

Amenity Green Space

Introduction and definition

- 6.1 This type of open space is most commonly found in residential areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and green spaces in and around housing, with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work. Amenity green space is also often used for landscaping purposes.
- 6.2 Amenity green space is also often found in villages, in the form of village greens. Amenity green spaces can have an overlapping function with parks and gardens and natural areas and also provide informal opportunities for children's play where there are no other facilities. Amenity spaces are one of the most local types of open space. It is important therefore to consider the provision of amenity green spaces in the context of other types of open space.
- 6.3 There is much research relating to the links between the provision of high quality open space and a reduction in crime. Given that amenity space is perhaps the most local type of open space provided, high quality space will be essential in order to discourage misuse and encourage a culture of respect.
- 6.4 This section relates to amenity green spaces and sets out the strategic context, key findings of the consultations and recommended local standards. The standards are then applied to evaluate the adequacy of the existing amenity green space and the associated demand for these spaces. Standards are also applied in the context of other open spaces with overlapping functions.
- 6.5 The key issues for amenity spaces arising from a review of strategic documents are set out in Table 6.1 overleaf.

Table 6.1 – Strategic context – regional and local

Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
Bromsgrove Local Plan	<p>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.</p> <p>Policy RAT6 refers to open space within housing developments and identifies that a housing development of over 0.4 hectares or above will be required to meet the minimum standard for children’s play space. Other types of open space should relate to the scale of the development.</p>	<p>This study will provide evidence for the protection of open spaces and the creation of new sites in line with development.</p>
Blueprint for Bromsgrove - a Local Agenda 21 Action Plan for the District	<p>An objective of the plan is to identify brownfield sites with potential amenity value.</p>	<p>This study will identify surpluses and deficiencies of open space and will provide evidence to inform decisions on where new amenity spaces may be of benefit to the local community.</p>

Consultation – Assessing Local Needs

6.6 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted that:

- a lack of discussion regarding amenity green space was evident throughout consultation. However, residents did identify the benefits of amenity green space, with this type of open space perceived to be particularly important in the urban areas of the district
- only 1% of residents use amenity green space more often than any other open space in Bromsgrove (1%). However, 31% of residents use this type of open space more than once a week highlighting that these open spaces are used regularly and are valuable to the local community
- the need for a balance between the quantity and quality of amenity green space was reinforced by residents. Many residents highlighted that poor quality amenity green space is of little value to the community and offers little function.

Existing provision - Quantity

6.7 The quantity of amenity green space in Bromsgrove is summarised in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2 – Provision of amenity green space across Bromsgrove

Analysis areas	Current provision	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	LDF population (2026)	Provision per 1000 population (2026)
Bromsgrove North	0.90	8	0.06	0.16	12,575	0.072
Bromsgrove West	1.22	9	0.02	0.34	14,154	0.086
Bromsgrove East	5.22	6	0.05	2.13	10,429	0.501
Bromsgrove North East	10.44	7	0.10	9.50	12,706	0.822
Bromsgrove Central	16.96	47	0.02	2.33	48,192	0.352
Overall	34.74	77	0.02	9.50	98,056	0.354

6.8 The key issues emerging from Table 6.2 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of amenity green space across the District are as follows:

- respondents to the household survey demonstrated an overall dissatisfaction with the current provision of amenity green space, with 56% of residents indicating that the quantity is insufficient compared to 32% that stated provision was sufficient
- sites are unevenly distributed across the district with the majority of sites located in Bromsgrove Central (47). Residents in the urban area of the District highlighted that amenity space is of particular value to them
- findings within the individual analysis areas mirror the overall results, with the majority of respondents in each area indicating provision is insufficient. The greatest level of satisfaction with the provision of amenity green space was evident within Bromsgrove North, where 43% of residents stated provision was sufficient. Residents in Bromsgrove East were the least satisfied
- the greatest current provision is found in Bromsgrove Central (16.96 hectares), however the highest provision per 1000 population is located in Bromsgrove North East (0.822 hectares). This does not correlate directly with perceptions arising from the household survey indicating that quality may potentially influence perceptions of quantity
- 35% of respondents to the Children's IT Survey identified they play at a grass area near the house most often, highlighting the value of local amenity green space to children
- when asked about the quantity of grass areas near their home, the majority of children stated there are a lot (44%). However, 29% indicated that there are some but could be more
- 37% of respondents to the IT Young People's Survey felt the provision of informal grass areas is sufficient. 14% of respondents stated provision is insufficient
- a difference in opinion regarding the provision of amenity green space was highlighted by respondents to the elected member's questionnaire. Within the ward of Hagley it was indicated that there was no amenity green space, however in the ward of Drakes Cross and Walkers Heath, provision was perceived to be more than adequate. This is perhaps reflective of the uneven distribution of amenity spaces across the district.

Setting provision standards – quantity

- 6.9 The recommended local quantity standard for amenity green space has been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and is summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix F. The standard has been set above the existing level of provision to promote a balance between new provision in areas where it is most needed and qualitative enhancements where new provision is not required. This is reflective of the high levels of dissatisfaction which were evident during the consultation process.

Quantity Standard (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.40 hectares per 1000	0.42 hectares per 1000
Justification	
<p>Respondents to the Children’s IT Survey highlighted the importance of open space to their age group, with 35% of respondents stating they play at an amenity green space site most often. With regard to the current provision of amenity green space, 56% of respondents to the household survey indicated provision was insufficient and 29% of respondents to the Children’s IT Survey felt that although there were some amenity green spaces there could be more. This highlights a significant level of dissatisfaction with the current provision of this type of open space.</p> <p>Due to the importance of amenity green space providing local informal recreation opportunities to children and the level of dissatisfaction with the current level of provision, it is recommended that the local quantity standard is set above the existing level of provision. Combined with the application of the accessibility standard, this will enable the identification of deficiencies within the District. As well as provide informal recreation opportunities, amenity green space can have an important landscaping function.</p>	

Current provision - quality

- 6.10 The quality of existing amenity green space in the district was assessed through site visits undertaken. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.
- 6.11 The quality scores achieved in PMP site assessments are weighted according to the findings of the local consultation. Those elements that were highlighted through consultation as being particularly important determinants of quality have been weighted higher to ensure that they have a greater influence on the overall quality score achieved. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix G.
- 6.12 The key issues emerging from site assessments relating to the quality of natural and semi natural open space are:
 - PMP site assessments reveal that the quality of amenity green space is average, with the average quality score of a site being 69%
 - Beoley Village Hall (84%) and Hartle Lane (80%) are the two highest scoring amenity green space sites and should be considered as examples of good practice
 - Withybed Close, Hewell Avenue and Long Meadows road are sites that all scored below 60%. These sites should be prioritised for improvement

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- site assessments undertaken by an independent consultant support these findings, suggesting that the quality of amenity green space is generally average. Areas for improvement focused upon the maintenance and safety of sites
- Hazelton Road is identified as an excellent amenity green space site and Laurel Grove and Crown Close are stated as having significant development opportunities
- Housman Close and Grayshott Close are highlighted as particularly poor sites that are in need of refurbishment.

6.13 The key issues emerging from consultation relating to the quality of amenity green space are as follows:

- respondents to the household survey regard the quality of amenity green space as average (51%). Findings within the individual analysis areas mirror the overall response. The greatest level of satisfaction is located in Bromsgrove West, where 65% of residents state the quality of amenity green space is average and 23% indicate the quality is good
- drop in session attendees highlighted the value of amenity green space to the local community stating that they provide a number of social interaction and community benefits. However, residents did raise safety concerns regarding gangs of young people congregating at these sites. This supports the findings of the site visits
- 40% of respondents to the children's IT survey identified that amenity green space is clean, safe and nice to use. Similarly, 33% of young people stated that amenity green space is clean, tidy and well maintained
- a difference in the quality of amenity green space in various parishes across the district was evident, with a split in opinion regarding the quality of amenity green space established by respondents to the Parish Council questionnaire. The quality of this type of open space in the parishes of Tutnall and Cobley and Alvechurch was identified as poor and in need of improvement. However, in the parishes of Lickey and Blackwell and Cofton Hackett, the quality of amenity green space was identified as good.

Setting provision standards – quality

6.14 The recommended local quality standard for amenity green space is summarised overleaf. Full justification and consultation relating to the quality of provision is provided within Appendix G. Improvements to the quality of amenity green space were perceived to be particularly important to local residents.

Quality Standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – AMENITY GREEN SPACE		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
Essential	Desirable	
Good access	Footpaths	
Flowers and trees	Level surface	
Clean and litter free		
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to amenity green spaces, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:		
Component of quality	Proportion of possible total responses received	Weighting
Security and Safety		3
Cleanliness and maintenance		4
Vegetation		2
Ancillary accommodation		1
Analysis suggests the improvement in quantity of amenity green space is considered to be more important than enhancing its quality.		

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 6.15 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing an opportunity for all people to use the site. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.
- 6.16 61% of residents would expect to walk to amenity green spaces. This emphasises the expectation that these sites are perceived to be local resources. This expectation was reflected in all areas of the District, including residents of the rural settlements.
- 6.17 The recommended local accessibility standard for amenity green space is summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H.

Accessibility Standard (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
10 MINUTE WALK TIME
Justification
<p>Local consultation indicates a clear preference for walking to amenity green spaces and therefore a walk time has been set.</p> <p>Respondents to the household survey highlight a 5 – 10 minute walk time as their preferred travel time. The modal response was also 10 minutes and the mean response was 11 minutes. Additionally, consultation indicated that sites in close proximity to the home are of particular importance to children and young people. Therefore, in consideration of the expected travel patterns of residents a 10 minute travel time is recommended.</p> <p>Amenity green space provides a particularly important function for children and is often one of the most popular types of open space for this age group. At least one amenity green space site should be provided within 10 minutes walk of a residents home in all areas of the district. Combined with the application of the quantity standard, the accessibility standard will enable the council to identify areas deficient in the provision of amenity green space.</p>

Applying provision standards

- 6.18 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of open space sport and recreation facilities and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 6.19 Table 6.4 below summarises the application of the quantity standard both at the existing time and up to 2026. This provides an understanding of where current provision is insufficient to meet local need.

Table 6.4 – Application of quantity standard

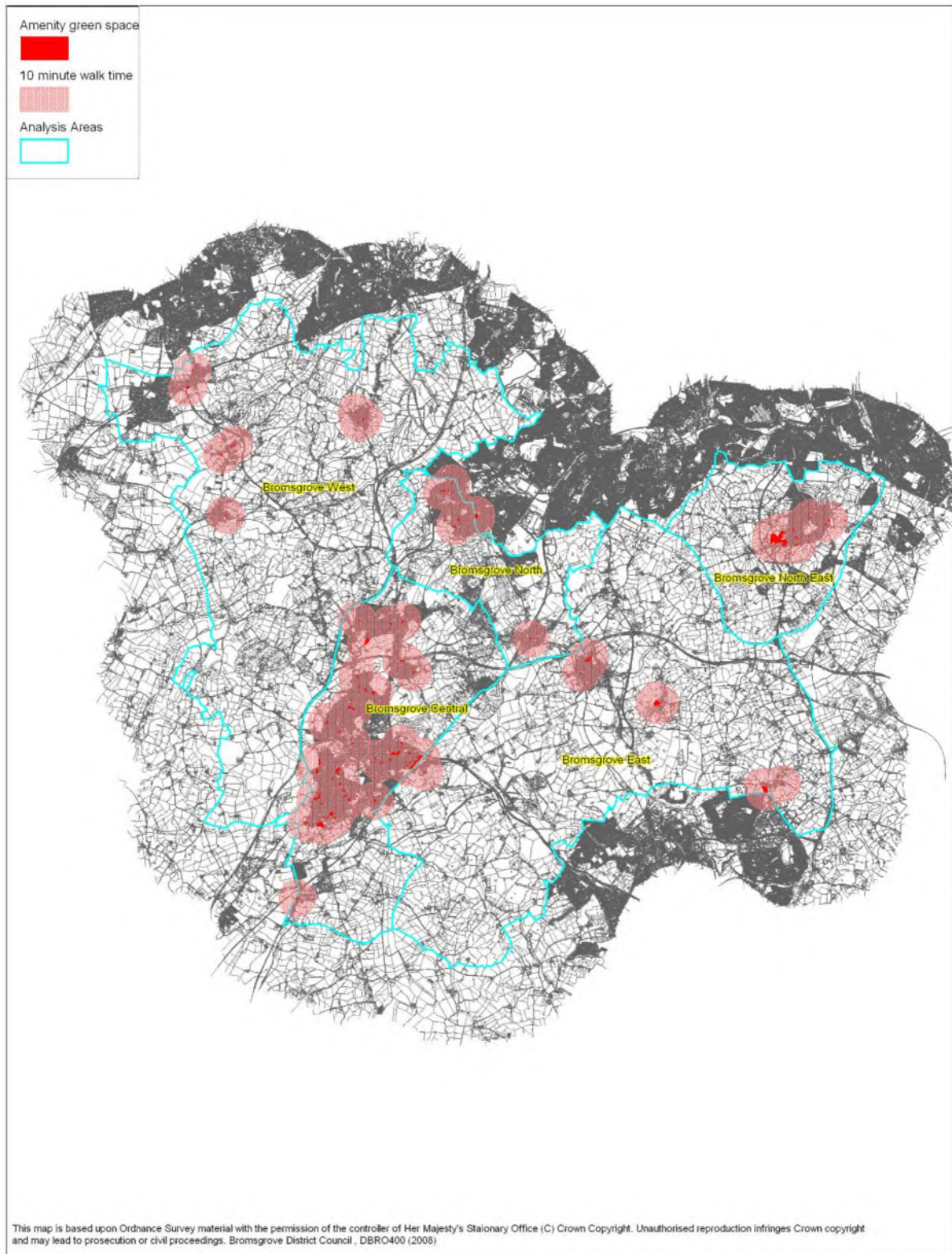
Analysis areas	Current balanced against local standard (0.42 hectares per 1000 population)	Future balanced against local standard (0.42 hectares per 1000 population)
Bromsgrove North	-3.82	-4.38
Bromsgrove West	-4.12	-4.72
Bromsgrove East	1.31	0.84
Bromsgrove North East	5.66	5.10
Bromsgrove Central	-1.18	-3.28
Overall	-2.15	-6.44

6.20 Table 6.4 indicates the following:

- overall, the provision of amenity green space is insufficient to meet current and future demand
- only Bromsgrove East and Bromsgrove North East have adequate provision of amenity green space to meet current and future demand
- the greatest current and expected shortfall of amenity green space is located in Bromsgrove West, with a deficiency of 4.72 hectares expected by 2026.

6.21 The application of the local accessibility and quality standards for amenity green space is set out overleaf (Map 6.1). Provision of amenity green space is also considered in relation to the location of parks and gardens and this can be seen in Map 6.2.

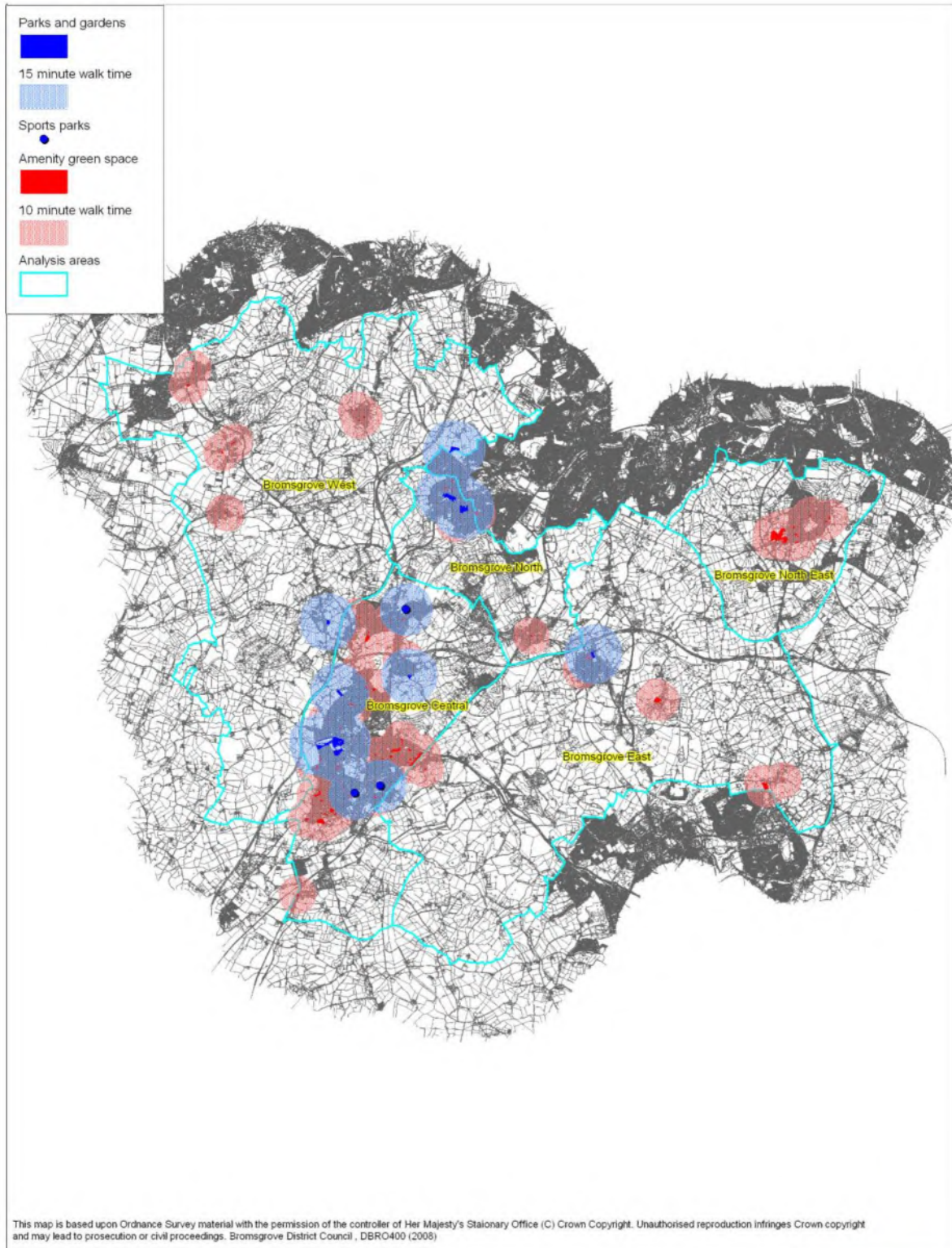
Map 6.1 – Provision of amenity green space in Bromsgrove



Amenity green space - 10 minute walk time



Map 6.2 – Provision of amenity green space and parks and gardens in Bromsgrove



Provision of parks and gardens and amenity green space



- 6.22 Map 6.1 indicates that there is an even distribution of amenity space in proportion to the population across the district. Despite this, there remain many residents who do not have access to an amenity space within the recommended catchment area.
- 6.23 As can be seen from Map 6.2 parks and gardens are predominantly located in Bromsgrove Central. Due to the fact that there are only a small number of parks located in other areas of the district, accessibility deficiencies remain in these areas and residents do not have access to local open spaces.

Applying the quantity, quality and accessibility standards

- 6.24 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas where there is potential unmet demand we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify whether areas are quantitatively above or below the recommended minimum standard and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.
- 6.25 Consultation highlights the importance of obtaining a balance between the quality and quantity of amenity green space and the quality was considered to be of particular importance. The interrelationship between quality and quantity was clear. While residents were dissatisfied with the quantity of amenity spaces, these perceptions overlapped with issues regarding quality. It will be important therefore to ensure that future improvements to the stock of amenity spaces in the district are balanced between quality and quantity. While residents want more amenity spaces, it is clear that these spaces should be functional and of high quality.
- 6.26 The existing quality of amenity green spaces is average, with the average quality score of a site being 69%. Site assessments reveal that there are a number of sites in need of significant improvement. The quality of maintenance and ancillary facilities (eg benches and bins) and the perceived safety of sites are considered to be the main issues for amenity spaces.
- 6.27 The quality scores, and key areas of improvement identified for each site should inform any improvements at amenity green space sites. Improvements to the existing amenity spaces will be as important as providing new sites in areas devoid of provision.

AGS1	<p>Seek to improve the quality of amenity green spaces. In particular, it is likely that improvements to the provision of ancillary facilities will be of particular benefit to the overall quality of amenity green space.</p> <p>Priorities for improvement should be given to areas where amenity spaces provide the only informal recreational opportunity.</p>
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- 6.28 In order to ensure the future quality of open spaces, consideration should be given to the size of sites. Smaller sites (particularly those located in proximity to larger facilities) may be of limited value to local residents and costly in terms of maintenance to the provider. Functionality was considered to be particularly important by residents.
- 6.29 The most appropriate priorities for each area of the district are therefore discussed taking into account the relationship between quality, quantity and accessibility. In light of the importance of amenity spaces to local residents, for all areas, where new development occurs, it will be essential to ensure that new amenity space is provided if the development falls outside of the recommended catchment of an existing amenity space site.

AGS2	Where new development occurs ensure that new amenity space is provided if the development falls outside of the recommended catchment of an existing amenity space site. Any new sites provided should meet with the local quality vision.
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- 6.30 Application of the quantity standard would suggest that as a minimum, settlements containing 500 residents or more should have access to an amenity space. A settlement of 500 residents or more would warrant amenity space of at least 0.2ha.
- 6.31 The Longridge Area Action Plan (AAP) which is currently out for consultation considers the provision of amenity space in the areas. Currently there are plans for a centralised amenity space and green corridor along the River corridor.

Bromsgrove North

- 6.32 Application of the quantity standard indicates that there is insufficient provision of amenity green space to meet current and future demand. Despite a quantitative shortfall of amenity green space, accessibility mapping indicates that the majority of residents have access to an amenity green space within the recommended 10 minute walk time. Only a small number of residents in Barnt Green do not have access to an amenity green space (Figure 6.1). This is perhaps reflected in the findings of the consultation which indicate that residents in Bromsgrove North are the most satisfied of all residents of the district.

Figure 6.1 – Deficiencies of amenity green space in Barnt Green



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- 6.33 When considering the provision of parks and amenity green space it can be seen that the only parks in the area are located in Rubery and serve the same catchment as amenity green spaces. Residents located in Barnt Green outside the catchment of an amenity green space do not have access to a park or garden either.
- 6.34 Although residents located in the area of deficiency in Barnt Green do not have access to a park or amenity green space, the location of Lickey Hills Country Park in this area does provide residents with access to informal open space. Access to local amenity space within a 10 minute catchment is however important.
- 6.35 Based on future population projections there will be a shortfall of 4.38 hectares by 2026. New provision will therefore be required in areas of deficiency.
- 6.36 In areas where residents are within the recommended 10 minute distance of an amenity space the focus should be placed on enhancing the quality of existing amenity green space. Local community consultation indicates that amenity spaces are only of value to the community if they are high quality and functional sites.
- 6.37 The shortfalls of other types of open space in this area increase the importance of amenity space to local residents. The development of these amenity spaces into a network of green linkages will help to address deficiencies.

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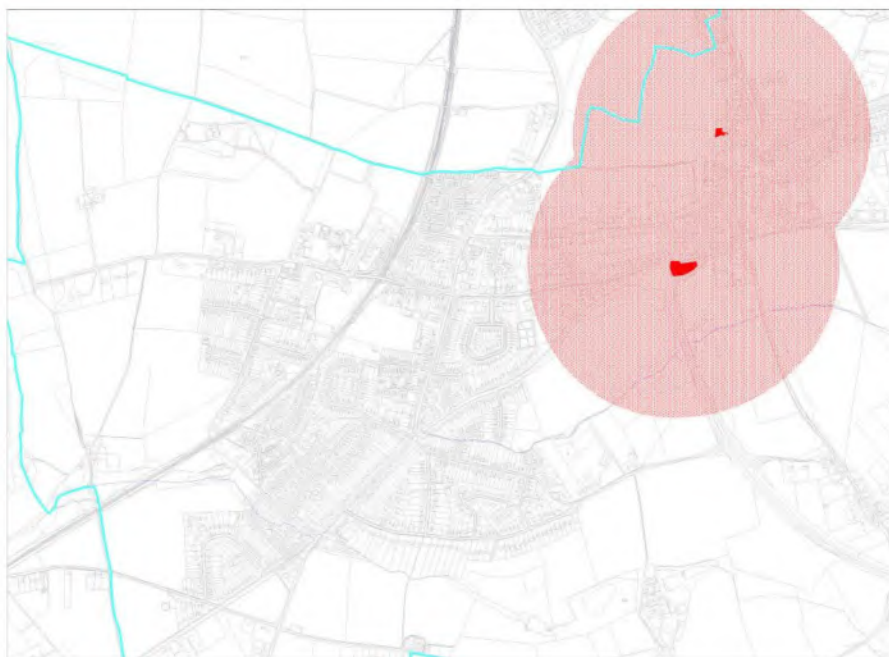
- 6.38 Application of the quantity standard demonstrates that all settlements containing over 500 residents should have access to an amenity space. In light of the importance of localised open space, even residents in smaller rural settlements may benefit from amenity space. Opportunities to provide sites in smaller villages should therefore be seized. This may include the promotion of the pocket parks scheme, where local residents are encouraged to manage and become involved in the maintenance of sites. The village green or pocket park can be central to the community.

AGS3	Seize any opportunities to increase the provision of amenity green space in Bromsgrove North particularly in the area devoid of existing provision in Barnt Green. Devise a systematic approach to improving the quality of existing amenity spaces in this area of the district.
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Bromsgrove West

- 6.39 The largest quantitative shortfall of amenity green space is located in this area of the district, equating to 4.12 hectares. Future population projections indicate that this shortfall is set to increase to 4.72 hectares by 2026. Despite this shortfall, accessibility mapping indicates that only residents in Hagley are outside the recommended catchment of an amenity green space (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 – Deficiencies of amenity green space in Hagley



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- 6.40 Those residents outside of the appropriate distance for amenity space are also outside of the local 15 minute walk time to a park. Despite a good level of access to allotments, natural open space and outdoor sports facilities they are therefore devoid of informal recreation opportunities. This was also raised as part of the preparation of the Parish Plan 2005.

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- 6.41 New provision in this area of Hagley should therefore be sought. Application of the quantity standard demonstrates that there are sufficient residents outside of the catchment area of amenity space to justify new provision. In light of the shortfall of parks in this area, a new park is also recommended (section 4). If a new park to be provided, this will negate the need for amenity space for residents within a 10 minute catchment of the site (the catchment for amenity green space).
- 6.42 Application of the quantity standard demonstrates that all settlements containing over 500 residents should have access to an amenity space. In light of the importance of localised open space, even residents in smaller rural settlements may benefit from amenity space. Opportunities to provide sites in smaller villages should therefore be seized. This may include the promotion of the pocket parks scheme, where local residents are encouraged to manage and become involved in the maintenance of sites. The village green or pocket park can be central to the community.
- 6.43 Outside of the areas devoid of provision, focus should be placed on enhancing the quality of amenity spaces giving particular consideration to the key issues raised during consultation and site visits and the resulting quality vision.

AGS4	Identify opportunities for the new provision of amenity green space in Hagley and in small settlements. Ensure that all residents in settlements of above 500 people have local access to amenity green space. Focus on improving the quality of amenity spaces elsewhere in the analysis area.
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Bromsgrove East

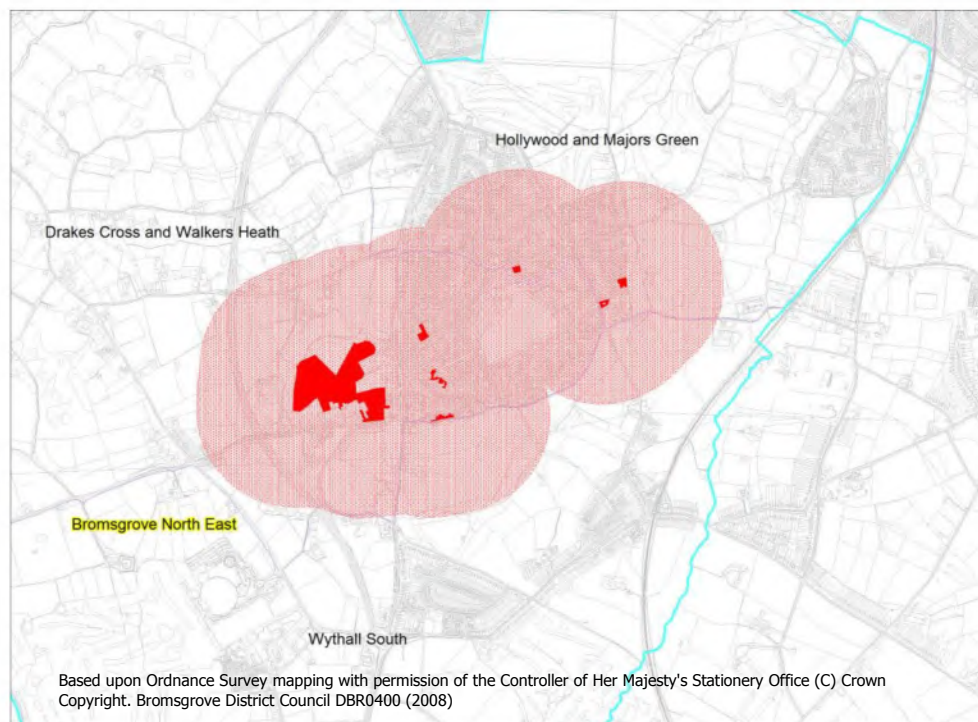
- 6.44 Accessibility mapping illustrates that nearly all residents in the larger settlements in Bromsgrove East have access to an amenity green space within the recommended 10 minute walk time. Application of the quantity standard supports this high level of accessibility, with there being sufficient provision of amenity green space to meet current and future demand.
- 6.45 When amalgamating the provision of parks and amenity green space all residents have access to at least one of these types of open space.
- 6.46 PMP site assessments indicate that the quality of amenity green space in this area is average and that Withybed Close and Penmanor amenity green space are two sites that scored below 60% and are therefore in need of significant enhancement.
- 6.47 In consideration of the above, priority should be given to enhancing the quality of existing amenity green space sites in the area.
- 6.48 While all residents in the larger settlements have access to amenity space, there is no provision in some of the very small settlements. Opportunities to provide sites in smaller villages should therefore be seized should demand arise.

AGS5	Seek to enhance the quality of amenity green space sites in Bromsgrove East, aiming to achieve the recommended quality vision at all sites. Use the findings of the site assessments to prioritise those sites in need of significant improvement.
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Bromsgrove North East

6.49 Quantitative analysis indicates that the provision of amenity green space in the area is sufficient to meet current and future demand. Although there is sufficient provision of amenity green space, application of the accessibility standard reveals that only residents located in Wythall and Hollywood have access to an amenity green space (Figure 6.3). Residents in these areas also have good access to parks. While these are perhaps the larger settlements, it means that many residents are lacking in local green space.

Figure 6.3 – Deficiencies of amenity green space in Bromsgrove North East



6.50 It can be seen that residents outside of the catchment for amenity space are also outside of the catchment area for a park.

6.51 Although residents located outside the Wythall and Hollywood areas do not have access to an amenity green space or park the small populations of these settlements, such as Major's Green do not warrant the provision of a new amenity green space site. Application of the quantity standard demonstrates that all settlements containing over 500 residents should have access to an amenity space.

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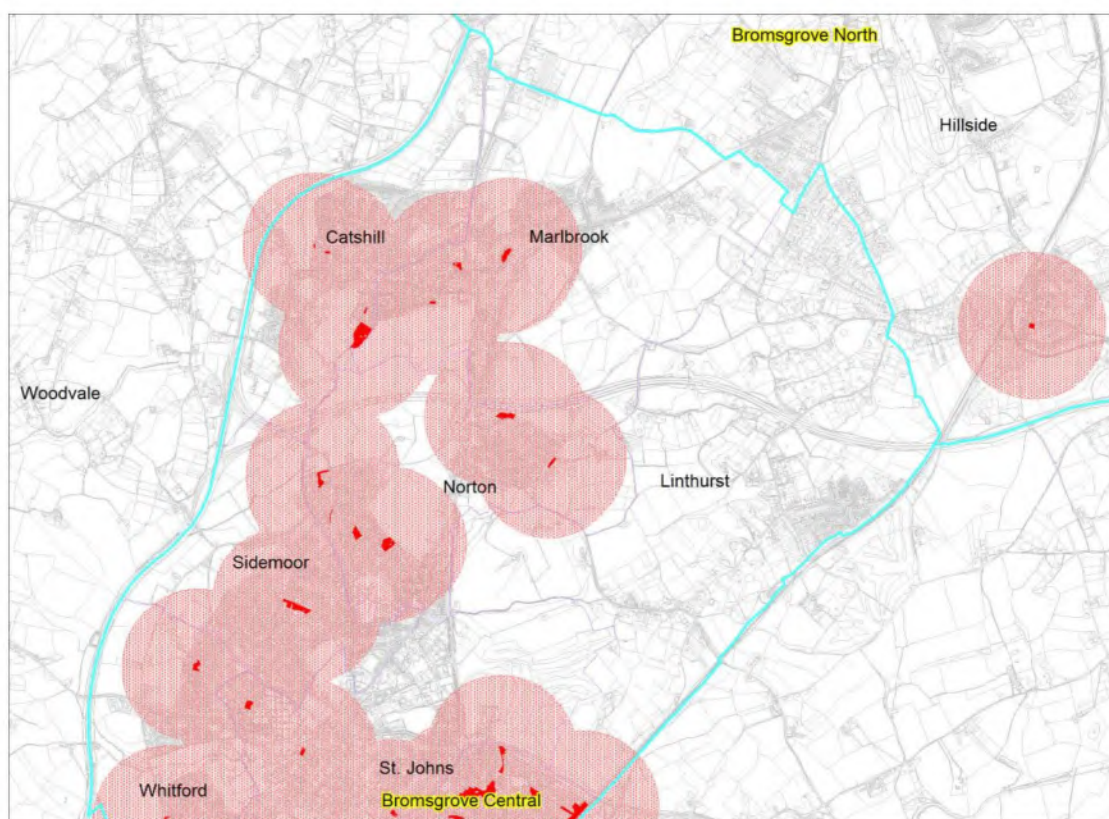
- 6.52 PMP site assessments indicate that the quality of amenity green space in this area is good, with the average quality score of a site being 73%. There is however room for improvement.

AGS6	Ensure that all residents in settlements over 500 people have access to at least one amenity space within the recommended distance threshold. Seek to maintain and improve the quality of existing amenity green space sites in Bromsgrove North East.
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Bromsgrove Central

- 6.53 Application of the quantity standard indicates that there is insufficient amenity green space in Bromsgrove Central to meet current and future demand. Despite a shortfall of this type of open space, accessibility mapping indicates that the majority of residents in Bromsgrove Central have access to an amenity green space. Only small pockets of deficiency are evident (Figure 6.4). Amenity spaces were perceived to be particularly important in the urban area of the district.

Figure 6.4 – Deficiencies of amenity green space in Bromsgrove Central



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- 6.54 When combining the provision of parks and amenity green space the majority of residents have access to at least one of these types of open space within the recommended 10 minute catchment of an amenity space. However, due to the location of these parks those residents who are currently outside the catchment of an amenity green space are also outside of the catchment for parks meaning that they do not have access to amenity spaces.
- 6.55 Although the number of residents who are outside of the catchment for amenity spaces is low the importance of amenity provision in the more urban environment, coupled with shortfalls when measured against the quantity standard mean that should the opportunity arise, consideration should be given to increasing the provision of amenity green space in the area. This will be particularly important in the event of new development.
- 6.56 In areas where the provision of amenity space is sufficient, the focus should be placed on improving the quality of sites, particularly those sites where the quality is insufficient to meet local standards.
- 6.57 Given the more urban nature of the central area, amenity spaces and green corridors also provide an important opportunity to link green spaces together as well as to link local neighbourhoods with larger green space sites.

AGS7	Should the opportunity arise, consider increasing the provision of amenity green space in the area. Improve the quality of existing amenity spaces and strive to create a network of linked sites.
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Summary

- 6.58 The community interaction benefits of amenity green space are recognised, with residents identifying this type of open space as valuable to the local community.
- 6.59 Application of the quantity, quality and accessibility standards illustrates the need for qualitative enhancements to a number of existing amenity green space sites. Amenity spaces can be particularly important to local residents in light of their close proximity to the home.
- 6.60 While the overall focus is on increasing the quality of amenity spaces, there are several areas of deficiency and consideration should be given to the provision of new spaces within these areas. Application of the quantity standard demonstrates that all settlements with a population exceeding 500 residents should contain a minimum of one amenity space.
- 6.61 It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision for amenity green space in Bromsgrove that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework and/or other delivery mechanisms are to:
- seek to improve the quality of amenity green spaces in the district aiming to achieve the recommended quality vision at all sites. Use the findings of the site assessments to prioritise those sites in need of significant improvement

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- where new development occurs ensure that new amenity space is provided if the development falls outside of the recommended catchment of an existing amenity space site
- provide new amenity spaces in Hagley, in areas of Bromsgrove central devoid of provision and in settlements where the population exceeds 500 residents
- exploit opportunities to use amenity spaces as green corridors to provide links between green spaces and residential communities.