

Civic Spaces

Definition

- 12.1 Civic spaces include civic and market squares and other hard surfaced community areas designed for pedestrians. The primary purpose of civic spaces is the provision of a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.

The Burma Star Association War Memorial, Bromsgrove



Strategic context and consultation

- 12.2 Civic spaces can be important areas of open space in town centres. They can also provide a focal point for community interaction in a village settlement.
- 12.3 PPG 17 states that “the purpose of civic spaces, mainly in town and city centres, is to provide a setting for civic buildings, and opportunities for open air markets, demonstrations and civic events. They are normally provided on an opportunistic and urban design led basis. Accordingly it is for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their town and city centre areas”.
- 12.4 A small minority of residents indicate they use civic spaces more frequently than any other open space in Bromsgrove. However, 18% of residents state they use civic spaces more than once a week.
- 12.5 There are no definitive national or local standards for civic spaces. However, the Bromsgrove Local Plan does make references to the provision of public open space.
- 12.6 Policy RAT4 covers the retention of open space, stating that the Council will seek to retain and enhance all public and privately owned open space of recreational and amenity value.
- 12.7 Civic spaces could be considered to be a form of public open space.

Current Provision

- 12.8 Civic spaces within Bromsgrove DC include:
- Woodbank Drive War Memorial (ID 50)
 - Wythall War Memorial (ID 183)
 - Burma Garden of Remembrance (ID 427)
- 12.9 Additionally, the pedestrianised area within Bromsgrove Town Centre is of particular importance to both residents and visitors to the district. This area acts as the focal point of the town.
- 12.10 52% of respondents to the household survey state that the provision of civic spaces is insufficient. 27% of residents feel provision is sufficient. Findings within the individual analysis areas are consistent with the district wide results, with the majority of residents in each analysis area stating that provision is insufficient.
- 12.11 Analysis of the more qualitative elements of the household survey indicated that people value the use of civic spaces as meeting places and feel that they provide a 'sense of belonging' to a place.

Setting a Quantity standard

- 12.12 PPG17 suggests that it is not realistic to set a quantity standard for civic spaces in light of their specialist nature.
- 12.13 Therefore **no provision standard** has been set. However, PPG17 adds that it is desirable for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their town and city centres. The design and planning of new neighbourhoods in Bromsgrove should take into account the demand for new civic spaces from local residents and ensure that such spaces are incorporated within master plans. This will be particularly important in the town centres and in particular with regards the plans for the regeneration of Bromsgrove Town Centre through the Area Action Plan.

Quality standard

- 12.14 The quality of each site has been assessed through a detailed site visit and the completion of a detailed pro forma described in Section 2. It is important to note that the quality score represents a snapshot in time and records only the quality of the site at the time of the site visit.
- 12.15 The key issues emerging from the site assessments and local consultations relating to the quantity of provision of civic spaces include:
- civic spaces are perceived to be of average quality by 48% of respondents to the household survey. 24% of respondents view their quality to be poor and 18% good
 - the quality of civic spaces in Bromsgrove is excellent, with the average quality score of a site being 85% according to the site assessments.
- 12.16 Residents highlighted that cleanliness and maintenance, alongside perceived safety should be particularly important considerations in the development of new civic spaces. Infrastructure (ie seats and bins) should also be provided.

Accessibility

- 12.17 Site specific accessibility issues were analysed as part of the programme of site visits and information and signage, transport and general issues were also assessed.
- 12.18 Site assessment ratings show that all of the civic spaces are good in terms of transport links, general site access and information and signage. Access to these sites is often facilitated by their primary location within the key town centres.

Setting an Accessibility Standard

- 12.19 PPG17 states that there is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such a typology as the provision of civic spaces will not be appropriate in every environment and cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation.
- 12.20 Appropriate access to sites is however paramount in maximising usage. Responses to the household questionnaire showed that more people would expect to walk to civic spaces as opposed to drive (59% walk compared to 34% drive). While this is not always possible, it reinforces the value of promoting green linkages to sites from local residential areas.

Summary

- 12.21 Local consultation undertaken highlights the aesthetic benefits civic spaces offer. Civic spaces function as a key meeting place within the town centres.
- 12.22 The nature of this typology means that they are very specific to their locality. Civic spaces are often located within town centres and therefore increasing access to this typology will be important particularly through the creation of green linkages to local neighbourhoods. Demand for civic spaces should be considered in the development of new neighbourhoods.
- 12.23 Although a quality standard has not been set for civic spaces, the council should seek to maintain and enhance the quality of civic spaces in Bromsgrove.