 47 audits were carried out in May and June 2005. The visits also served as an opportunity to verify site attributes such as typology and access. These audits represent a snapshot-in-time of the quality of the site. The assessment considered the following qualities of each open space:

- Physical;
- Social;
- Aesthetic; and
- Biodiversity.

Each of these qualities was assessed using data from the following fields:

Category 1	Field	
Physical Quality	P4 Site Furniture P5 Signage P6 Boundary Features P7 Vegetation Cover	P8 Footpaths P9 Architectural Feature P11 Maintenance
Category 2		
Social Quality	S1 Personal Security P14 Vandalism	
Category 3		
Aesthetic Quality	Balance Texture Colour	Diversity Unity Stimulus
Category 4		
Biodiversity	P12 Biodiversity	

Table 3.3 Site Quality Audit Categories

Physical

The assessment of physical quality involved appraising the quality of mainly built features such as site furniture, boundary features etc. To ensure that the audit was comprehensive, each physical element was further subdivided into landscape elements. (See Appendix F and Table 3.7). The list of elements audited was informed by the consultation responses received where issues such as litter and dog fouling were identified as concerns by a large proportion of respondents.

Each element was scored according to the following scale:

Recorded score	Quality Score	Description
1	0 - 20%	Failing
2	20 - 40%	Poor
3	40 - 60%	Sufficient
4	60 - 80%	Good
5	80 - 100%	Excellent

Table 3.4 Site Quality Audit Scoring System

Up to ten factors where assessed:

- Convenience
- Usability;
- Condition;
- Usefulness;
- Need;
- Coordination;
- Functionality;
- Presence of elements;
- Work needed; and
- Appropriateness.

For example, the assessment of litterbins considered their convenience, condition, work needed, and appropriateness. The definitions of these factors are given in Appendix 3.

Where no feature was present a score of zero was recorded. Zero scores have been ignored in the overall quality scores for each site so as not to penalise a site for not having a particular feature. The evaluation criteria for scoring are shown in Appendix 3. An example of some of the elements scored are given in table 3.5 below.

Field	Element	
P4 Site furniture	Seats and benches Picnic tables Entrance lighting Security lighting	Litter bins Dog litter bins
P5 Boundary features	Walls Fences Railings Vegetation	Hedges

Table 3.5 Site Quality Audit Elements Scored

Social

The assessment of social factors included an assessment of the sense of personal security and an assessment of the evidence of vandalism. Personal security was assessed in relation to visibility, degree of isolation, exit options, hidden corners, natural surveillance and accessibility. A summary assessment was made using a five-point scale ranging from threatening to comfortable. Vandalism was assessed on a similar scale ranging from none (score 5) to generally extensive (score 1).

Aesthetic

Aesthetic qualities were assessed with a view to defining the overall sense of place by reference to balance, scale, enclosure, texture, colour, diversity, unity and stimulus. Again evaluation criteria were developed to guide scoring for each quality.

Biodiversity

All audited sites have attributes relating to accessibility, habitats found to be present and the level of intervention in terms of management. Accessibility has been recorded as follows:

- Full Access: entry to the site is possible without restriction;
- Conditional Access: A right of entry exists which is subject to or affected by one or more restrictions or conditions that may affect the quality of the natural experience enjoyed by the visitor;
- Proximate Access: There is no physical right of access but the site can be experienced from its boundary, where a close-up visual and aural experience of nature may be available;
- Remote Access: No physical right of access exists and the proximate experience is limited, but the site provides a valuable visual green resource to the community along a number of distinct sightlines and at distance;
- No Access: No physical right of access exists and views of the site are largely obstructed

Each of the following habitat types were recorded if found to be present:

- Water
- Bare Soil
- Grassland / Tall Herbs

- Scrub
- Woodland

Level of intervention was recorded as follows:

- Low
- Extensive
- Intensive
- Artificial

3.1.7 Database

Following the completion of the site quality audits, the audit forms were assimilated into tables within a Microsoft Access database for further analysis. Forms have been created in the database for each field within the audit form to make it easier to read the information held within the tables as shown in Table 3.6.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Access form titled 'OPENSACES DATABASES - [frm_TITLE]'. The form contains the following fields and sections:

- Form Header:** 'Welcome to the Oxford Open Spaces Database (with associated Geographic Information System ODBC)' and the 'Scott Wilson' logo.
- Form Fields:**
 - SITE ID: 1
 - SITE NAME: Land Adjacent to Wolvercote Mill Stream
 - ALTERNATIVE NAME: (empty)
 - OPENING TIMES: (empty)
 - LOCATION: Wolvercote
 - UGSTF TYPOLOGY: Ecological
 - SITE AREA (Ha): 0.6436
 - ACCESS: Restricted
 - LOCAL TYPOLOGY: Ecological
- Quality Score:** 0.00% (in red), with 'Update Scores' and 'Delete Record' buttons.
- TRANSPORT Section:**

	CONV	USEB	NEED	APPR
CAR PARKING	0	0	0	0
CYCLE STANDS	0	0	0	0
BUS STOPS	0	0	0	0
- ACCESS Section:**

	CONV	USEB	NEED	APPR
PEDESTRIAN	0	0	0	0
DISABLED	0	0	0	0
CYCLE	0	0	0	0
VEHICLE	0	0	0	0
DOG ACCESS	0	0	0	0
GATES/GATEWAYS	0	0	0	0
PHYSICAL BARRIERS	[Empty Input Field]			
EASY IMPROVEMENTS	[Empty Input Field]			
- Options Grid:**

CONV OPTIONS	COORD OPTIONS
USEB OPTIONS	FUNC OPTIONS
COND OPTIONS	EVID OPTIONS
USEF OPTIONS	WORK OPTIONS
NEED OPTIONS	APPR OPTIONS
- Other Fields:** 'Comments' and 'Designations' (both empty text boxes).

Table 3.6 Example of Audit Database

For each field, a percentage quality score has been calculated. This score is based on the maximum potential score for the features recorded. In the example in Table 3.7, loose bound paths were found to be present and a score of three was entered for each of the factors assessed. As only one feature was found to be present, the maximum potential score is $6 \times 5 = 30$. The actual quality score for the

recorded feature in this case is $6 \times 3 = 18$ which equates to 60% of the maximum potential score. The overall percentage quality score for each site is based on the maximum potential score for all features recorded.

P8 FOOTPATHS						
SITE ID:	<input type="text" value="2"/>					
	CONV	FUNC	COND	NEED	WORK	APPR
DESIRE LINES	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
BOUND	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
LOOSE	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>
ROADS	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
CYCLE ROUTES	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
EASY IMPROVEMENTS	<input type="text"/>					
QUALITY P8	<input type="text" value="60.00%"/>					

Table 3.7 Quality Score Example

In the Strategy, the database has been used selectively in order to summarise data and derive recommendations. In addition, the database has the capacity to be an important management tool for the Council and many more correlations and conclusions may be drawn from the database than are presented in this report. The Council will need to allocate resources to maintaining and updating the database. The database could be used, for example, to determine the need for investment, to assess management and maintenance and to record changes in quality over time.

An existing site quality score has been given for each site based on a calculation involving all of the attributes recorded through the audit. A copy of the audit form used is located in Appendix 2 for reference. In December 2006, the database was amended to include a function score which has then been applied to the existing quality score to derive a weighted quality score. This weighted quality score is now used in determining policy options for sites in the urban village analysis.

The database has also been used extensively to inform the recommendations and action plan.

3.1.8 Value

The value assessment considers the wider role of a site within its local context and has been carried out in line with PPG 17 guidance considering the following three main issues:

- Context;
- Level and type of use; and
- Wider benefits.

A separate value assessment has been carried out for formal and informal open spaces. Within each of these categories, information gathered throughout the study has been used to calculate the overall value percentage score for each site. This has been based on the following calculation:

$$(\text{Sum of actual scores for each criterion} / \text{maximum potential score}) \times 100$$

The criteria used are defined below:

Context

Proximity – the mean number of local catchment buffers generated from other sites of the same formality, which overlap a site, indicating the number of other sites in proximity has been calculated within the GIS. A site which is unique in its locality, sharing no buffers with other sites of the same formality can be considered to be of higher value than a site which is in close proximity to several other sites. The following scores have been attributed:

Formal Open Space	Score
1 – 2 sites	8
2 – 4 sites	6
4 – 6 sites	4
6 – 8 sites	2

Informal Open Space	Score
1 – 2 sites	8
2 – 4 sites	6
4 – 6 sites	4

Level of Provision – calculated based on the total amount of unrestricted formal or informal open space per thousand population in each urban village depending on the formality of the site in question. Sites within urban villages where the quantity of provision is low in comparison to the citywide average are considered to be more valuable than sites within areas of high provision. As the

Companion Guide to PPG17 suggests, if there is very little provision in an area, even a space of mediocre quality may well be valuable.

Level of Formal Open Space Provision	Score
< 1 ha /1000 population	8
1 – 2 ha /1000 population	6
2 – 3 ha /1000 population	4
3 – 10 ha /1000 population	2
> 10 ha /1000 population	1

Level of Informal Open Space Provision	Score
< 2 ha /1000 population	8
2 – 4 ha /1000 population	6
4 – 6 ha /1000 population	4
6 – 10 ha /1000 population	2
> 10 ha /1000 population	1

The level of provision of Formal and Informal open space varies significantly across the City. Therefore the Value assessment takes into account this variation.

Levels and Type of Use

Typology – Some typologies offer a better range of facilities and can therefore be considered to be of higher value. Scores have been attributed as below:

Typology	Score
Housing Amenity Land, Churchyard / Cemetery	2
Green / Common, Greenlink	4
Civic Square, Ecological, Park – Neighbourhood, Park – Local, Playground, Sports Ground, Square /Garden	6
Park – City	8

Most frequently used sites – The sites identified as being the most frequently used through the public consultation can be considered to be of more value than poorly used sites. Scores have been attributed as below, according to the number of responses received during the consultation:

Number of Respondents	Score
41 >	10
31 – 40	8
21 – 30	6
11 – 20	4
1 – 10	2
0	0

Wider benefits

Ecological, Landscape and Historical designations – Sites with high level designations are very rare and are often irreplaceable. Their value can therefore be considered to be very high. Where a site has a number of designations, the highest designation has been included in the score, as shown below:

Designation	Score
International	8
National	6
Local	4
None	0

Social Inclusion – Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) – public open spaces within areas of high deprivation are likely to be more valuable than in areas of low deprivation, as people in areas of high deprivation are likely to have fewer options for recreation. As IMD data is provided at the super output area level, an average score has been calculated including all super output areas which cover each urban village. The scores given in this value assessment are based on a local rank of deprivation within Oxford where rank 16 is the highest level of deprivation in the city and 1 is the lowest.

Ranking in Terms of IMD	Score
Rank 15 and 16	8
Rank 13 and 14	7
Rank 11 and 12	6

Rank 9 and 10	5
Rank 7 and 8	4
Rank 5 and 6	3
Rank 3 and 4	2
Rank 1 and 2	1

As can be seen from the tables above, a 'high' value site is one which is unique in its locality, offers a wide range of facilities, is frequently used, is designated due to its landscape, ecological and/or historical importance, and is within an area of high deprivation, that has a limited supply of unrestricted open space.

In contrast, a 'low' value site is one which is in close proximity to several other sites, offers a limited range of facilities, is seldom used, has no statutory designations, and is within an area of low deprivation, that has a abundant supply of unrestricted open space.

Having calculated the total value score for each Formal and Informal open space, a percentage value score was calculated. This ensured the Value scores for individual sites were easily comparable and facilitated the creation of 'Value Thresholds', determining whether a site had low, medium or high Value. The table below shows the range of scores used. It should be noted however that these thresholds are indicative, and should be used as a guide only.

Rating	Value Score Range
Low Value	0 – 49 %
Medium Value	50- 59 %
High Value	60 % +

3.1.8 Combining Quality and Value

The Companion Guide to PPG17 suggests that combining the assessment of quality and value allows local authorities to objectively identify actions for the future of open spaces. This assessment has been carried out using a matrix as defined in Table 3.8. This matrix provides a method for determining the most appropriate policy approach for each open space. For the purposes of this assessment, sites have been banded into Good / Average / Poor Quality and High / Average / Low Value according to their overall scores for each.

In December 2006, a weighted quality score was added to the database to take account of the presence or absence of required features within a site as listed in Appendix I. This weighted score is now used in the Quality / Value matrix when determining policy options (see section 3.3.7).

Good Quality / Low Value	Average Value / Good Quality	Good Quality / High Value
<i>Policy Options</i> Maintain quality Review value based on further assessment		<i>Policy Options</i> Maintain quality Protect through the planning system
Average Quality / Low Value	Average Quality / Average Value	Average Quality / High Value
Poor Quality / Low Value	Average Value / Poor Quality	Poor Quality / High Value
<i>Policy Options</i> Could be surplus to requirements in terms of primary purpose; review value based on further assessment		<i>Policy Options</i> Raise quality to meet required standard Protect through the planning system

Table 3.8 Quality / Value Matrix

The Quality / Value matrix must be treated with caution and needs to be considered as a rough tool for selecting policy options for sites. It is felt that where either quality and/or value is found to be average or low, officers must make a professional judgement with regards to the future of each site on a site-by-site basis. Where value is high and quality is average, improving quality should be the priority. Where value is low and quality is average, a decision must be made on a site-by-site basis, as to whether to focus resources on improving both quality and value or to treat the open space as surplus to requirements. Site user surveys should be carried out in such cases to further define the value of the site in question.

It is understood that in certain cases, sites are protected under the law such as cemeteries and allotments but these sites often score poorly in terms of value using this assessment. With this in mind, a separate value assessment has been carried out for Allotments within the City assessment of open space. In the case of Cemeteries and Churchyards, even where value is considered to be low, policy will protect these sites and consideration should be given to enhancing value through other means.

3.1.9 Public Consultation

Consultation with the community is a key part of any green space study in order that the study can accurately reflect the needs and aspirations of local people.

The public were initially consulted in Autumn 2003 by means of household questionnaires and focus groups. This consultation was found to be ineffective at generating a good response and has now been updated following a further round of consultation in Spring 2005. This consultation took the form of a telephone based consultation exercise and a separate youth consultation exercise in the form of questionnaires sent to local schools.

The results of the public consultation are summarised within the reports contained within Appendix 5. The findings of the public consultation have been considered throughout the report when analysing use and demand, in making recommendations and in setting standards.

3.1.10 Future Demand

Oxford City Council has provided population projection data for political wards for the period 2001 – 2011. As the data is only available for ward, an estimate of future population fluctuations within each urban village cannot be made. This data will be used to estimate the potential impact on demand for open space within this period for the city as a whole. It is acknowledged that Oxford City Council will be required to secure more land for housing in the mid to long term and that this is likely to significantly alter the population projections.

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 The Effect of Severance

Busy roads, railway lines, canals and rivers all act to restrict access to open space. A number of lines and areas of severance have been identified within the City of Oxford and these have been mapped into the GIS and have been taken into account in the analysis.

At the Local level of the hierarchy, severance lines have been used to cut accessibility catchments to indicate the significance of barriers to access at this level as suggested in the Companion Guide to PPG17. It is felt however that in general, there are more opportunities to access sites at higher levels of the hierarchy and severance is, therefore, less of an issue. For this reason, the indicative catchments for Neighbourhood and City level sites have not been cut. In certain circumstances at these higher levels of hierarchy, options for accessing open space will be severely restricted by significant severance effects such as railway lines and rivers. In these cases, this has been identified within the text and recommendations for possible measures for improving access have been given, where appropriate.

3.2.2 Definition of Urban Villages

The analysis of open space provision has been carried out at the City level and by Urban Village. Urban Villages have been identified, with the assistance of Oxford City Council as representing a truer reflection of communities than political ward boundaries. These urban villages reflect geographical units made up of a variety of land uses, which reflect physical and social barriers, enabling a more detailed analysis of local supply and demand to be carried out. These have been mapped into the GIS and incorporate barriers to movement such as railways, rivers, canals and main roads.

3.2.3 Population

As the urban villages identified within Oxford do not follow political ward boundaries, census data has been recalculated to determine the estimated population of each area. The 2001 census allows analysis down to the output area level. Output areas are built from postcode units of approximately 125 households and are used as the building blocks of the census. Output areas nest within the political ward boundaries. The boundaries of some of the urban villages dissect output area boundaries and thus, a calculation has been performed to determine the population within each urban village. The population is determined within the GIS by calculating the area of each output area within each urban village boundary based on the assumption that there is an even population distribution.

3.2.4 Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) has been taken into account within the analysis. IMD data is available at the super output area level only. Super output areas are amalgamations of output areas and as such, cover larger geographical areas. As urban villages have been used for the analysis of open space in Oxford as defined above, the issues with super output areas overlapping urban village boundaries is exacerbated. For this reason, figures given for IMD are based on the average of super output areas overlapping the urban village.

3.2.5 Quantity

An assessment of the quantity of open space has been carried out using data from the GIS and from population data as defined above. The total amount of open space identified within the city has been quantified and the average amount of unrestricted open space per 1000 population calculated, as well as the amount of formal and informal open space for the city.

3.2.6 Allotments

The supply of allotments has been reviewed and the potential opportunities for disused or poorly used allotments to be redeveloped as publicly accessible open space has been evaluated. The value and

demand for allotments has been assessed by looking at occupancy rates at all sites across the city. Possible improvements to the Quality and Accessibility of Allotments is also discussed.

3.2.7 Open Space for Students

The City of Oxford has high student population due to the presence of two large universities. This transient population have different open space requirements to the permanent residents of the city. The adequacy of the supply of open space to meet the needs of this group has been discussed.

3.2.8 Children and Youths

The quantity distribution and quality of facilities for children and youths has been assessed across the city. The quality database, the existing play strategy and the results of the public consultation have been used to determine the adequacy of the existing provision.

3.2.9 Disability Discrimination

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 gives disabled people further rights in the access of goods, facilities and services. The green space study will consider the quality of existing disabled access as recorded as part of the quality audit and make recommendations for improvements where appropriate.

3.2.10 Setting Standards

The analysis of supply and demand has determined the recommended the Quantity, Quality and Accessibility standards. These can be found in Chapter 5 City Assessment and Analysis.

3.3 Urban Village Assessment and Analysis Methodology

3.3.1 Introduction and Context

In addition to the citywide analysis, a separate assessment has been carried out for each of the 16 urban villages in order to determine how open space contributes to local urban character, and how local variations in demography, urban morphology and context affect the supply and demand for open space. The strengths and weaknesses relating to open space provision in each urban village has also been evaluated, and detailed recommendations made. Priorities should ultimately be determined by focussed local consultation.

3.3.2 Population and Index of Multiple Deprivation

An assessment has been made of the characteristics of the population in terms of total population, age, ethnicity and the Index of Multiple Deprivation within each urban village.

An assessment of all unrestricted open spaces in each urban village is included. Data including Site ID, Site Name, Typology, Ownership, Quality Score, Value Score and Site Policy Options has been tabulated, and used for further analysis. Further site details are available in Appendix A and Value and Quality comparisons can be found in Appendix B.

3.3.3 Quantity

In order to get a more detailed understanding of the make up of open space within each urban village, a table has been produced showing current provision. Total formal, informal, local, neighbourhood and city provision is given in terms of hectares per thousand population of unrestricted open space. A comparison is then made of the quantity of provision of the local, neighbourhood and city hierarchy within each urban village against the city quantity standard. Thus, an assessment can be made of the adequacy of the supply of open space in each area (sufficient, surplus or deficit). The results of the public consultation have also been used to compare the results of the analysis of quantity with the views of the local community in the urban village.

3.3.4 Quality and Value

In terms of quality, the weighted quality scores achieved for each site have been assessed against the city standard. The public's perception of the quality of open spaces derived from the consultation exercise in each area has also been considered in comparison to the results of the analysis, in order to assist in prioritising actions.

Value will be assessed alongside quality according to the city assessment methodology.

3.3.5 Accessibility

This is as per the methodology previously outlined in the city assessment methodology.

3.3.6 Open Space Development and Recommendations

Each Urban Village assessment concludes with a summary of the main findings and suggestions for improvements including priority projects within existing sites, potential new sites and improvements within the urban village to enhance accessibility, connectivity and integration of open space. Priority projects have been identified based on the relative significance of quantity, quality, value and accessibility. For example, where there are deficiencies in quantity, projects to increase the quantity or improve accessibility of open space have been prioritised, whereas where quantity of open space is good, then improvements to quality may be more appropriate. Similarly, where value is shown to be below average, then consideration has been given to whether change of use or disposal may be an option.

3.3.7 December 2006 Addendum

In December 2006, Oxford City Council made an amendment to the Green Space Study in order to further assess the quality of sites. Where the original assessment sought to identify the quality of existing features within a site, it did not take account of the requirement for particular features to be present for any given typology. This improvement therefore seeks to introduce an additional function score to the quality assessment which will then be combined with the existing quality score to determine an overall weighted quality score for each site.

The function score is determined by the presence or absence of features within a site of a particular typology. Only features currently within the database have been included in the assessment as to introduce new features at this time when no full audit is planned would result in inconsistent results. Appendix I includes a table of required features by typology. Certain typologies including Housing Amenity Land, Derelict Land and Roadside have been excluded. The required features are those considered essential for a site to perform its primary purpose.

The calculation of the function score is the percentage of features which are present within a site against the list of required features included in Appendix I. If a feature has a score in the quality database, it is determined to exist within the site. For example, there are 12 required features for a Local Park to fully perform its primary purpose. If a site were to have only six of these features present, the function score would be 50%. Table 3.9 below gives an example of the function scores available for Local Parks depending on the number of features present against the list of 12:

Number of Features Present	Function Score
1	8%
2	17%
3	25%
4	33%
5	42%
6	50%
7	58%
8	67%
9	75%
10	83%
11	92%
12	100%

Table 3.9 – Function Scores for Local Parks

In order to fully appraise the quality and function of a site, the existing quality score of the site and the function score of the site will be combined to derive an overall weighted score. This will simply be based on the function score applied as a factor to the existing quality score. For example, if a Local Park were to achieve an existing quality score of 80% and a function score of 50%, the overall

weighted score would be 40%. Using this method of calculation ensures that future quality audits can be carried out using the established methodology, relying on the database to make the assessment of function and producing the weighted score. This eliminates the potential for human error and saves time in inputting data. Working through the example given above for a Local Park with an existing Quality Score of 80%, the following weighted scores would be achieved:

Number of Features Present	Function Score	Calculation	Overall Weighted Score
1	8%	8% of 80 =	7%
2	17%	17% of 80 =	13%
3	25%	25% of 80 =	20%
4	33%	33% of 80 =	27%
5	42%	42% of 80 =	33%
6	50%	50% of 80 =	40%
7	58%	58% of 80 =	47%
8	67%	67% of 80 =	53%
9	75%	75% of 80 =	60%
10	83%	83% of 80 =	67%
11	92%	92% of 80 =	73%
12	100%	100% of 80 =	80%

Table 3.10 – Weighted Scores for Local Parks based on an assumed Existing Quality Score of 80%

The quality database has been upgraded to calculate these scores automatically and the overall weighted score will replace the existing quality score in the assessment of quality within the Green Space Study and in determining policy options for each site. The Citywide assessment and the Urban Village Assessments will be updated to include a commentary on the function scores of sites.

4.0 DEMAND

Consultation with the community is a key part of any parks and open spaces strategy in order that the strategy can accurately reflect the needs and aspirations of local people. CABE Space state:

“Public consultation should be planned carefully – it is important to achieve a strategic overview of public attitudes that will inform the Strategy and provide a baseline for performance measurement, but consultation should also become part of an ongoing process of community engagement in the regeneration of green space.”

CABE Space (2003) unpublished guidance

The full version of the Consultation Report is in Appendix D and details the full methodology and results. Overall the report has brought out some useful findings that both inform the further work on the strategy and also wider service delivery and development issues for the City Council. This will be discussed, along with the results from the previous consultation.

4.1 Previous Consultation

4.1.1 Summary

- The Local Plan consultation (First Deposit, June 2002) identified concerns over loss of green space.
- Oxford City “Talkback” consultation (1999) identified:
 - Inadequacies in children’s play provision;
 - The need for better communication with young people; and
 - That parks and open spaces are the most used leisure facility provided by the authority
- The Oxford City Council Parks and Green Spaces Customer Satisfaction Survey (2002) identified:
 - Toilet facilities, lighting and events are poor and toilets were getting worse; and
 - The resulting Action Plan, setting out a timetable for achieving certain key improvements, is unclear and lacking in detail.

4.1.2 Consultation Results

Oxford Council has carried out “customer satisfaction surveys” in 2000 and 2002 on a number of key sites set out below:

- Florence Park;
- Bury Knowle Park;

- Cutteslowe Park;
- Hinksey Park; and
- Shotover Park.

Negative overall customer satisfaction ratings were given to

- Toilet facilities;
- Lighting; and
- Park events.

This corresponds to the Household Survey (2003) carried out in preparing this study, where toilet provision was again the most requested improvement.

High positive overall customer satisfaction ratings were given to:

- General tree cover;
- Park in general;
- General cleanliness; and
- General grass / floral displays /shrub areas.

Site specific results for improvements are set out below and compared to the results from the Household Survey (2003) carried out in preparing this strategy.

Site name	Customer survey (2002)	Household Survey (2003)
Bury Knowle Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Pathways • Tennis courts • Seats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More seats and tables • Onsite staff • Dog fouling
Cotteslowe Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Events • Play area • Kiosk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve toilets • Better quality children's play • On site staff/ dog fouling / more seating
Florence Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Catering facilities • Streams • Bandstand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve toilets • On site staff • More seating and tables
Hinksey Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Boating lake • Play area • Paddling pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve toilets • Sports facilities • Teenage / seating
Shotover Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways • Signage • Car park • Security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter control • Dog fouling • On site staff / improve toilets / better facilities

Table 4.1 Comparisons of Desired Improvements From Two Surveys

4.2 Strategy Consultation - 2003

The original consultation conducted by Community First Partnership on behalf of Scott Wilson (2003), included a household survey and group survey.

The household survey was conducted in September and October 2003. A total of 1500 questionnaires were distributed to every 68th household on the electoral role in order to generate a random sample of open space users and non-users. The group survey was circulated to 203 community based organisations throughout Oxford City, and was designed to compliment the household survey.

4.2.1 Key Findings

The key findings of the consultation were:

- Walking and relaxing are the most popular uses of parks and open spaces;

- Dog fouling is the biggest barrier that the authority should address;
- Anti-social behaviour, safety and vandalism need to be tackled – especially in OX4 post code areas;
- People consider there to be sufficient quantity of space although figures vary with post code areas;
- People consider there to be sufficient quantity of children's play although there appear to be localised deficiencies in OX3 post code areas;
- Quality is perceived to be high overall but some key sites have low scores, when compared against the total range of quality scores; and
- There are some significant issues to be addressed in terms of making parks more accessible to people with disabilities, especially entrances to key sites.

4.2.2 Improvements

In addition to the site specific results set out earlier (Table 4.1) the overall picture is that toilets ranked first. The top five most requested improvements were:

- Improved toilets
- Control of dog fouling
- More seating and tables
- Litter control / clearance
- On site staff (wardens)

4.2.3 Conclusions

As well as responding to the most requested improvements, the 2003 public consultation has determined that:

- The Action Plan in the parks and green spaces customer satisfaction survey needs to be reviewed and clearer targets set; responsibility, costings and clear dates for achievement are needed;
- Community safety issues need to be addressed by the authority and managing organisations;
- Toilet provision continues to be a problem. It is a barrier to greater use and one that the authority has known about for a number of years;

- A cross service and inter agency approach is needed to combat dog fouling; and
- Consultation with young people should be further developed especially with the youth council.

4.3 Strategy Consultation – 2005

Community First Partnership undertook further consultation in 2005. This included a Telephone Survey and Young Persons Questionnaire Survey.

The Telephone Survey was designed in association with the partner organisations and a random sample within the study area was targeted via telephone interviews. A total of 548 interviews were conducted, and a fairly even representation from each urban village was sought.

The Young Persons Questionnaire Survey was designed in association with the partner organisations and all seven secondary schools within or immediately adjacent to Oxford City were approached to participate in the survey. Three schools, Matthew Arnold School, St Gregory the Great VA Catholic School and Wheatley Park School agreed to participate in the consultation. The other schools declined to participate due to other school commitments or because of the timing of the survey coinciding with exams.

Each school was sent up to 200 questionnaires, which were distributed to the students through their tutor groups, then collated and returned by each school in a pre-paid envelope. A total of 329 completed questionnaires returned generating an overall return rate of 56.7%.

4.3.1 Telephone Survey

The Telephone Survey Draft Report can be found in Appendix D. In relation to Quantity, Quality and Accessibility, the key findings of the Telephone Survey are discussed below.

Quantity

The results of the Telephone Survey shows that quantity of open space is considered to be sufficient; 80% of respondents felt the amount of open space in their local area was 'about right'.

Quality

The quality of parks and open space is considered to be high. Where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, parks and open spaces attained a mean score of 7.1. In general, the highest scoring open spaces in terms of quality were generally City sites, the highest scoring being University Parks.

The most popular improvements are more / better facilities and improved maintenance and cleanliness. Improvements to children's play and provision for teenagers were also popular suggestions.

Accessibility

The data collected in relation to travel times and respondents post-code demonstrated the distance people were willing to travel to their most frequently visited open space. The biggest barrier to use was lack of time; however nearly half of respondents indicated no barriers to use of parks and open spaces.

Similar to quality, the most frequently visited open spaces were generally City sites, the most frequently visited site being University Parks.

4.3.2 Young Persons Questionnaire Survey

The Young Persons Questionnaire Survey Draft Report can be found in Appendix D. In relation to Quantity, Quality and Accessibility, the key findings of the Young Persons Questionnaire are discussed below.

Quantity

The quantity of parks and open space is considered to be sufficient; over half of all respondents felt the amount of open space in their local area was 'about right'. The number of children's play areas was also considered sufficient, however, nearly two thirds of respondents considered there was insufficient provision for teenagers.

Quality

The quality of parks and open space is considered to be average. Where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, parks and open spaces attained a mean score of 5.4. Children's play areas attained a similar quality score of 5.4.

The most popular improvements indicated by young people are more/ better street sport facilities, adventure playground and teen shelters.

Accessibility

The biggest barrier to use was lack of time. Other significant barriers included personal safety, dog fouling, quality of facilities, and lack of facilities.

The most frequently visited open spaces were generally City and Neighbourhood sites, the most frequently visited site being Florence Park.

4.3.3 Conclusions

- The quantity of open space is considered to be 'about right'; this supports the use of an open space quantity standard, looking to maintain the current level of provision;

- The quality of open space is considered to be high; this supports the recommendation of an aspirational quality standard, indicating which open spaces are currently failing to meet their potential;
- The travel times resulting from the public consultation informed the accessibility buffers applied to neighbourhood and city sites; these reflect local demand, and are therefore reliable indicators of accessibility;
- The most frequently visited parks and open spaces were those of 'city' and 'neighbourhood' status; the quality of these sites should therefore be maintained / enhanced. However, this does not reflect the importance of more local sites; further user surveys should be conducted, especially for those sites considered to of 'poor' value;
- Maintenance and cleanliness are desired improvements; the results of the consultation should be considered along-side the quality database, to review the Council's current open space maintenance regime;
- More / improved facilities is also a desired improvement, especially teen facilities; within the Urban Village Analysis, sites with the potential to accommodate a greater range of facilities have been identified, responding to areas of deficiency and sites of poor quality; and
- The results of the Young Persons Questionnaire demonstrate the opinions of secondary school students; these findings should be taken forward to further assess the supply and demand of provision for children and young people.

5.0 City Assessment and Analysis

5.1 Site Identification

In the autumn of 2003, a total of 602 sites were identified from the aerial photography and were mapped into a GIS, representing 52% of the City area (see Figure 1). Removing restricted sites owned by the University of Oxford, institutional land, limited and restricted access agricultural land and roadside sites reduced the number of sites to 395, which represents about half of the total open space area or 25% of the total city area (see Figure 2). In 2005, a number of amendments were made to the GIS dataset following discussions with the council. The changes included site additions, removals and mergers resulting in a database containing 417 sites which comprise the agreed set and which are used in the analysis.

5.2 Typology

Table 5.1 shows the typologies of sites within the City of Oxford based on The Urban Green Spaces Task Force Typology and the Local Typology used in this study. The distribution of sites by typology is shown in Figure 3. Maps showing sites by Typology are also included in the sections for each Urban Village.

Urban Taskforce Typology	Local Typology	Number of Sites
Parks and Gardens	Parks - City	7
	Parks - Neighbourhood	23
	Parks - Local	27
	Square / Garden	20
Playspace	Playground	45
Semi-natural Sites	Ecological	55
Amenity Greenspace	Green / Common	11
	Housing Amenity Land	95
	Green Link	7
Sports Grounds	Sports Grounds	23
Brownfield Land	Vacant	18
	Construction	13
	Operational	15
Church / Cemeteries	Churchyard/Cemetery	18
Allotments / City Farms	Allotments	39
Civic Space	Civic Square	2
	Total	417

Table 5.1 Number of Open Spaces By Typology

Table 5.1 identifies that a high proportion of the sites identified are Housing Amenity Land, predominately associated with 20th century residential developments in the south and east of

the city. There are also high numbers of ecological sites, local parks and allotments distributed throughout the city. Of specific concern is the low number of civic spaces, particularly considering the significance of the city centre in terms of tourism. With high numbers of visiting tourists who are unlikely to travel far beyond the city centre, high quality civic spaces which can accommodate heavy use could provide additional economic benefits and improve the environment for all.

5.3 Access

Table 5.2 shows the numbers of sites identified at each level of Access. Approximately half of all the sites comprising the dataset have unrestricted access. 40% of sites have limited access and 10% are restricted. Improving access to sites which currently have only limited public access could improve accessibility in areas where this is currently poor.

Accessibility	Number of Sites
Unrestricted Access	207
Limited Access	161
Restricted Access	50
Total	418

Table 5.2 Number of Open Spaces by Access

5.4 Site Size and Hierarchy

The size distribution of sites visited is shown in Table 5.3. It is clear that a large proportion of sites are small with 45% being below 0.4ha. Small sites tend to have fewer facilities and a lower user capacity. Small sites include playgrounds and Housing Amenity Land. Sites above 2ha make up approximately 26% of all sites. Larger sites tend to have a greater range of facilities and potential to be multi-functional. Large sites include city parks and ecological sites such as Port Meadow.

Area of Site (ha)	Number of Sites
<0.2	133
0.2>0.3	30
0.3>0.4	24
0.4>0.5	10
0.5>1.0	63
1 > 2	48
2 > 5	68
> 5	42

Total	417
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Table 5.3 Number of Open Spaces By Size

Access	Hierarchy Level	Site Size (ha)	Number
Unrestricted	City	> 10	13
	Neighbourhood	2 - 10	49
	Local	< 2	144
Limited / Restricted	Not in Hierarchy	-	212

Table 5.4 Number of sites by hierarchy

Table 5.4 above shows the number of sites within each level of the hierarchy. The distribution of sites within the hierarchy is good, and as would be expected, a small number of key city sites at the top of the hierarchy and a good provision of smaller, local sites at the bottom. Hierarchy is taken into consideration when analysing accessibility within the urban village assessments.

5.5 The Effect of Severance

Figure 4 represents the lines and areas of severance, which have been identified as being barriers to access of open spaces in the city. Oxford has a number of waterways running from north to south in the western half of the city including the River Thames, the River Cherwell and the Oxford Canal.

A number of major roads have also been identified as limiting access to open spaces. The Oxford Ring-Road severs Cutteslowe, Barton and Sandhills, Risinghurst, Littlemore, Blackbird Leys and Wolvercote Urban Villages from the rest of the city. There are limited opportunities for crossing this busy road, forcing users to travel further to find a safe place to cross.

Railway lines including those providing services to London, Birmingham and Bicester and freight lines have been identified. These lines severely restrict access in the west and the very south of the city. Of particular concern are the areas of Botley Road and Binsey, Blackbird Leys, Wolvercote and Littlemore where crossing opportunities are infrequent.

5.6 Definition of Urban Villages

Figure 5 shows the 16 Urban Villages identified within the City of Oxford. These Urban Villages will be used as the basis of a more detailed assessment and analysis of the supply and demand of open space in Chapter 5.

5.7 Population and Index of Multiple Deprivation

Age Structure

The age structure of the population of Oxford reveals some interesting variations from the average for England and Wales. 25% of the population are between 20 and 29 years old compared to an average of 12.6% for England and Wales. This is largely due to the higher proportion of University students living in the city. Overall 33% of the population are between the ages of 15 and 30.

Current Population – Census 2001					
% Age 0 - 14	% Age 15-19	% Age 20 - 29	% Age 30 - 59	% Age 60 - 74	% Age 75>
15	8	25	35	10	7

Table 5.5 Analysis of Age Distribution of Population of City of Oxford (from 2001 census)

Index of Multiple Deprivation

The majority of the population are White with 87% being White British, Irish or Other White. The largest ethnic group is Asian or Asian British and comprises 4.8% of the population. 3% of the population are of Chinese extraction, with the remaining group being of Afro-Caribbean, African, Other Black or Mixed origin.

Current Population – Census 2001				
Asian	Black	Chinese	Mixed	White
5 %	3 %	3 %	2 %	87 %

Table 5.6 Analysis of Ethnicity of Population of Oxford (from 2001 census)

5.8 Quantity

The average amount of unrestricted open space per thousand population has been assessed to determine the existing level of provision for the City. The importance of comparing the quantity of provision against the demand for open space within the city to determine appropriate quantity standards is recognised.

The Companion Guide to PPG17 suggests that appropriate quantity standards should be determined from analysis of existing quantity provision in light of local community views. With this in mind, the quantity standard is based on the average provision of unrestricted open space within the city. This equates to the following:

$$(\text{Hectares of Unrestricted Open Space} / \text{Population}) \times 1000 = \text{Quantity Standard}$$

$$(771/134005) \times 1000 = 5.75\text{ha}/1000 \text{ Population}$$

Referring to the results of the telephone based public consultation in Appendix 5, when asked the question, “Do you think there are enough open spaces in your local area”, 80% of respondents felt that provision was about right. With the support of the local population, the quantity standard for Oxford is recommended to be 5.75ha / 1000 population.

Table 5.7 below shows the quantity of open space in the City of Oxford and within each Urban Village. A more detailed table of Quantity Standards can be found in Appendix C. A total of 1108.46ha of open space comprises the complete analysis dataset, of which 770.76ha has unrestricted access. This equates to 5.75ha/1000 population, of which 1.98ha/1000 population is formal provision and 3.77ha/1000 population is informal provision.

This table also identifies that there are deviations from the city average provision of unrestricted open space within all urban villages. The largest discrepancies appear in Cutteslowe, Wood Farm and Wolvercote Urban Villages which all have a high provision. However, in the case of both Wood Farm and Wolvercote, the majority of this provision is informal open space and in the case of Wolvercote, there is no formal provision at all. Conversely, Summertown and Littlemore have very low quantities of provision and in Summertown there is no access to informal open space within the urban village.

Urban Village	Population	All Open Space (ha)	Unrestricted Open Space (ha)	Ha Unrestricted / 1000 Population	Ha Formal / 1000 Population	Ha Informal / 1000 Population
Abingdon Road	4958	57.74	31.70	6.39	2.00	4.39
Barton and Sandhills	4659	15.87	9.16	1.97	1.71	0.25
Blackbird Leys	12192	38.15	27.41	2.25	1.80	0.45
Botley Rd and Binsey	3154	61.73	21.56	6.83	3.79	3.05
City Centre	12747	47.06	40.30	3.16	2.45	0.71
Cutteslowe	2641	47.10	44.66	16.91	14.89	2.02
East Oxford	20924	152.35	61.66	2.95	1.81	1.14

Urban Village	Population	All Open Space (ha)	Unrestricted Open Space (ha)	Ha Unrestricted / 1000 Population	Ha Formal / 1000 Population	Ha Informal / 1000 Population
Headington	19056	90.10	58.11	3.05	1.47	1.58
Littlemore	3197	33.47	3.19	1.00	0.57	0.43
Marston	6050	37.77	28.61	4.73	2.87	1.86
Risinghurst	2276	11.10	9.43	4.14	2.75	1.40
Rose Hill / Temple Cowley	14064	73.23	58.38	4.15	1.46	2.69
St Margaret's	9576	79.79	64.77	6.76	0.14	6.63
Summertown	7716	12.43	8.99	1.16	1.20	0.00
Wolvercote	1942	165.78	147.30	75.85	0.00	75.85
Wood Farm	8853	154.88	140.60	15.88	0.61	15.27
Not in Urban Village	-	29.90	14.91	-	-	-
CITY TOTAL	134005	1108.46	770.76	-	-	-
CITY AVERAGE	-	-	-	5.75	1.98	3.77

Table 5.7 Quantity of Open Space in Oxford

In settlements where Quantity is below the City standard, consideration should be given to the creation of new public open space. However the Accessibility and Quality of provision should also be taken into account; by upgrading existing open spaces, it may be possible to increase their carrying capacity.

Future Demand

Population projections suggest that the total population of Oxford is likely to increase by 2.8% in the period between 2001 and 2011. If the quantity of open space is not increased to take account of this increase in population, the quantity standard will be reduced resulting in a higher level of use of some existing sites which could result in further wear-and-tear and a corresponding reduction in quality. The council should therefore seek wherever possible, to provide additional open space in order to maintain the standard, either by the creation of open space or change of access arrangements. Improving the quality of existing open space in order to increase the carrying capacity of sites must also be considered. The table below outlines the additional quantity of open space required to maintain the required standard to 2011:

Current Provision of Unrestricted Open Space (Ha)	Current City Population	Projected City Population 2011	Proposed Quantity Standard (Ha Unrestricted Open Space /1000 Population)	Total Required Provision Unrestricted Open Space in 2011 (Ha)	Additional Quantity of Unrestricted Open Space to be Provided by 2011 (Ha) to maintain standard
770.76	134,005	139,299	5.75	800.97	30.21

Table 5.7 Future provision of unrestricted open space

According to the predictions, an additional 30.21ha of unrestricted open space needs to be secured by 2011. It is likely that beyond 2011, the City of Oxford will be required to accommodate a further population increase. When data becomes available as to the extent and nature of the population increase, this assessment will need to be updated to take account of the additional open space required to maintain the standard.

Oxford City Council provided population projection data up to 2011 in order to carry out an assessment of future demand. The known proposed development sites within Oxford, as contained in the Draft Local Plan 2002-2016 have also been analysed by Urban Village to evaluate the effect that this will have on Open Space provision.

Current Population – Census 2001					
% Age 0 - 14	% Age 15-19	% Age 20 - 29	% Age 30 - 59	% Age 60 - 74	% Age 75>
15	8	25	35	10	7

Projected Population – 2011					
% Age 0 - 14	% Age 15-19	% Age 20 - 29	% Age 30 - 59	% Age 60 - 74	% Age 75>
14	8	27	38	9	5

Table 5.8 Population composition change 2001 - 2011

Table 5.8 above shows how the population composition is predicted to change in the period 2001 to 2011. This table suggests that there will be no significant change in the proportion in each age group within the City.

Comparison with other Local Authorities

Table 5.9 below shows the draft quantity standards being considered by 9 other authorities. Open space provision in urban areas such as the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Lambeth is typically low, due to the high density of buildings. The standards developed for authorities in the urban fringe such as the London Borough of Croydon and Wycombe District are more comparable to the standard for Oxford.

Recent Open Space Studies	Hectares of Unrestricted Open Space per Thousand Population
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	(Draft standard) 1.6ha/1000
London Borough of Lambeth	(Draft standard) 1.6ha/1000
London Borough of Southwark	(Draft standard) 2.6ha/1000
London Borough of Sutton	(Draft standard) 2.9ha/1000
London Borough of Croydon	(Draft standard) 4.3ha/1000
Wycombe District Council	(Draft standard) 6.36ha/1000
Redditch Borough Council	(Draft standard) 7.4ha/1000
Reading Borough Council	(Draft standard) 9.7ha/1000
Chorley Borough Council	(Draft standard) 10.01ha/1000

Table 5.9 Draft Quantity Standards of other Local Authorities

5.9 Quality

An aspirational quality standard aims to raise the quality of open spaces across the city. It is felt that all open spaces should be of at least good quality and as such, an aspirational standard of 70% (Weighted Score) is recommended. Existing sites will be benchmarked against this standard throughout the analysis.

In December 2006, the methodology for calculation of the quality score was amended to take account of the function of a site. The quality score used in the analysis is now the weighted score given in the database. The 70% standard is based on the methodology for calculating quality scores as outlined above and any future assessments should follow this methodology in order to track how improvements affect quality.

The qualitative assessment of open spaces acts a basis for determining an aspirational quality standard for the parks and open spaces of Oxford. In order to provide a means of monitoring performance and benchmarking sites, the quality standard should be based on the methodology for the quality audits. The analysis above has revealed that the average quality score for audited sites in Oxford is currently 78%. However, when the function score is applied using the methodology outlined above, the average weighted score is 48% which suggests that on average less than half the features required to make a site function according to its typology are present. It is therefore suggested that Oxford aims to raise the quality of all open spaces which fall below the required standard to at least 70% (Weighted Score) which equates to good quality on the five point scale used to audit sites. Improvements should be made on the basis of improving the quality of existing features in the first instance and secondly, based on the inclusion of features required for the typology of a site. It is believed that this standard is achievable and can be met through a careful allocation of resources and external funding through developer contributions and other sources.

To gain a better understanding of how parks and open spaces are performing against one another in terms of quality, the results of the quality audit have been analysed. Existing site quality scores vary between 04% and 97%, with a mean of 78% suggesting that the quality of existing features is sufficient in most sites according to the scoring criteria. Function scores range from a minimum of 11% to a maximum of 100% with a mean score of 61%. When the function score is applied to the existing score in order to produce a weighted score, the minimum is 9% and the maximum is 93% with an average of 48%. The results of the telephone based public consultation revealed that people felt the quality of parks and open spaces in Oxford is high with a mean score of 7.7. The ten highest scoring sites with unrestricted access are shown in Table 5.10. The lowest scoring open spaces are shown in Table 5.11. Derelict and Vacant sites have been excluded from the listing.

Highest and Lowest Scoring Sites

Rank	Site ID	Name	Typology	Village	Area (ha)	Existing Score	Function Score	Weighted Score
1	440	Hunter Close Play Area	Playground	Wood Farm	0	86%	89%	76%
2	145	Headington Cemetery	Churchyard / Cemetery	Headington	2.43	90%	86%	77%
3	442	St. Barnabas Play Area	Playground	City Centre	0	90%	89%	80%
4	382	Port Meadow	Green / Common	Wolvercote	137.55	81%	100%	81%
5	177	Rose Hill Cemetery	Churchyard / Cemetery	Rose Hill / Temple Cowley	4.48	96%	86%	82%
6	443	Christchurch Meadow	Green Link	City Centre	0	84%	100%	84%
7	300	Wolvercote Village Green	Green / Common	Wolvercote	0.12	85%	100%	85%
8	150	Wolvercote Cemetery	Churchyard / Cemetery	Cuttesslowe	5.34	92%	100%	92%
9	172	SS Mary & John Monastery	Churchyard / Cemetery	East Oxford	1.12	93%	100%	93%
10	302	St Peters	Churchyard / Cemetery	Wolvercote	0.38	93%	100%	93%

Table 5.10 Highest Scoring Sites With Unrestricted Access

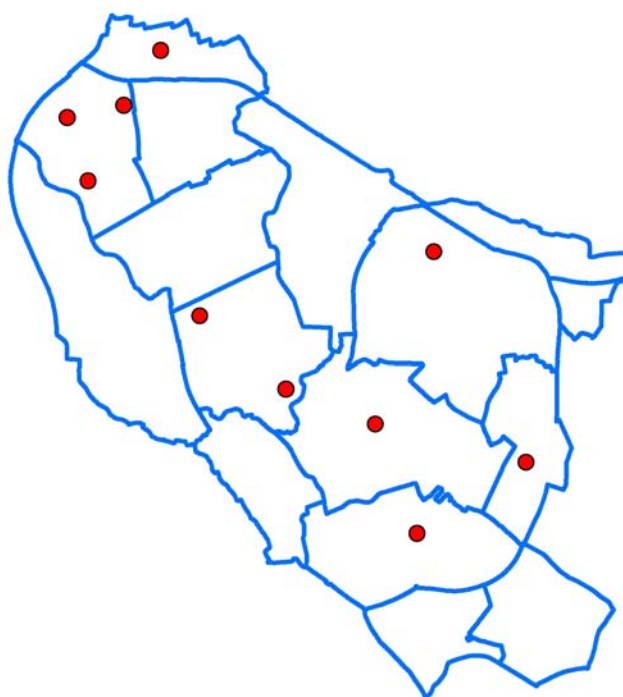


Figure 10 Distribution of Highest Scoring Sites with Unrestricted Access

Half of the highest scoring sites are Churchyard/Cemetery, two Playgrounds, two are Green/Commons and one is a Greenlink. They are concentrated in central and northern urban villages. All of the top 10 sites achieved high scores for function of over 80%. Quality of existing features was also considered to be high with all sites also achieving above 80%.

Rank	Site ID	Name	Typology	Village	Area (ha)	Existing Score	Function Score	Weighted Score
1	12	Headington View Point	Ecological	Headington	0.55	85%	11%	9%
2	236	Dale Close Open Space	Square / Garden	City Centre	0.58	77%	20%	15%
3	13	Land Adjacent to Court Place Farm Allotments	Ecological	Marston	0.83	71%	22%	16%
4	30	Land Adjacent to Oxford Canal	Ecological		6.21	73%	22%	16%
5	166	Falcon Rowing and Canoe Club	Ecological	East Oxford	0.79	73%	22%	16%
6	18	Land Adjacent to River Thames	Ecological	East Oxford	1.18	75%	22%	17%
7	201	Arlington Drive	Ecological	Marston	2.39	78%	22%	17%
8	331	Barton Village Nature Park	Ecological	Barton and Sandhills	0.84	78%	22%	17%
9	7	Long Meadow	Ecological	Marston	6.34	78%	22%	17%
10	138	Normandy Crescent Recreation Ground	Park - Local	Wood Farm	0.22	53%	33%	18%

Table 5.11 Lowest Scoring Sites With Unrestricted Access

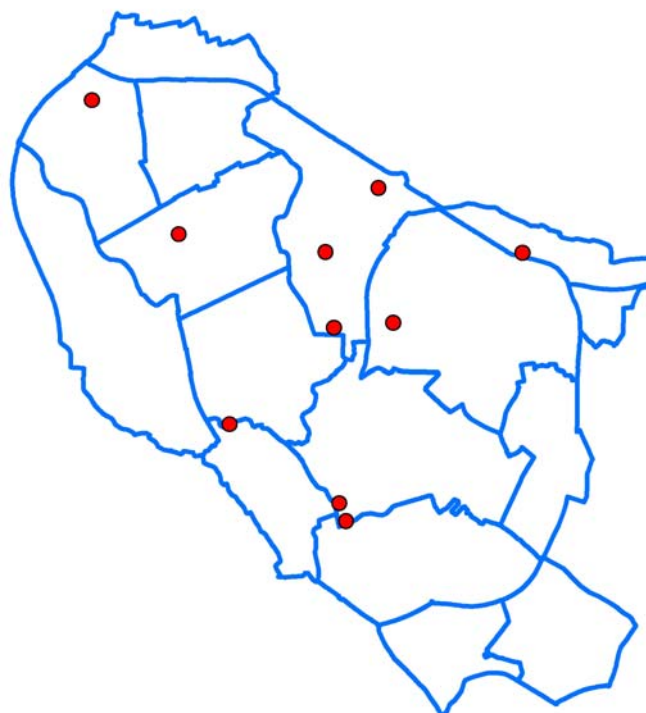


Figure 11 Distribution of Lowest Scoring Sites with Unrestricted Access

Of the 10 lowest scoring sites, 8 are ecological. This is in general due to a low function score suggesting the number of features present against the list contained in Appendix I is limited. Overall however, the quality of existing features is high with the majority receiving scores above 70%. These sites are distributed as shown in Figure 11 and are mostly concentrated northern part of the City. The public consultation carried out in 2005 however found that respondents

were generally happy with the quality of parks, open spaces and children’s play provision in the city. Respondents were asked to rate the quality of open spaces on a scale of 1 to 10, resulting in a mean score of 7.7 which equates to sufficient to good quality. When asked to suggest whether there is anything which would prevent them from using parks and open spaces, only 1% cited the quality of facilities as being an issue.

Most Vandalised Sites

As safety and security is a key consideration identified by Oxford City residents in relation to parks and open spaces, we have identified the ten sites that had the lowest scores in terms of Vandalism and Most Threatening sites derived from the personal security audit. These sites are listed in Tables 5.12 and 5.13.

Rank	Site ID	Name	Typology	Village	Area (ha)
1	248	Fisher Row Gardens	Square / Garden	City Centre	0.13
2	263	Arnold Road	Playground	East Oxford	0.05
3	158	Dynham Place	Playground	Headington	0.12
4	107	Marston Recreation Ground	Neighbourhood Park	Marston	4.36
5	193	Orchard Way Recreation Ground	Neighbourhood Park	Rosehill/Temple Cowley	3.25
6	23	Wolvercote Bathing Place	Green / Common	Wolvercote	0.28
7	247	Berwood Park	Local Park	Barton & Sandhills	1.17
8	220	Fetty Place Recreation Ground	Neighbourhood Park	Barton & Sandhills	3.00
9	242	Donnington Recreation Ground	Sports Ground	East Oxford	2.69
10	215	Quarry Hollow Play Area	Playground	Headington	0.56

Table 5.12 Most Vandalised Sites

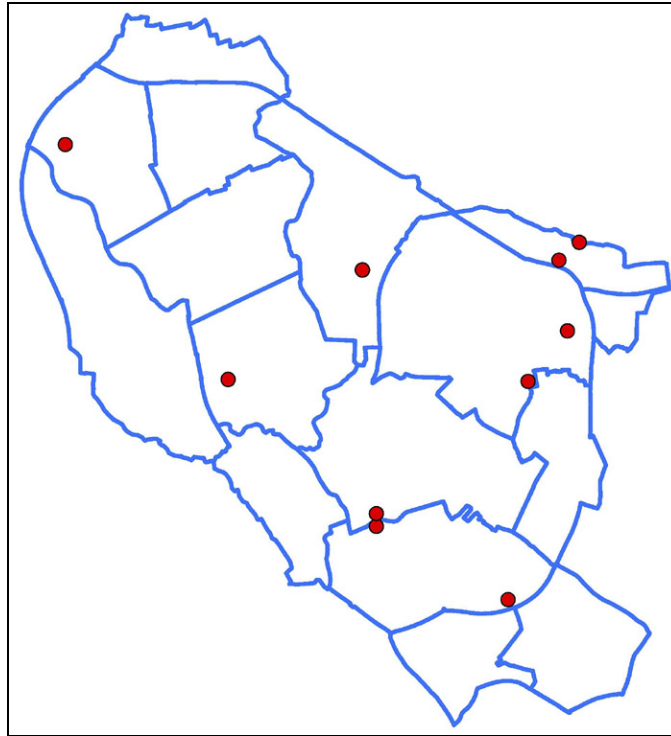


Figure 12 Distribution of Most Vandalised Sites

The most vandalised sites are mainly Local Parks and Playgrounds. The distribution of these sites is shown on Figure 12 and shows a fairly even distribution throughout the Urban Villages. Of the 10 lowest scoring sites in terms of quality, 40% of these are also the most vandalised sites. The public consultation carried out in 2005 found that 3% of respondents felt that vandalism would prevent them from visiting parks and open spaces in the city.

Most Threatening Sites

As might be expected the Most Threatening Sites tend to be those with poor surveillance, such as Ecological sites and Allotments, although there is one Playground and 2 Local Parks, which is of more concern. The distribution of these sites is shown on Figure 13 and shows a cluster of sites in Headington, with the other sites fairly well scattered across the west of the City. The recent public consultation found that 5% of respondents felt that fear of personal security would prevent them from using parks and open spaces in Oxford.

Rank	Site ID	Name	Typology	Village	Area (ha)
1	6	Peasemore Piece	Ecological	Headington	1.25
2	215	Quarry Hollow Play Area	Playground	Headington	0.56
3	212	Town Furze	Allotments	Headington	0.23

4	385	Astons Eyot	Ecological	East Oxford	14.00
5	158	Dynham Place	Playground	Headington	0.12
6	29	Trap Grounds	Ecological	St. Margaret's	3.56
7	18	Land adjacent to River Thames	Ecological	East Oxford	1.18
8	180	Binsey Lane	Allotments	Botley Road and Binsey	3.78
9	15	Tumbling Bay	Ecological	Botley Road and Binsey	0.49
10	297	Masons Road	Playground	Wood Farm	0.05

Table 5.13 Most Threatening Sites

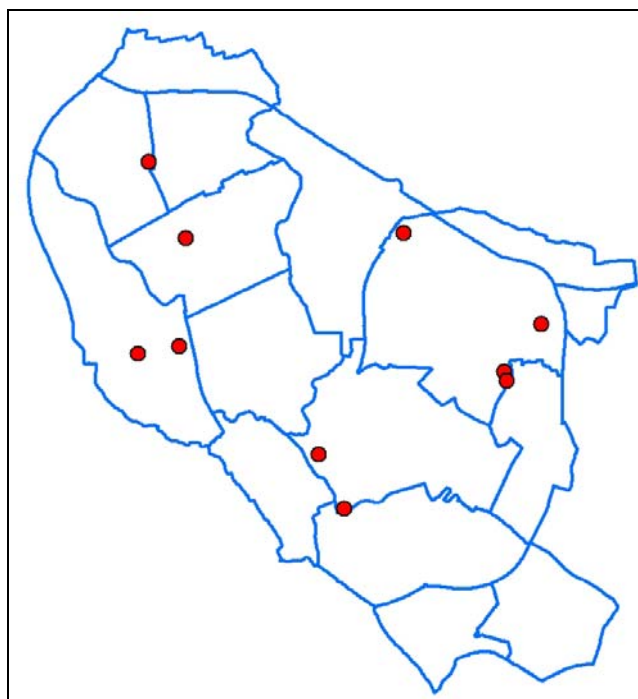


Figure 13 Distribution of Most Threatening Sites

Lowest Scoring Play Facilities

The Lowest scoring play facilities are clustered within the east of the City although this is the area with the largest number of play areas as well. Oxford City Council recognises the importance of providing quality play provision and carried out an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of play areas in Oxford in 2001. This assessment found that in some areas the standards of maintenance could be higher. It went on to suggest that although the equipment is maintained in a safe condition, peripheral items such as fences, gates, litterbins and surfaces are often in poor order as a result of inadequate budgetary provision.

The recent consultation carried out with children and youths in Oxford asked participants to score the quality of play facilities on a scale of 1 to 10. The mean score achieved from 294 responses was 5.0 which equates to poor to sufficient quality. The wider consultation achieved a mean quality score of 6.8 equating to sufficient to good quality.

Rank	Site ID	Name	Typology	Village	Area (ha)
1	158	Dynham Place	Playground	Headington	0.12
2	289	Girdlestone Grass Play Area	Playground	Headington	0.09
3	138	Normandy Crescent Recreation Ground	Local Park	Wood Farm	0.22
4	137	Ridley Road	Local Park	Wood Farm	0.36
5	215	Quarry Hollow Play Area	Playground	Headington	0.56
6	293	Pawling Road	Playground	Wood Farm	0.15
7	216	Ridgeway Road	Local Park	Risinghurst	0.61
8	263	Donnington Play Area	Playground	East Oxford	0.05
9	366	Dene Road	Playground	Wood Farm	0.27
10	192	Gillians Park	Neighbourhood Park	Blackbird Leys	3.85

Table 5.14 Lowest Scoring Play Facilities

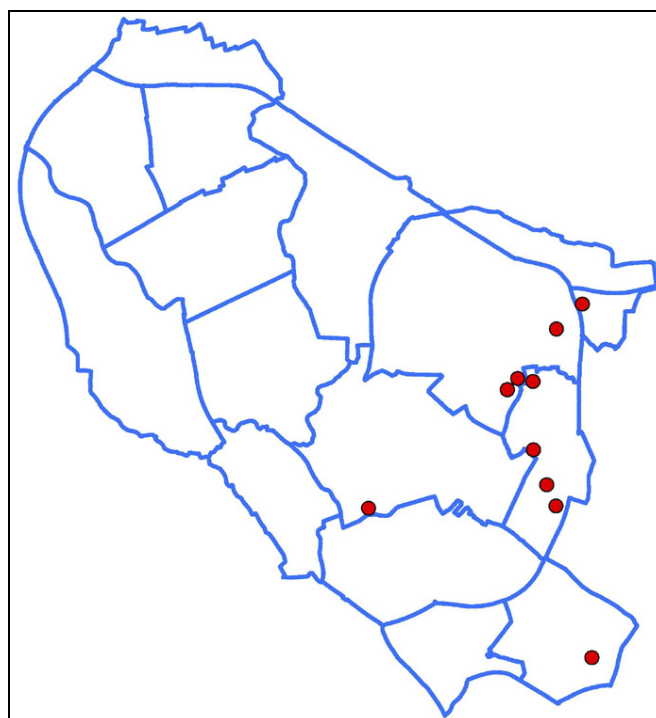


Figure 14 Distribution of Lowest Scoring Play Facilities

5.10 Accessibility

A considerable amount of public consultation has been carried out as part of this study. This revealed some useful information in determining how far people are willing to travel to sites within each level of the hierarchy. Respondents were asked to name their most frequently visited site and give their postcode. This enabled the distance walked to be calculated accurately. The public consultation revealed that people are willing to walk approximately

1900m to city sites and 750m to neighbourhood sites. An effective catchment of 400m has been used for the local level of provision based on the findings of previous studies and the guidance within the Mayor of London's 'Guide to preparing open space strategies'. Once these distances had been calculated, a factor was applied which takes into account the affect of local barriers to access such as local street patterns and the location of entrance gates to give 'as the crow flies' distances which are used to create the proximity buffers shown on the maps.

The accessibility standards are thus as follows for each level of the hierarchy:

Hierarchy	Accessibility Standards
City	1900m (1140m 'as the crow flies')
Neighbourhood	750m (450m 'as the crow flies')
Local	400m (240m 'as the crow flies')

Table 5.15 Accessibility Standards

Figure 6 shows accessibility to formal city sites. It is clear from this map that there are a number of deficiencies in terms of access to these sites within the city. Of strategic concern is the area of deficiency which spreads across the north of Marston and Headington Urban Villages and includes both Barton and Sandhills and Risinghurst Urban Villages.

Accessibility to informal city sites is shown in Figure 7. This map shows that there is very good access to informal city sites in the west and parts of the east of the city but identifies areas of deficiency in the centre of the city. Of strategic concern are Marston, Headington, Blackbird Leys and Littlemore Urban Villages. Proximity to open countryside on the fringes of the city and along the Rivers Thames and Cherwell provide some unrestricted access in these areas.

5.11 Value

The Value scores for each site, calculated as per the methodology discussed in Section 3.1.7, Chapter 3 Methodology, are analysed within each urban village assessment.

5.12 Allotments

Data supplied by each of the allotment associations in Oxford (June 2005) has been used to calculate the occupancy rates at all allotment sites. Figure 8 shows the distribution of sites by occupancy. There appears to be a good distribution of sites across the city. However, when considering the location of some sites in the west of the city such as site 175, Cripsey Meadow

Allotments, accessibility is an issue. There is currently no allotment provision within Summertown or City Centre Urban Villages although sites are available close to the boundary in neighbouring urban villages.

Four of the sites identified are derelict:

Site ID	Site Name
181	Horspath Road
180	Binsey Lane
212	Town Furze
163	Minchery Farm East

Table 5.16 Derelict Allotment Sites

There are a number of large sites with low occupancy located throughout the city. These include the following:

Site ID	Site Name	Site Size (ha)	Occupancy (%)
173	Barton Allotment	4.82	22
182	Court Place Farm	5.90	50
184	Thomson Terrace	2.27	50
191	Watlington Road	2.21	36

Table 5.17 Allotments Sites with Low Occupancy

In these four sites alone, the area of unoccupied allotments equates to 9.26ha. This area could be used to make up deficiencies in other typologies in areas of deficiency. Further investigation is required to determine whether occupancy rates on these sites are decreasing or increasing and whether occupancy rates reflect demand or many be due to other factors.

44% of all allotments are 90 – 100% occupied suggesting high demand in the surrounding area. There is a concentration of high occupancy allotments in East Oxford and Headington Urban Villages suggesting that further land may need to be sought in these areas. Again further investigation is required to determine if the demand in these areas could be satisfied in under-used allotments.

The existing quality scores are generally within a range of 50-70% and do not readily correlate with level of usage, as less-used allotments often score higher for biodiversity. Weighted scores range from 29% to 69% suggesting that additional features may be required in order for the sites to fully perform their primary purpose. In order to improve quality of allotments, reference should be made to the required and desirable features listed for the typology in Appendix I. Required features include secure boundaries, appropriate access for pedestrian, the disabled and cyclists and in the larger sites toilets are also required.

Further work is required to ascertain the demand and occupancy rates for allotments within Oxford, through an Allotment Strategy.

5.13 Open Space Provision for Students

The present standard of open space provision on Oxford University-owned land is 11.6 hectares per 1000, based on a population of 16,500 students. Oxford Brookes University provides little provision for students and these rely, for the most part, on the same open spaces that serve the general population. There are proposals to develop additional purpose-built accommodation for students; this is linked to a projected increase in student numbers.

5.14 Open Space Provision for Children and Youths

A total of 94 sites have been identified within the city which contain play facilities, the distribution of which is given in Figure 9. There are clear concentrations of play facilities in the south and east of the city. In some cases, for example in Blackbird Leys Urban Village, there are dense concentrations of play facilities within close proximity to one another. Play facilities in the west and north of the city however are few and far between.

The quantity, quality and accessibility of play facilities for children and youths in Oxford have been raised as an issue in the recent public consultation. The youth survey found that approximately half of respondents felt there was sufficient provision of children's play areas. However, only 24% of respondents felt there was sufficient provision of facilities for teenagers. The consultation of the wider population also returned some interesting results. There is significant variation in the views of people living in different parts of the city. In general, those in Littlemore and Wood Farm felt there was insufficient provision within their local area. In the case of Wood Farm, the high concentration of facilities identified in figure 8 suggests that this view might be influenced by the poor quality of facilities.

The quality of play facilities also varies significantly across the city. The average quality of existing play facilities is 71% with 20% being the lowest and 100% being the highest scores achieved.

In order to improve the supply of play provision across the city, the Council should ensure that the quality of existing play and youth facilities meets the required quality standard. In relation to accessibility, in areas of under provision the opportunity to create new provision should be explored, while in areas of over provision, such as Blackbird Leys, it will be possible to rationalise facilities.

It is also important to consider hierarchy of play provision. In general local parks should include a play facility that conforms to the NPFA LEAP standard, while neighbourhood parks should include a play facility that conforms to the NPFA NEAP standard, providing it is appropriate given the character of the open space and its proximity to sites of the same typology. City parks should also have a play facility that conforms to the NPFA NEAP standard, whilst considering the potential to provide a wider range of facilities and attractions. In order to improve the provision of play facilities within park sites, reference should be made to the required and desirable features listed in Appendix I.

5.15 Disability Discrimination

As can be seen from the table below, a significant proportion of sites scored poorly in terms of disabled access. This is of significant strategic concern, particularly in light of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, which requires service providers not to discriminate against disabled people in terms of the standard of service it provides.

% of Scoring Sites	Quality
16	Failing
23	Poor
28	Sufficient
26	Good
8	Excellent

Table 5.18 Quality of Disabled Access

Sites, which scored particularly badly in terms of existing disabled access, include the following:

Site ID	Site Name
---------	-----------

4	Lye Valley Nature
5	CS Lewis Reserve
14	Mesopotamia
23	Wolvercote Bathing Place
47	South Park
70	Oxford Road Recreation Ground
113	Hollywell Cemetery
137	Ridley Road Recreation Ground
166	Falcon Rowing and Canoe Club
176	Wolvercote (Port Meadow) Allotments
186	Trap Ground Allotments
190	Mill Lane allotments
194	Sandy Lane Sports Ground
209	Bartlemas Close Allotments
243	Wellington Square
286	Peat Moors Recreation Ground
289	Girdlestone Road Grass Play Area
293	Pawling Road
294	Titup Hall Drive Playground
362	Boundary Brook Nature Park
375	20 Pound Meadow
391	Kiln Lane Allotments

Table 5.19 Poor Scoring sites in relation to Disabled Access

Each of these sites scored just 1 out of 5 for convenience, usability, need and appropriateness of disabled access, which is a significant concern. Service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments under Section 21 of the Act. This might take the form of improvements to signage, surfacing, gates and seating.

Improving all facilities at the same time is likely to be impracticable and therefore a phased programme of modifications is recommended. With reference to signage provision, signs need to be provided which are easily understandable by all members of society including those with learning disabilities. Surfacing needs to be flat wherever possible and suitably hardwearing to allow wheelchair access at all times of the year. Gates should not impede access to those with physical disabilities and seating should be safe and accessible to all.

The function score for each typology now includes a requirement for disabled access which allows the council to quickly identify which sites are not adequately serving this section of the community.

7.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations apply to open space management within the City of Oxford as a whole. Recommendations are also given for each of the 16 Urban Villages in Chapter 6.

7.1 Vision

The Vision statement recommended below is to guide the planning and management of open space in Oxford as follows:

The Open Space of Oxford makes an important contribution to its unique character and quality. The vision is to rationalise its extent to more closely meet the needs of local communities, and improve its quality through enhancing its appearance and ecological value and providing a full range of recreational opportunities. Its use by all sections of the community should also be encouraged so as to promote social inclusion, improve health and enhance quality of life.

This Vision needs to be agreed by the City Council, its representatives and the local community in order to be achievable and sustainable.

7.2 Quantity

- The existing amount of publicly accessible open space in the City is considered to be sufficient although there is significant variation in provision amongst the Urban Villages. The recommended Quantity standard relating to the provision of unrestricted open space in Oxford is 5.75 hectares per thousand population, which is supported by the consultation undertaken which generally indicated that respondents felt that the amount of open space was 'about right'. This standard is steered towards protecting existing open space within the City and ensuring that future developments provide additional open space in order that this standard is maintained for future generations. Improving the Quantity of unrestricted open space in areas of deficiency will help to address the imbalance in provision between Urban Villages;
- Where provision falls below the required Quantity standard, improving the overall provision of unrestricted open space must be considered as the first priority;
- Where it is not possible to increase the quantity of open space, Accessibility and Quality of provision should also be considered; by upgrading existing open spaces, it may be possible to increase their carrying capacity;
- The assessment of the balance of formal and informal provision must also be taken into account when considering where new provision should be provided and what functions it should perform;
- New provision should meet the Quantity standard for the City in terms of providing for new populations;

- New provision should be to a minimum size standard of 0.4ha, to avoid creation of small, unsustainable open space. Where necessary, a mechanism to 'pool' contributions for new open space provision should be considered;

7.3 Quality and Value

- The recommended Quality standard for all types of open space in Oxford is 70% (i.e. all sites should achieve 'Good Quality'). This is based on the weighted score introduced to the database in December 2006 and defined in section 3.3.7. Any re-assessment of sites should be based on the method given for site auditing in Chapter 3 so that all Quality assessments are directly comparable. The database now calculates function scores and weighted scores automatically when quality data for existing site features is entered into the database. The Council should seek year on year improvements;
- The Urban Village assessments include an assessment of Quality and Value, which results in a policy option for each unrestricted open space. Quality is now defined by the weighted score with reference where appropriate to the quality of existing site features. These policy options are provided as a guide for determining the future of each open space. Each open space must be considered on its merits, on a site-by-site basis. Any sites which have a Low Value score should be evaluated by the Council and further consultation should be carried out in order to further define their value before any decision is made which may result in the site becoming surplus to requirements;
- Sites with High Value need to be protected through the planning system as a priority. Consideration should be given as to how sites with Average Value can be enhanced so that these too can be protected through the planning system;
- Improving site Quality should be considered a priority in areas where the quantitative provision of open space is above the required standard;
- Improving the Quality of sites elsewhere must also be considered a priority, particularly where Value is High;
- Where the quality of existing features within a site is below the required quality standard, improvements should be made to raise the quality before considering which features listed in Appendix I are missing from the site;
- The Quality database should be interrogated when considering priority improvements and should also be used as an active management tool to monitor performance;
- Priority improvement projects should be considered in light of the results of the public consultation given in Appendix D in order to ensure that the views of the local community are met. If necessary focussed consultation should be undertaken at a local level.
- City level parks should be of the highest quality and contain the broadest range of facilities within the City. In order to achieve this, the Council should produce management plans for each City site, with a view to achieving Green Flag status. External sources of funding

should also be considered for the upgrade and management of these open spaces including Heritage Lottery Funding and Big Lottery Funding.

7.4 Accessibility and Access

- The recommended Accessibility standard for unrestricted open spaces at the Local level of the hierarchy is 400m walking distance;
- The recommended Accessibility standard for unrestricted open spaces at the Neighbourhood level of the hierarchy is 750m walking distance;
- The recommended Accessibility standard for unrestricted open spaces at the City level of the hierarchy is 1900m walking distance;
- Where an issue with Accessibility at a certain level of the hierarchy has been identified, further consideration is required as to how Accessibility can be improved;
- In areas of High Deprivation, the provision of High Quality, Accessible open space can significantly enhance quality of life and promote health and social inclusion;
- Access to play facilities has been found to differ significantly across the City. In some areas, over provision is a burden on the Council in terms of maintaining safe, high quality facilities whereas, in other areas, provision is significantly below what is required. Further work is required to ascertain the correct level of provision required for each area and to develop a strategy for play;
- Ensure all local parks have a play facility that conforms to the NPFA LEAP standard, if appropriate, in terms of the character of the open space and its proximity to sites of the same typology;
- Ensure all neighbourhood parks have a play facility that conforms to the NPFA NEAP standard, if appropriate in terms of the character of the open space and its proximity to sites of the same typology;
- Ensure all City parks have a play facility that conforms to at least the NPFA NEAP standard, if appropriate in terms of the character of the open space and its proximity to sites of the same typology, and explore the potential to provide a wider range of facilities and attractions;
- In relation to youth provision, NEAP standard facilities should, by definition, provide an 'activity zone'. However the information gathered during the public consultation and open space audit should be used to determine where additional facilities should be located within the Neighbourhood and City parks;
- With specific reference to formal City level provision, the Council should consider the possibility of creating a new City park to incorporate existing sites, 182, 392, 394, 87, 86, 6 and 102. Additional land may need to be acquired in order to provide a continuous open space. This should be the subject of a comprehensive management plan aimed at improving the overall Quality to at least 70% and to provide a comprehensive range of

facilities also taking into account the recommendations of other strategies, such as the Playing Pitch Strategy;

- The City's open spaces are an important ecological resource and consideration, therefore, needs to be given as to how this Value can be protected and enhanced whilst maintaining public access. The Council should consider carrying out an additional assessment of the accessibility of natural greenspaces using English Nature's ANGSt model, along with a Countryside Access Strategy;
- Access to open space should not be discriminatory and should be safe and welcoming for all users. Where site access has been identified as an issue, this needs to be improved as a priority.

7.5 Demand

- The recent consultation with schools resulted in a poor response from schools located within the City. In order to complete the assessment of the demand for open space for school age users, further consultation is required with the remaining schools identified;
- In order to take forward the recommendations of the Urban Village assessments, it is recommended that local community groups and friends groups are consulted and where possible, involved in the design, creation and management of open space in the interests of sustainability. Where Friends Groups do not exist then such groups should be encouraged;
- Further consultation may be required with minority and 'hard to reach' groups to ensure social inclusion.

7.6 Developer Contributions

- It is recommended that the Council review policy HS29, requiring creation of open space of 10% of a site for housing developments of more than 0.4 hectares or 20 dwellings, to determine whether the threshold, in terms of numbers of dwellings, for developer contributions should be reduced for open space provision either in terms of Quantity, Quality and Accessibility;
- In settlements where Quantity exceeds the City standard, contributions should be sought for upgrading the Quality and Accessibility of existing open space;
- In settlements where Quantity is below the City standard, contributions should be sought for the creation of new public open space. However the Accessibility and Quality of provision should also be taken into account; by upgrading existing open spaces, it may be possible to increase their carrying capacity.

7.7 General

- In general, the provision of adequate signage, both within open spaces and directing people to open spaces from residential and commercial areas, is poor. It is therefore

recommended that Oxford City Council carry out a comprehensive audit of existing signage and develop a Signage Strategy for the City's open spaces and linking elements such as footpaths and cycleways .

- The assessment of Allotment provision given in Chapter 5 identifies a number of sites as having low rates of occupancy, which may reflect low demand. Further demand analysis is therefore required leading to the development of an Allotment Strategy for Oxford.
- Providing better integration between open space and the built environment can enhance the character and identity of each Urban Village and the character of the City as a whole. This can take the form of street greening including tree and shrub planting, floral displays and high quality amenity management.
- The Quantity, Quality and Accessibility of open space within the City Centre of Oxford is currently poor. Oxford is one of 7 Heritage Cities in Britain and as such, attracts a high number of tourists each year. Provision of high quality, high capacity civic spaces within easy reach of the City Centre is therefore key to maintaining Oxford as a key tourist destination in the UK.

7.7 Green Space Management

- The Council should seek to manage their green spaces in line with the suggested hierarchy of sites. In order to achieve this, the Council should develop a Parks Strategy, based on the findings and recommendations of this study.
- The council should assess the feasibility of providing a Park Ranger at all City level green spaces to ensure high quality is achieved and maintained. These Park Rangers could also be responsible for ensuring the quality of neighbourhood green spaces in surrounding Urban Villages.
- Oxford City is privileged with having a number of large, very high quality green spaces which form the top level of the hierarchy. At this present time, none of these sites has been recognised nationally for its high quality and it is therefore recommended that the Council seek to achieve Green Flag status for all City level formal greenspaces. For all sites, this will require the preparation of a management plan and the submission of an application to the Civic Trust.

Urban Village Assessments and Analysis

Key to Page Numbering

Urban Village	Numbering Code
Abingdon Road	AR
Barton and Sandhills	BS
Blackbird Leys	BL
Botley Road and Binsey	BB
City Centre	CC
Cuttesslowe	CU
East Oxford	EO
Headington	HE
Littlemore	LI
Marston	MA
Risinghurst	RI
Rose Hill and Temple Cowley	RT
St. Margaret's	SM
Summertown	SU
Wolvercote	WO
Wood Farm	WF

8. Action Plan

In order to realise the Vision for Oxford the following objectives have been established within the Action Plan:

- **Objective 1:** Maintain the City standard of 5.75ha of unrestricted open space per 1000 population;
- **Objective 2:** Maintain and enhance the green character of the City;
- **Objective 3:** Establish a prioritised programme of improvements to the quality of parks and open spaces;
- **Objective 4:** Maintain and improve access to the open space network;
- **Objective 5:** Protect and enhance biodiversity value of open spaces;
- **Objective 6:** Promote the City's Open Space and look at ways to increase usage to promote social inclusion, promote health and enhance quality of life;
- **Objective 7:** Maintain a good distribution of play facilities of good quality to meet the needs of the population;
- **Objective 8:** Monitor and review performance in meeting open space Vision.

Objective 1: Maintain the City Standard of 5.75ha of Open Space per 1000 Population					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
1.1	Review High Value / High Quality sites to ensure that they are protected by planning designations.				
1.2	Ensure all existing and proposed City and Neighborhood Parks are protected by planning policy designations.				
1.3	<p>Review Policy HS29, requiring creation of open space of 10% of a site for housing developments of more than 0.4 hectares or 20 dwellings. Review whether threshold in terms of number of dwellings, for developer contributions should be reduced, for open space provision either in terms of Quantity, Quality and Accessibility:</p> <p>In settlements where Quantity exceeds the City standard, contributions to be sought for upgrading the Quality and Accessibility of existing open space;</p> <p>In settlements where Quantity is below the City standard, set a minimum size for new open spaces and consider pooling contributions for the creation of new public open space. Amount to conform to the City Quantity standard. Accessibility and Quality of existing provision should also be taken into account, when determining whether to create new open space or improve Accessibility and Quality.</p>				
1.4	<p>Seek change of access arrangements to restricted or limited access open space in areas with poor access to open space by extending the use of joint user agreements with schools and colleges:</p> <p>In each of these areas, dual use of schools and/or change of use of Allotments or parts of allotments if proven to be surplus to requirements to be considered.</p>				
1.5	Identify sites where new pedestrian crossings or bridges/underpasses would enhance access to open space currently affected by severance lines including Shotover Country Park and Court Place Farm				
1.6	Investigate acquiring / leasing agricultural land to provide access to informal open space in areas of deficiency				

Objective 2: Maintain and enhance the green character of the City					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
2.1	Supplement existing policies to protect open space in areas of deficiency. This is particularly important in those areas where there are deficiencies in quantity or access to open space but where other factors may compensate for this such as garden size (Summertown/St Margaret's).				
2.2	Consider improvement of open space linkages and public realm improvements including street greening as means to enhance the character of urban villages especially in highly built up areas such as the City Centre.				
2.3	In order to highlight the quality of Oxford's formal greenspaces, the council should seek to achieve Green Flag Awards for all city level parks. This requires the preparation of a full management plan for each site				
2.4	Produce a parks management strategy, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess demand through parks users surveys; - Review maintenance and management arrangements for all parks; - Establish the need for permanent staff arrangements in all city parks. 				
2.5	Carry out further consultation at settlement level.				
2.6	Complete a Tree Strategy for the City.				

Objective 3: Establish a prioritised programme of improvements to the quality of parks and open spaces					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
3.1	Allocate resources to maintain and update the Database of Sites to be used as a management tool for the improvement of open spaces.				
3.2	Update quality audits on all open spaces, at least every 5 years.				
3.3	Review the aspirational quality standard every 5 years in order to achieve Best Value				
3.4	Use the site audit methodology and quality database to grade performance of sites and guide equitable improvements across the City. Aim for Year on year improvements.				
3.5	Review as a priority the sites taken from the Quality / Value matrix which are currently scoring High Value but Poor Quality and are therefore potential priority sites for Quality improvements as identified in the urban village assessment and analysis.				
3.6	Review as a priority the sites which are currently scoring Good for Quality but Low for Value and therefore may require a change of use or addition of facilities in order to enhance the Value.				
3.7	Review as priority Sites scoring Poor Quality and Low Value. Where this is the case, value must be reviewed based on further assessment. If value cannot be enhanced, consideration should be given as to whether the site is surplus to requirements.				
3.8	Review sites scoring Average Quality or Value, on a site by site basis, to determine requirements for improving Quality or Value.				

Objective 4: Maintain and improve access to the open space network;					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
4.1	Create a City Park in the Court Place Farm area incorporating sites 182, 392, 394, 87, 86, 6 and 102. This may require acquiring additional land or improving land already in the ownership of the council.				
4.2	Littlemore Urban Village currently has the lowest provision of unrestricted open space. The creation of a new neighborhood level park incorporating existing site 103 and part of allotment site 184 would significantly improve access in this area.				
4.3	Opportunities for the provision of high quality / high capacity civic spaces within the city centre to enhance character and provide tourism opportunities should be considered. Access to existing open spaces within proximity to the city centre also requires improvement.				
4.4	Develop an allotment strategy informed by an analysis of demand in order to determine the required level of provision and access				

Objective 5: Protect and enhance biodiversity value of open spaces					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
5.1	Develop Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan and seek to enhance biodiversity value of sites through changes to management regimes etc where appropriate. Seek to reinforce open space linkages to enhance corridors for wildlife.				
5.2	Undertake Countryside Access Strategy to improve quality and access to natural green space, which includes an assessment of natural green space standards (ANGSt).				

Objective 6: Promote the City's Open Space and look at ways to increase usage					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
6.1	Carry out further park user surveys to supplement demand analysis to establish clearer patterns of use of open space both across the City and within Urban Villages. Address issues raised regarding barriers to access in priority improvement projects.				
6.2	Repeat the surveys every two years.				
6.3	Increase usage of open space to serve needs of community: a) Support and improve communication within and between Friends/Local Groups b) Encourage and facilitate volunteer involvement in open space management c) Increase number and variety of events in open spaces d) Increase educational information and use in open spaces e) Ensure facilities and events in open spaces are accessible to all f) Review and enhance publicity associated with open spaces such as interpretation information, leaflets, trails, signage etc.				
6.4	Improve activities for 8-15 year olds within Parks and open space.				
6.5	For safety and security and contact with general public, visitors and tourists, in City parks, provide site dedicated park wardens or rangers.				

Objective 7: Maintain a good distribution of play facilities of good quality to meet needs of population					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
7.1	Develop play strategy: Review distribution of play facilities for all age groups and provide good quality facilities related to need. Rationalise play areas where over-provision, to provide less but better quality facilities with higher capacities. Link play provision to hierarchy of open space e.g. LEAPs in Local Parks and NEAPs in Neighbourhood Parks, where appropriate.				
7.2	Review policy HS30 for provision of new play areas by developers requiring creation of suitable play space in developments of more than 0.4 hectares or 20 dwellings. Review whether more appropriate to require improvements to Quality and Accessibility of existing play spaces rather than creating many new, small play areas and to have lower threshold where such contributions will be required.				
7.3	Provide better distribution of facilities for 12-18 year olds.				

Objective 8: Monitor and review performance in meeting open space Vision					
<i>Ref No</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource</i>	<i>Timescale</i>
8.1	In line with carrying out quality audits carry out quantity, accessibility and value assessments in order to update the Green Space Study every 5 years.				

Appendices

- Appendix A** Oxford Open Spaces
- Appendix B** Quality and Value Analysis
- Appendix C** Urban Village Open Space Provision and Standards
- Appendix D** Consultation
- Appendix E** Typology
- Appendix F** Audit Form
- Appendix G** Field Survey Data – Terminology
- Appendix H** Bibliography