

Undertaking the Study

Introduction

- 2.1 PPG17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreational facilities (paragraph 1). It encourages local authorities to proactively plan for the future delivery of appropriate open space, sport and leisure facilities.
- 2.2 Paragraph 7 states that “local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas”. PPG17 sets out the Government’s belief that national standards are inappropriate, as they do not take into account the demographics of an area, the specific needs of residents and the extent of built development. PPG17 therefore places significant emphasis on meeting local needs and expectations and adapting provision to the local context.
- 2.3 The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:
- assessing needs and opportunities
 - undertaking audits of open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - setting local standards
 - maintaining an adequate supply of open space
 - planning for new open space.
- 2.4 The Companion Guide recommends a process that should be followed and outlines the key objectives of an open space, sport and recreation needs assessment.
- 2.5 The Companion Guide indicates that the four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:
- (i) understanding that local needs will vary even within local authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
 - (ii) recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
 - (iii) considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
 - (iv) taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment.
- 2.6 This PPG17 study has been undertaken following the recommended process and guides the effective provision of open spaces across Bromsgrove District. It recommends local standards based on analysis of current provision and local community need. The application of the recommended local standards highlights key areas of deficiency and priorities for enhancement.



2.7 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each local authority will need to be adopted as each area has different structures and characteristics. The process set out in PPG17 has therefore been adopted to ensure that the needs and expectations of residents in Bromsgrove are adequately addressed, particularly in light of the rural characteristics of the area and the ageing population.

Types of open space

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

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

2.10 PPG17 identifies ten typologies, including nine types of green space and one category of urban open space. It states that when preparing assessments of needs and audits of existing open space and recreation facilities, local authorities should use these typologies, or variations of them.

2.11 Table 2.1 below sets out the types of open space included within this study in Bromsgrove. All open spaces falling into the categories below are included within this assessment with the exception of natural and semi natural open spaces. Only natural open spaces falling within settlement boundaries are included.

2.12 The significance of sites outside of settlement boundaries, alongside areas of nearby natural countryside will be considered throughout this report. This is particularly important in light of the nature of many of the rural settlements in the District where there may be limited dedicated provision within the boundaries of the settlement but extensive areas of countryside in close proximity to the home. In some instances, increasing access to existing open space will be as or more important than the development of new spaces.

Table 2.1 – Typologies of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Bromsgrove

Type	Definition	Primary purpose
Parks and gardens	Includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks. Parks usually contain a variety of facilities, and may have one of more of the other types of open space within them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal recreation • community events.
Natural and semi-natural green spaces	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wildlife conservation • biodiversity • environmental education and awareness.

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Type	Definition	Primary purpose
Amenity green space	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal activities close to home or work children's play enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Provision for children	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below the age of 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces containing equipped play facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> children's play.
Provision for young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose) as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teenage shelters skateboard parks BMX tracks Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> activities or meeting places for young people.
Outdoor sports facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> outdoor sports pitches tennis courts and bowls greens golf courses athletics tracks playing fields (including school playing fields). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilities for formal sports participation.
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. Private gardens are not included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.
Cemeteries & churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards, including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> burial of the dead quiet contemplation.

Type	Definition	Primary purpose
Green corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> walking, cycling or horse riding leisure purposes or travel opportunities for wildlife migration.
Civic spaces	Hard surfaced areas usually located within town centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community events setting for civic buildings.

2.13 The Playing Pitch Strategy considers provision for football, cricket, rugby and hockey. Full details can be found in section 14.

The geographical area

2.14 Analysis of the open space, sport and recreation facilities across the District has been undertaken both District wide and also by five areas across the local authority area (referred to as analysis areas in this report). These areas were discussed and agreed with the Council at the outset of the project and are made up by the amalgamation of wards.

2.15 The use of analysis areas allows examination of data at a more detailed local level, enabling an understanding of the geographical distribution of open spaces and ensuring that differences in perception and opinion of open spaces across the District are understood.

2.16 Although these analysis areas have been used to guide interpretation, the application of local standards will enable the identification of priorities at neighbourhood level where appropriate.

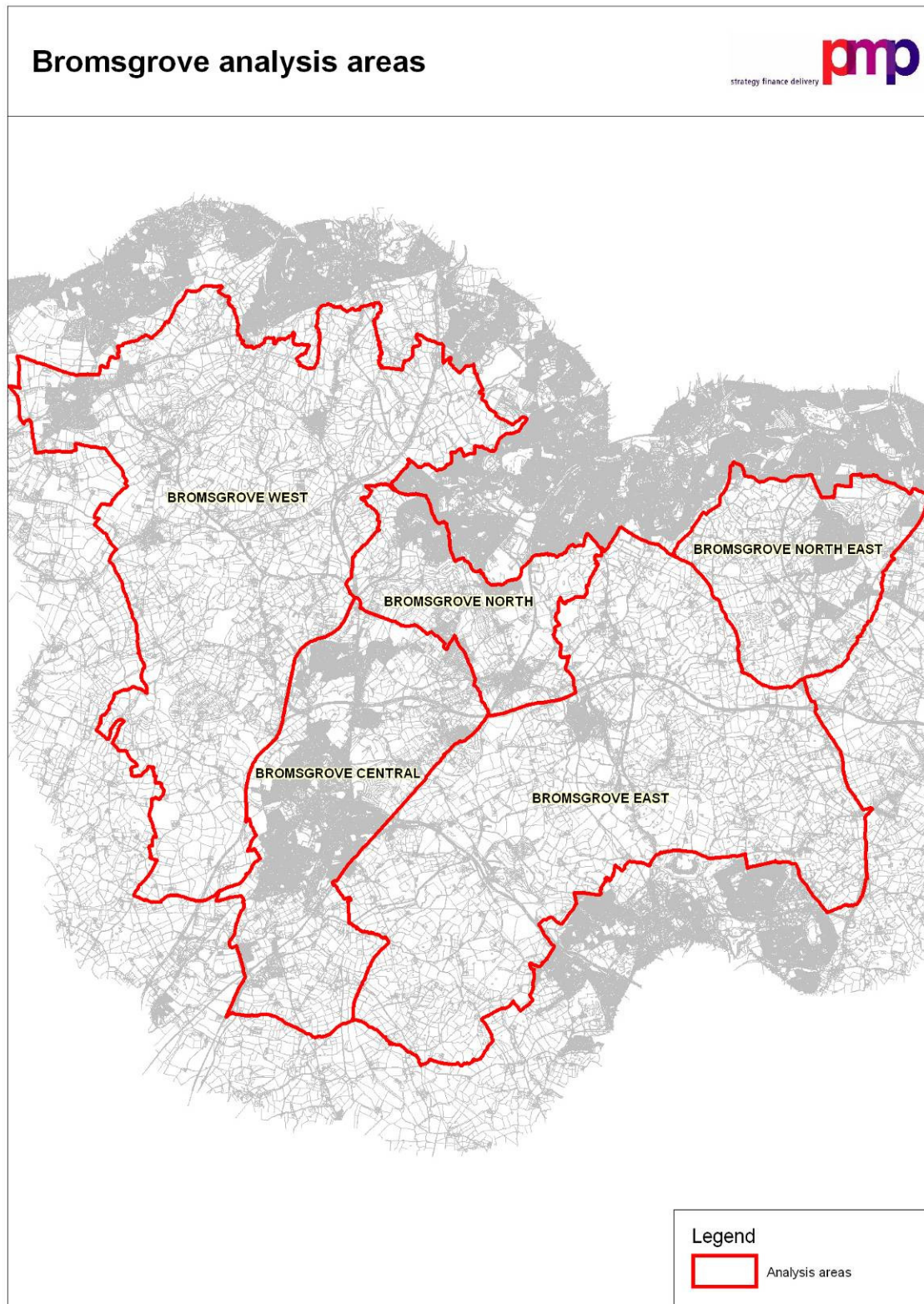
2.17 Table 2.2 details the geographical areas that have been used for analysis and interpretation during this study.

Table 2.2 – Analysis areas in Bromsgrove

Area name	Population	Wards included
Bromsgrove North	11,247	Hillside, Waseley and Beacon
Bromsgrove West	12,723	Furlongs, Hagley, Woodvale and Uffdown
Bromsgrove East	9,305	Tardebigge and Alvechurch
Bromsgrove North East	11,377	Wythall South, Drakes Cross and Walkers Heath and Hollywood and Majors Green
Bromsgrove Central	43,185	Stoke Prior, Stoke Heath, Charford, Sidemoor, Slideslow, Whitford, St Johns, Norton, Linthurst, Marlbrook and Catshill

2.18 A map of the geographical areas used for analysis in this report can be found overleaf (Map 2.1).

Map 2.1 – Geographical areas in Bromsgrove



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PPG 17 – Five - step process

- 2.19 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a logical five-step process for undertaking a local assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities. This process was followed in this assessment and although presented as a linear process below, in reality, steps 1 and 2 were undertaken simultaneously. Steps 1 – 5 have been undertaken by PMP.
- 2.20 The five step process is as follows:
- Step 1 – identifying local needs
 - Step 2 – auditing local provision
 - Step 3 – setting provision standards
 - Step 4 – applying provision standards
 - Step 5 – drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.

Our process

- 2.21 The following paragraphs detail the key tasks undertaken as part of each of the key stages of PPG17.

Step 1 - Identifying local needs

- 2.22 PPG17 states that consultation with the local community is essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision.
- 2.23 The assessment of needs should contribute to the production of local standards that reflect the type and amount of open space, sport and recreation facilities that local communities want. It is essential that the local standards set are directly reflective of local needs and expectations. The study was advertised on the Council website, in order to raise awareness of the study.
- 2.24 It is important to obtain a statistical evidence base of local needs as well as carrying out a series of subjective consultations to test the key themes emerging from the statistical evidence base.
- 2.25 A series of local consultations were therefore carried out across Bromsgrove including:
- household questionnaires
 - neighbourhood ‘drop in’ sessions
 - internet survey for children and young people
 - consultation with external agencies
 - one-to-one consultations with Council officers
 - Council officer survey
 - Parish Council questionnaire
 - workshops with Community Activity Network, sports clubs, older residents, children and young people and allotment users.

- 2.26 Background is provided on each of the key elements of the consultation in the paragraphs that follow. Copies of all surveys are provided in Appendix B.

Household survey

- 2.27 The household survey provides an opportunity for residents to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space provision as well as identifying their aspirations for future provision.
- 2.28 5000 questionnaires were distributed to households across the District to capture the views of both users and non-users of open spaces. Residents were randomly selected using the electoral register.
- 2.29 Random distribution of questionnaires to a geographically representative sample (based on the populations living in each of the identified analysis areas) of households ensures that representatives from all age groups, ethnic groups and gender were given the opportunity to participate. In order to promote an even response rate across ages and gender, residents with the next birthday in each household were asked to complete the questionnaire.
- 2.30 481 postal surveys were returned, providing a statistically sound sample that can be used to assume responses for the remaining population across the District. Obtaining more than 400 responses means that the results are accurate to +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval.

Neighbourhood ‘drop in’ sessions

- 2.31 Neighbourhood ‘drop in’ sessions were held in five locations within Bromsgrove, specifically:
- Bromsgrove Customer Service Centre
 - Hagley Library
 - Wythall Library
 - Rubery Library
 - Alvechurch Library.
- 2.32 These sessions were advertised to the public via drop in posters, the Council’s website and in the Redditch Standard and Bromsgrove Standard newspapers (Appendix I). These sessions were intended to provide an informal opportunity for residents to give their views on open space, sport and recreation issues. Many residents passing by also took the time to discuss their views. The sessions were well attended and the key issues arising from discussions have fed directly into the recommended local standards.

Internet survey for children and young people

- 2.33 Consultation with young people and children is traditionally difficult, however it is important to understand the views of this large sector of the community. Children and young people are important users of open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- 2.34 To reflect the importance of children and young people, two questionnaires were therefore posted on the internet. One questionnaire was intended for pupils of a primary school age and one for young people of secondary school age. All schools within the Council boundaries were notified of the website address and asked to encourage their pupils to complete the questionnaires.

- 2.35 The level of response to the surveys was average with 314 responses received in total.
- 2.36 The information obtained through the distribution of these questionnaires has been instrumental in the development of the local standards and ensures that the views of young people and children are represented.

External agencies questionnaire

- 2.37 Questionnaires were distributed to key regional and local agencies with the aim of obtaining their views and ensuring that local standards and emerging priorities dovetail with the work of other agencies. These questionnaires were distributed electronically and by post.

Internal council officers

- 2.38 Internal consultations with Council officers were undertaken in order to understand the work, focus and key priorities of the Council and to provide a detailed strategic and practical overview. An internet survey was also distributed to Council officers, examining their views on open space, sport and recreation facilities from their perspective as residents and people who work within the District. This survey received 16 responses.

Parish Council and Elected Members Questionnaires

- 2.39 In recognition of the important role that Parish Councils and Elected Members play in the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities in Bromsgrove, a questionnaire was distributed to all Parish Councils and Elected Members in the District in order to gain an understanding of localised issues and priorities. Questionnaires explored issues including the perceived quality and quantity of facilities in the area and issues experienced with existing facilities and/or access to facilities. This survey received 30 responses.

Sports clubs survey

- 2.40 Questionnaires were distributed to sports clubs to gain views from current users on sports facilities in the district. A good level of response was received, identifying specific issues relating sports facilities in Bromsgrove. The distribution of questionnaires to sports clubs was a particularly important component of the Playing Pitch Strategy. 41 responses were received in total and those clubs that did not respond were followed up with postcard reminders and telephone calls.

User group workshops

- 2.41 Workshops were undertaken with the following local groups:
- sports clubs
 - allotment users
 - older residents
 - young people
 - BECAN.

- 2.42 Workshops were held at the Council Chambers with the aim of identifying key issues for different types of users of open space, sport and recreation facilities. The discussion sessions explored a number of issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space, sport and recreation facilities in Bromsgrove.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

- 2.43 PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space and sport and recreation, irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access. The logic for this is that all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs. Audits should also include all primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions. Types of open space, sport and recreation facilities that are excluded from the audit are: grass verges, private farm land, lakes / rivers/ pools and densely wooded areas.
- 2.44 The Council compiled a detailed audit of provision of open space across the District. This audit was then verified and refined by PMP in order to ensure that only those sites falling within the PPG17 typologies were identified and that no sites were omitted. In line with PPG17, grass verges and farmland were excluded from consideration, as well as sites located outside of settlement boundaries.
- 2.45 307 sites were identified during the audit. Each site was classified into a relevant typology. The multi functionality of some types of open space presents a challenge in the audit. In order to address these issues, all spaces have been classified by their primary purpose. This ensures that all spaces are counted only once, but does not negate the need to consider the relationships between different types of open space as part of the study.
- 2.46 Additionally, some types of open space are located within a larger space. Where this occurs and the primary purpose is clearly defined, these sites are considered to be two separate sites and have been subdivided. A good example is the location of a children's play area within a park. It is important that these sites are considered separately as they have different roles and fall into different typologies, although it is recognised that the collocation of sites of many different typologies may in itself be an attraction to local residents.
- 2.47 Following completion of the desk based audit, site assessments were carried out at each site.
- 2.48 Site assessments were undertaken using a matrix, enabling comparisons both between sites in the same typology and across typologies. For consistency purposes, all sites were assessed by the same person. Sites were rated against the following categories:
- accessibility
 - quality
 - wider benefits.
- 2.49 The site assessment process resulted in an overall quality and accessibility score for each site in addition to ratings for each individual factor. A full list of sites and site assessment scores can be found in Appendix C. The site assessment matrix can be found in Appendix D.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and applying provision standards

- 2.50 PPG17 states that open space standards should be set locally and recommends that national standards should not be used to assess local circumstances.
- 2.51 PPG17 recommends that local authorities use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (stage 1) to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities. In order to ensure that the recommended local standards are directly representative of local needs in Bromsgrove, PMP has derived the standards directly from the result of other consultations.
- 2.52 PPG17 recommends that local standards should include:
- quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed)
 - a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities)
 - accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).
- 2.53 Table 2.3 below briefly summarises the process that has been adopted for setting local standards.

Table 2.3 – The setting standards process

Process Stage	Methodology
National standards	Analysis of any existing national standards for each typology. These are usually provided by national organisations eg Fields in Trust for playing pitches. It is important to ensure that national standards are taken into account as part of determination of local standards.
Existing local standards	Consideration of existing local standards for each typology that are currently applied by the Council. These include standards set out in the Local Plan and in other adopted strategies.
Current provision (quantity standards only)	Assessment of the current quantity of provision within the local authority area as a whole and within each of the analysis areas.
Consultation (household survey)	Consideration of the findings of the household survey with regards the provision of each type of open space. This analysis provides a robust indication (at the District wide 95% confidence level) of public perception of the existing provision and aspirations for future provision of all different types of open spaces.
Consultation comments	Results from qualitative consultations(eg sports club survey, drop in sessions, children and young people’s surveys and workshops) are used to test the key themes emerging from the statistical evidence base and to determine issues of priority importance to residents. These feed in to the standards set.
PMP recommendation	PMP recommendation of a local standard. The standard is based on an assessment of the local community need and will be in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quantity – x hectares per 1000 population

Process Stage	Methodology
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility – a distance threshold in metres • quality – a list of essential and desirable features.
PMP justification	Full justifications for the recommended local standard based on qualitative and quantitative consultations are provided for each typology.

2.54 A brief explanation of the purpose of setting each type of standard is set out below.

Quantity

2.55 The open space audit gives an understanding of the quantity of provision for each type of open space in each area of the District. This level of detail enables the calculation of the amount of each type of open space per 1,000 population. This information is provided within typology specific sections 4-13.

2.56 The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:

- provide an understanding of the adequacy of existing provision for each type of open space in the District
- establish areas of the District suffering from deficiency of provision of each type of open space
- provide a guide to developers as to the amount of open space expected in conjunction with new development.

2.57 This assessment measures the quantity of provision against the current population of 87,837. This figure was taken from the 2001 Census.

2.58 Consideration is also given to the likely implications of future population growth up to 2026 using population projections developed by the Office of National Statistics. The likely implications for new housing growth through the Regional Spatial Strategy can also be evaluated by applying standards once specific locations for development are known.

2.59 In order to ensure that any standards set are reflective of local community needs and opinions, key themes emerging from consultations in each analysis area relating to the quantity of each type are analysed. The key issues for each type of open space are assessed within sections 4 – 13. Local standards are subsequently set, taking into account the current level of provision compared to the perceived community need.

2.60 The degree to which the quantity standard represents an increase on current provision has been calculated directly from the levels of satisfaction displayed in the household survey, but also taking into account perceptions evident during other consultations. Standards have been based on the following categorisation:

- 50% or more residents satisfied – standard remains at current level
- 40% or more residents satisfied – increase of local standard by 2%
- 30% or more residents satisfied – increase of local standard by 5%

- 20% or more residents satisfied – increase of local standard by 10%
- 10% or more residents satisfied – increase of local standard by 15%.

2.61 Facilities for children and young people have been considered separately in light of priorities set out in other strategies. Outdoor sports facilities have also been considered separately due to the range of facilities included within this typology.

Accessibility

2.62 Accessibility is a key criteria for open space sites. Without good access, the provision of good quality open space would be of limited value. The overall aim of accessibility standards is to identify:

- how accessible sites are
- how far people are willing to travel to reach open space
- areas of the District that are deficient in provision (identified through the application of local standards).

2.63 Similar to quantity standards, accessibility standards should be derived from an understanding of community views, particularly with regards to the maximum distance that members of the public are willing to travel.

2.64 Distance thresholds (ie the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport) are a very useful planning tool especially when used in association with a Geographic Information System (GIS). PPG17 suggests that open spaces should be accessible by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. Access is a particularly pertinent issue in the rural areas of Bromsgrove.

2.65 Although accessibility catchments may show that residents have access to a certain type of open space, it is important to consider natural barriers to access (such as roads, railway lines and water).

Quality

2.66 The quality and value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. Two examples of this are:

- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Usage is therefore restricted and as a result the value of the site to the public is limited
- a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have significant wider benefits such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a high value despite qualitative issues.

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

- the geographical areas of the District
- specific types of open space.

- 2.68 The quality standards set as part of the study are intended to provide information on the key features of open space that are important to local residents. Sites are then assessed and given a score for a range of factors including:
- cleanliness and maintenance
 - security and safety
 - vegetation
 - ancillary accommodation.
- 2.69 Each element of quality is rated on a scale of very good (5 points) to poor (1 point) and a total percentage score is then calculated. Where an element of provision (such as toilets) is considered to be not applicable, this will not be taken into account in the calculation of the percentage score.
- 2.70 These scores are then weighted (multiplied either by 4, 3, 2 or 1) to reflect the importance of each factor for each type of open space. These weightings are derived from the findings of the consultation. Factors that are given higher weightings are perceived to be the most important and to have the largest impact on the quality of the site according to local residents. Factors with a higher weighting will therefore influence the total score more than those with lower weightings.
- 2.71 Full details of the linkages between the quality assessments and the site visits undertaken can be found in Appendix G.
- 2.72 Following the calculation of the total scores achieved during site visits, sites can then be benchmarked against each other. The application of the process for each typology can be found in typology specific sections 4 – 13.

Step 5 – Drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities

- 2.73 The application of the local standards enables the identification of deficiencies in terms of accessibility, quality and quantity and also enables analysis of the spatial distribution of unmet need.
- 2.74 Based on this analysis, strategic options can be devised considering space to be protected, existing provision to be enhanced, opportunities for relocation and proposals for new provision.
- 2.75 The recommendations contained within the report are based on the findings of the application of the local standards for each typology. An example is provided below:

PG1	Given the low number of sites within the district, all park and garden sites should be afforded protection from development.
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- 2.76 The recommendations and key issues raised will inform the direction of the local development framework as well as other strategy documents across Bromsgrove.