

SECTION 5

NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

Natural and semi natural open space

Introduction and definition

- 5.1 This type of open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrubland, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and bio-diversity within the settlement boundaries. Natural and semi natural open space can frequently be found within other open space types, and in some instances there may be some sites classified as amenity green space or parks that play a similar role to natural and semi natural open space sites. This serves to highlight the overlap between typologies. In particular, natural and semi natural sites often offer important opportunities for play.
- 5.2 In line with PPG17, larger sites that sit outside of settlement boundaries have been excluded from the audit and calculations. However, it is important to consider the role that these sites play in alleviating deficiencies and providing resources for both residents and wildlife. This is particularly pertinent in the Borough, where 83% of the Borough is Green Belt and given the significance of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA).
- 5.3 Although natural and semi natural open space plays a key role in wildlife conservation and biodiversity, the recreational opportunities provided by these spaces are also important. In this respect, natural and semi natural open spaces play a similar role and function to that of amenity green space and parks and gardens. It is essential that a balance between recreational use and biodiversity and conservation is achieved.

- 5.4 This section outlines the strategic context and key consultation findings relating to natural and semi natural open space within the Borough, with the conclusion of this section being the development of local standards. These local standards are applied in the context of existing provision, with due consideration to the provision of parks and amenity green space (which can fulfil similar roles).



Context

- 5.5 The key issues for natural and semi natural open spaces arising from a review of strategic documents are:
- **National England standards** recommend that all residents should have access to a natural green space within 300 metres of their homes. There should be at least one 20 ha site within two kilometres of all homes. The **Rethinking Open Space Report** indicates that on average there is 2 ha per 1,000 population across local authorities in the UK

- the **RBWM Local Plan (2003)** states the loss of existing areas of important urban land will not be permitted unless they are replaced by a similar site or can be best retained and enhanced through a redevelopment scheme
- the **Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA)** is safeguarded by the European Union Birds Directive EC/79/409 and was designated to protect its population of rare birds (Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler). The TBHSPA affects 13 local authority areas and covers an area of 8,274 ha across Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire
- a strategy to protect the population of designated bird species in these areas from disturbance is currently being developed jointly by the South East England Regional Assembly and the affected local authorities. The strategy indicates that whilst residential development within 400m of designated SPAs would not be appropriate, between 400m and 5km of an SPA residential development may be appropriate subject to the impact of additional population on the SPA being effectively mitigated against. For the RBWM the 5km zone affects the parishes of Old Windsor (part of) Sunninghill and Sunningdale.
- a key part of the strategy to mitigate against the impact consists of the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). The areas of land designated as SANG would be required to have specific characteristics and also be located so as to either attract or intercept visitors who would otherwise have gone to the SPA
- the Council is aspiring to develop a network of SANG. The size and location of SANG is therefore very important to enable it to effectively perform this function. The Natural England standard is 8ha of SANG per 1,000 additional population. However, it should be noted that this would only be an issue for the southern parishes of the Borough covering the settlements of Ascot, South Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale and this will be incorporated into a separate Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that targets specifically these affected areas.

Consultation

5.6 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues relating to natural and semi natural open space:

- 31% of respondents to the household survey indicated that natural and semi natural open spaces are the open space type which they use most frequently. Within this group of users, 55% prefer to access natural and semi natural open spaces on foot. Preferred travel times were evenly split between five, 10 and 15 minutes

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- in addition to the recreational value of natural resources, household survey respondents also stated that they recognise the wider benefits of natural open spaces, particularly in terms of providing opportunities for biodiversity and habitat creation. It was felt particularly in rural areas that linkages between sites is poor and that a strategic plan is required to ensure that public rights of way provide clear access to natural and semi natural areas
- the lowest levels of satisfaction were in the Northern wards and Maidenhead. 38% of household survey respondents in both these analysis areas highlighted that there were insufficient quantity levels of natural and semi natural open spaces.

Quantity of existing provision

- 5.7 The provision of natural and semi natural open space in the Borough is summarised in Table 5.1. As detailed in Section 4, Windsor Great Park has been deemed to have sufficient ecological and natural features to be classed within this typology although its opportunities to provide features similar to parks is recognised later in this section.
- 5.8 The projections of likely provision by 2026 assume that the quantity of natural and semi natural open space will remain constant until 2026.

Table 5.1 – Provision of natural and semi natural open space across the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Analysis areas	Current provision (hectares)	Current provision per 1,000 population (hectares)	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)	Projected population (2026)	Provision (ha) per 1,000 population (2026)
Maidenhead	177.59	4.14	7	0.34	104.28	48,677	3.65
Windsor and Eton	171.37	5.15	16	0.05	130.62	37,075	4.62
Northern wards	305.62	9.67	12	0.62	117.67	28,808	10.61
Southern wards	54.81	2.12	13	0.60	12.34	33,092	1.66
Overall	709.39	5.31	48	0.05	130.62	147,652	4.80

- 5.9 The key issues emerging from Table 5.1 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of natural and semi natural open space across the Borough are:
- based on the findings of the household survey, 62% of respondents feel that the provision of natural and semi-natural open space is adequate/more than adequate and 34% feel there is nearly enough/not enough provision, highlighting a split in opinion. The most common response (52%) is that provision is about right

- across the individual analysis areas it is evident that the highest level of satisfaction can be found in the Southern wards, where 73% of household survey respondents feel provision is about right/more than enough. This is surprising as this analysis area has the lowest level of provision. The accessibility and size of Windsor Great Park may have affected perceptions. The lowest levels of satisfaction can be found in Maidenhead and the Northern wards, where 38% of respondents in both analysis areas feel provision is insufficient. This highlights a mixed satisfaction level between the rural and urban analysis areas. While rural areas will generally contain higher quantities of natural and semi natural open spaces there may be issues with regard quality or accessibility that are influencing residents perceptions
- consultations identified the need to protect existing natural and semi natural areas and ensure public access is provided wherever possible, especially around the Crown Estate and National Trust land. It was also mentioned that churches in rural areas are providing successful wildlife habitats that should be maintained and protected
- there are currently 48 natural and semi natural open spaces in the Borough. The overall level of provision is currently 709.39 hectares, producing an average site of 14.77 hectares per open space. The size of sites ranges significantly – with some sites as small as 0.05 hectares (Keepers Farm Close South, ID 104) whilst others are as large as 130.62 hectares (Windsor Great Park, ID 77). This can be explained by the broad nature of this typology
- as shown in Table 5.1, there is a large variety in terms of both the number of sites and the level of provision per 1,000 population. The largest number of sites is in the Windsor and Eton analysis area (16), whilst the smallest number is in the Maidenhead analysis area (7)
- the Southern wards have significantly less natural and semi natural open space than the other analysis areas. Despite this, satisfaction levels are relatively high, indicating that accessibility to sites such as Windsor Great Park may be good compared to access to sites in the northern settlements of the Borough.

Setting provision standards – quantity

- 5.10 The recommended local quantity standard for natural and semi natural open space has been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix I.

Quantity Standard (see Appendices I and J)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
5.31ha per 1000 population	5.4ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>The value placed on natural and semi natural open space is clear, both in terms of the recreational resource these spaces offer and the role that natural areas play in biodiversity and conservation. While the household survey reveals a split in opinion between those who perceive there to be insufficient natural areas and those who are satisfied with current levels of provision, all other consultations emphasised the protection of existing provision and increasing accessibility to sites through better networking of footpaths and cycle ways.</p> <p>It is therefore suggested that the local standard is set at a higher level than current provision. A figure of 5.4 ha per 1,000 population has been agreed with officers. Much of this will be to mitigate against planned growth in population to the north of Maidenhead and ensuring sites in the Northern wards are clearly accessible.</p> <p>The green nature of the Borough has meant several extremely large natural and semi natural open spaces exist across the Borough. While sites such as Windsor Great Park and the Maidenhead Thicket serve predominantly as natural and semi-natural areas it is vital that a balance is ensured between the conservation of biodiversity and public accessibility to these strategic sites.</p>	

Current provision - quality

- 5.11 The quality of existing natural and semi natural open space in the Borough was assessed through site visits, the findings for which are set out in Table 5.2. 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.
- 5.12 The quality scores 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 that each site achieves. In particular, the quality and variety of the vegetation was perceived to be particularly important for natural and semi natural open spaces. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix L.
- 5.13 Site assessments that have been undertaken do not consider the ecological or biodiversity value of the site in any great detail. In general terms, larger sites would be expected to have the highest potential ecological value.

Table 5.2 – Quality of natural and semi natural open space across the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Geographical area	Number of sites	Range of quality Scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Maidenhead	7	20 – 80	61.5	The Gullet (ID 234)	Braywick Park NSN (ID 260)
Windsor and Eton	16	34 – 88	56.8	Kenneally NSN (ID 119)	Trinity Wildlife Area (ID 51)
Northern wards	12	20 – 80	59.5	Chosely Road NSN (ID 347)	Ockwells Park Nature Reserve NSN (ID 210)
Southern wards	13	20 – 80	40.1	Allens Field (ID 418)	Broomhall Rec Woodland (ID 439)
Overall	47	20 - 88	57.0	The Gullet (ID 234), Chosely Road NSN (ID 347)	Trinity Wildlife Area (ID 51)

5.14 The key issues emerging from Table 5.2 and the consultation relating to the quality of natural and semi natural open space are:

- findings from the household survey indicate that there is an overall perception that the quality of natural and semi-natural areas is good (68%). 27% indicated that the quality is average and only 5% stated the quality is poor
- across the individual analysis areas similar results from the household survey are evident, with the lowest level of satisfaction in Windsor and Eton, where 7% of residents feel the quality of natural and semi-natural open space is average/poor
- respondents to the household survey also identified that the items that were deemed least satisfactory and should be addressed were toilets, provision of litter bins, seats and benches, cycle parking and dog related facilities (at least 15% of all respondents who use this typology most frequently indicated these items were unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory)
- the Southern wards scored the lowest average score and also has the highest quantity shortfall based on 2026 population projections and the local standard
- 42% of all sites scored below 60% for quality with the sites that scored lowest having the following quality issues:
 - The Gullet, ID 234 (20%) – litter, graffiti, appears unmanaged

- Chosely Road NSN, ID 347 (20%) – appears derelict with significant litter
- Allens Field, ID 418 (20%) – disused football pitch, overgrown.

Setting provision standards – quality

5.15 The recommended local quality standard for natural and semi natural open space is summarised overleaf. Full justifications and consultation relating to the quality of provision for the local standard is provided within Appendix L.

Quality standard (see Appendix L)

Recommended standard – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents. The recommended local standard does not include any desirable features.
Essential
Clean and litter free
Nature/conservation/biodiversity features
Delineated footpaths
Good site access (disabled)

Accessibility

5.16 31% of respondents to the household survey indicated that they visited natural and semi-natural areas most frequently out of all typologies. Within this group, 55% of residents currently walk to sites with travel times for all forms of transport evenly split between 0-5 minutes (32%), 5-10 minutes (28%), and 10-15 minutes (25%)

Setting provision standards – accessibility

5.17 The local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultation.

5.18 Consultation and analysis highlights that the key issues with regards accessibility include:

- Council officers highlighted the importance of promoting natural and semi natural areas, particularly nature reserves
- it was also flagged that the public right of way network needs to be improved whilst maintaining biodiversity within existing sites, which is of paramount importance
- 66% of respondents from the household survey expect to walk and 26% expect to travel by car to natural and semi-natural open space.

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- of those who would expect to walk to a natural and semi natural open space, 56% would be willing to travel between 5-10 minutes. Of those respondents who would prefer to drive, 61% expect a journey to take between 5 and 10 minutes. All of these figures are consistent across all of the analysis areas.
- site assessments highlighted that information, signage and a poor entrance to the site were key issues with a large number of sites scoring (57%) recording an access score of below 60%.

5.19 The recommended local accessibility standard for natural and semi natural open space is summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix M.

Accessibility standard (see Appendix M)

Recommended standard
15 MINUTE (720 METRES*) WALK TIME
Justification
<p>When identifying preferred methods of transport, local consultation highlights the split in opinion regarding whether natural and semi natural sites should be accessed by walking or driving (26% of respondents would travel by car, whilst 66% of people stated that they would walk). To a certain extent this will relate to the varying size and function of spaces within each locality.</p> <p>An assessment of the 75th percentile threshold level for the Borough suggests that residents are willing to walk up to 15 minutes to a natural and semi natural open space. The modal response time was 10 minutes and current usage patterns indicate that 25% of residents currently travel between 10-15 minutes to access natural and semi natural sites.</p> <p>A drive time local accessibility standard would produce a significantly larger distance threshold than a walk time standard. PPG17 states that higher thresholds may be appropriate if there is no realistic possibility of sufficient new provision to allow lower thresholds to be achievable, but that this can result in levels of provision that are too low and may not meet some local needs.</p> <p>In terms of local consultation findings on the quantity of provision (22% think that there is not enough as opposed to only 10% who think there is more than enough) and given the importance of facilitating everyday contact with nature, a standard based on a walk time is recommended as this will help to deliver a greater number of localised natural and semi natural spaces.</p> <p>Of household survey respondents who visit natural and semi-natural sites more frequently than any other type of open space and who currently drive to such sites, but in future would expect to walk, 31% were from the Maidenhead analysis area, 18% from the Windsor and Eton analysis area, 27% from the Northern wards analysis area and 11% from the Southern wards analysis area. This identifies Maidenhead as the analysis area where people are most amenable to change from accessing natural and semi natural areas by car to walking. Further strategies should identify ways of facilitating this.</p>

**a straight-line distance of 720m has been used rather than the pedestrian distance of 1200m. This is based on average walking distances reduced by a factor of 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in straight lines. The 40% factoring is based on the approach set out in the NPFA Six Acre Standard.*

Applying provision standards

- 5.20 The application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of open space and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 5.21 The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help determine where those deficiencies are of high importance. Applying the standards together is a much more meaningful method of analysis than applying the standards separately.
- 5.22 The application of the local standard for quantity results in the following issues:

Table 5.3 – Application of quantity standard

Analysis areas	Future provision (2026) in hectares balanced against local standard (5.4 hectares per 1000 population)
Maidenhead	-85.27
Windsor and Eton	-28.84
Northern wards	150.06
Southern wards	-123.89
Overall	-87.93

Green = above the minimum standard, Red = below the minimum standard

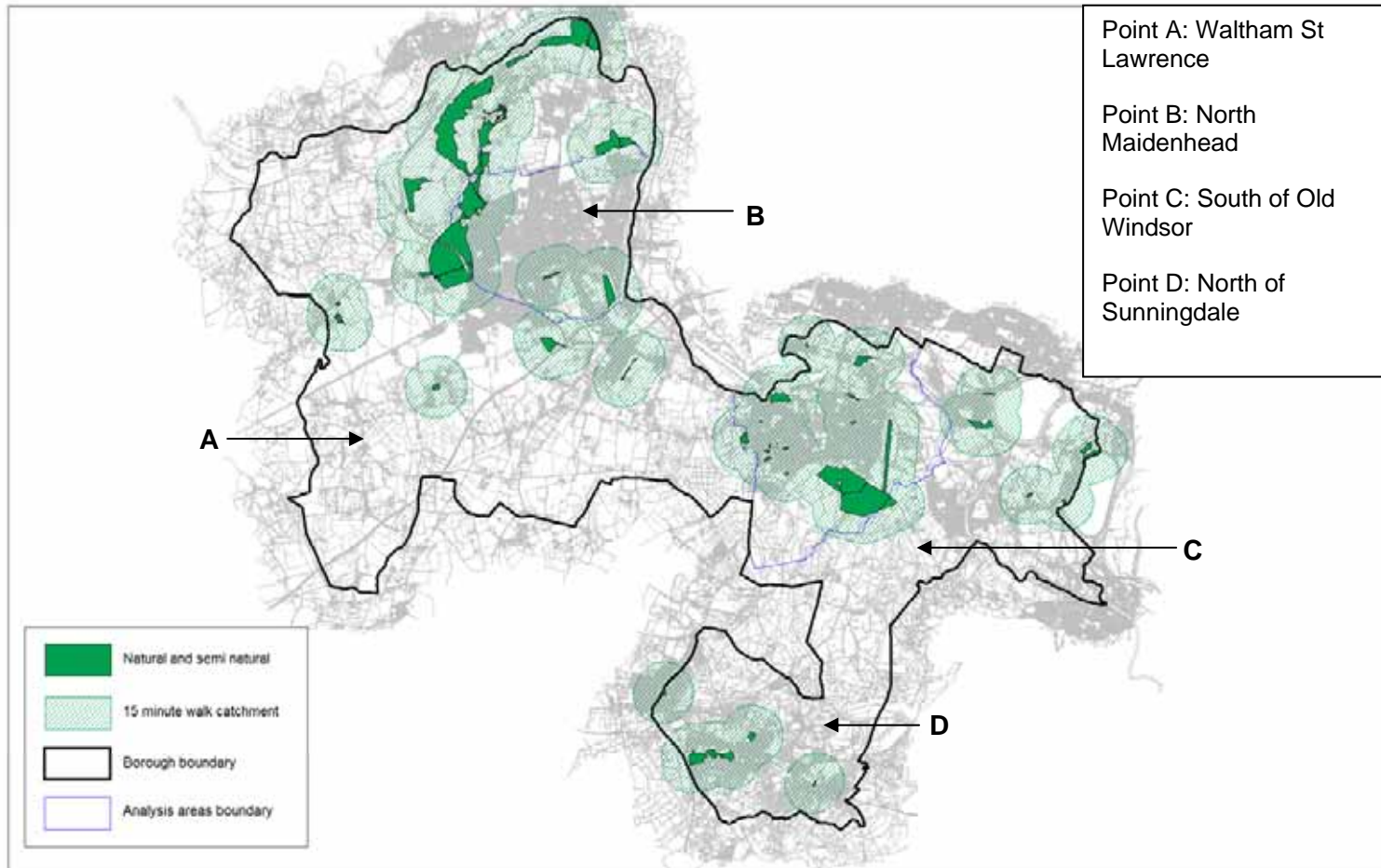
- applying the standard against the projected population in 2026 reveals that there are likely to be deficiencies in three of the four analysis areas, namely Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton, and the Southern wards
- household survey consultation results indicate that those in the Southern wards perceive provision to be satisfactory compared to other analysis areas despite having a projected deficiency of 123.89 hectares. As previously mentioned, Windsor Great Park may impact upon this score. There may also be large farming areas that are not deemed as public but where public rights of way permit access
- the Northern wards currently have high levels of natural and semi natural open space. This is predominantly due to the Cockmarsh area in Cookham, the Maidenhead Thicket site and Bisham Woods. Despite the abundance of woodland offered by the Maidenhead Thicket site the accessibility scores are relatively low due to the lack of signposting on several sites. This may affect local perceptions of publically accessible space within the area

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- Windsor Great Park contributes approximately 137 of the 175 hectares of natural and semi natural open space in the Windsor and Eton analysis area. While this site has a high biodiversity value its presence as a regional parkland may impact upon its long term ecological diversity. The Council should identify ways of protecting the biodiversity within the natural and semi natural parts of this site by identifying and promoting opportunities to establish new natural and semi natural open space sites towards the south of the Borough.

5.23 The application of the local accessibility standards for natural and semi natural open space is set out in Figure 5.1 overleaf.

Figure 5.1 - Provision of natural and semi natural open space in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead



Natural and semi natural

Based upon the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office
Crown Copyright. Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Licence No 100019817



SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- 5.24 As illustrated in Figure 5.1, natural and semi natural open space sites are well distributed across the Borough. While the Maidenhead Thicket site serves a significant area of the Northern wards and Maidenhead analysis area, Windsor Great Park is an important strategic site in the south.
- 5.25 Indeed it is the abundance of natural open space that many residents feel is integral and defines the character of the Borough. The need to protect these sites from development was one of the overriding themes of consultation.

NSN1	In light of the wider benefits of natural and semi natural open spaces and the expressed importance of these sites by local residents, the Council should protect all natural and semi natural sites from development.
-------------	--

- 5.26 With the exception of residents living within small rural settlements (where there is usually good access to nearby countryside) the majority of residents in Windsor, Ascot, south Maidenhead, Cookham and Bisham are able to reach at least one natural and semi natural open space site within the recommended distance threshold.
- 5.27 The notable residential areas that do not have access to sites within the recommended accessibility standards of a 10 minute walk time are the central and northern areas of Maidenhead, Old Windsor and north of Sunningdale. Other smaller settlements that do not have access to natural and semi natural sites that require further attention are White Waltham, Shurlock Row, Paley Street, Fifield, Woodlands Park, and Hurley. All these smaller settlements are in the Northern wards and despite the current level of provision being above the recommended minimum local standard in this analysis area, it is important that these residents are able to access natural and semi natural sites.



- 5.28 The local quantity standard implies that an increase of circa 18 hectares is currently required across the Borough to meet the minimum level of provision. Based on the projected population growth this will increase to an additional 90 hectares by 2026.
- 5.29 In light of the varying nature of natural and semi natural open space, development of new sites can be both challenging and a long term process. It is recommended that the Council address the low levels of satisfaction in the Northern wards, particularly in the smaller settlements where access on foot to the current sites within 10 minutes is not possible. A new strategically placed site in Waltham St Lawrence or Shurlock Row (A on Figure 5.1), if well publicised, may increase local public perception of provision. The Council should investigate the opportunity of permitting public access to any natural and semi-natural sites that already exist in this area.

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- 5.30 Other opportunities to address the shortfall of provision in analysis areas are shown on Figure 5.1. While increasing accessibility for Maidenhead residents to the major natural and semi natural sites to the north west of Maidenhead the Council should also explore the opportunities to develop pocket parks which include natural and semi natural features, particularly in the north of Maidenhead (B on Figure 5.1). There are several amenity green spaces that could be developed to offer the biodiversity natural features highlighted as desirable in consultations. The opportunities for other typologies to be developed to meet this shortfall in Maidenhead are addressed later in this section (Figure 5.2).
- 5.31 Finally the largest quantitative shortfall is in the Southern wards. Despite the close proximity of Windsor Great Park, which in part mitigates against the shortfall, the Council should seek opportunities around Old Windsor and north Sunningdale to open up large areas of publically accessible open space (Points C and D on Figure 5.2).

NSN2	The Council should address the quantitative deficiency by identifying sites in northern part of Maidenhead town, Old Windsor and Sunningdale that can be developed to offer natural features and clear public access.
-------------	---

- 5.32 The importance of qualitative enhancements is reinforced by the findings of the site assessments, which suggest that the quality of natural areas was significantly lower than many other types of open space, with an average score of just 57%. Future efforts should therefore be concentrated into improvements to the quality of natural and semi natural spaces where it is the intention that these sites should be for public use. In some instances, the visual amenity of natural and semi natural open space may take on greater importance than the recreational benefits that the site can bring. Where this is the case, quality enhancements may be inappropriate.
- 5.33 While it is not expected that these sites will be managed in the same way as formal parks/amenity spaces, they should be inviting and controlled. Many natural sites were perceived to be poor or very poor in terms of safety and security (with insufficient lighting and poorly defined boundaries). Ancillary features (such as signage, bins and benches) are also a key area for improvement. Where qualitative improvements are made to natural and semi natural open spaces, it will be essential that these are integrated within the overall character of the site.

NSN3	Strive to improve the quality of natural and semi natural sites (where appropriate), taking into account recommendations made within the Green Infrastructure Study.
-------------	--

- 5.34 The quality of provision of natural and semi natural open spaces should not only consider recreational opportunities, but should also take into account the biodiversity and wildlife value of the site. Many participants in consultations considered this to be imperative.

NSN4	Improve the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces in wards that contain a large number of low scoring quality sites. These include The Gullet (ID 234), Chosely Road NSN (ID 347) and Allens Field (ID 418).
-------------	--

SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

NSN5	Maximise biodiversity on natural and semi natural open spaces through the implementation of effective management and maintenance regimes.
-------------	---

- 5.35 Although the distribution of sites is good, it is essential to provide adequate access to natural sites across the entire Borough. Site visits highlight that signage to natural sites is particularly poor. The entrance to sites is also frequently hidden. To an extent, access can depend upon the ownership of the site (and the management). Some sites may also be inaccessible due to safety considerations.

NSN6	Increase access where appropriate to natural and semi natural open space sites by ensuring that entrances to sites are visible and that appropriate signage is provided.
-------------	--

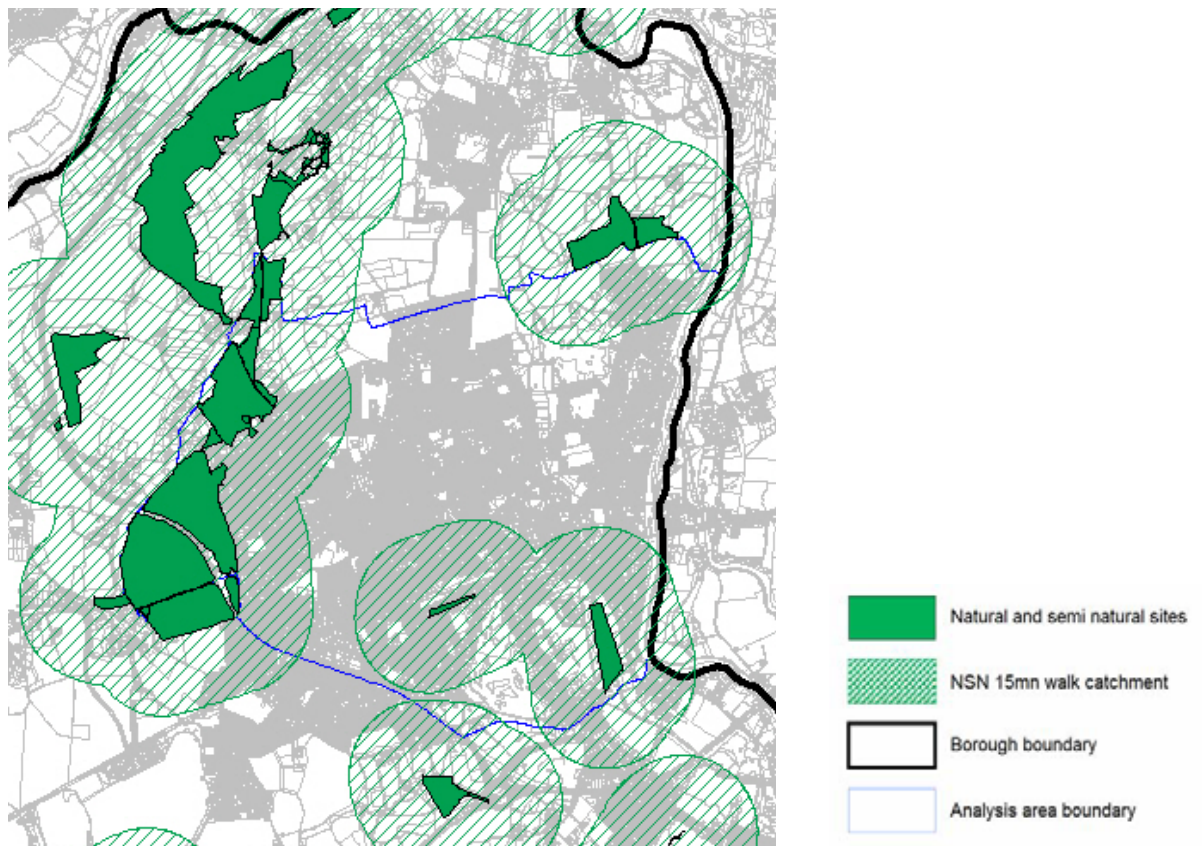
- 5.36 In addition to natural and semi natural open spaces located within the Borough boundaries, there is also an array of larger sites bordering the Borough such as Bracknell Forest. These sites often serve local needs within the 15 minute catchment, and complement the provision within the Borough's settlements and ensure that residents have choice and opportunity.
- 5.37 Within the rural areas of the Borough, accessible countryside provides much of the natural provision for residents. It is important that this countryside is made accessible through signposting rights of way and green corridors. There are many residents living in rural villages outside of the recommended catchment area for natural and semi natural open space. It is therefore essential to maximise the accessibility of the countryside, an issue that will be focussed on in more detail within the Green Infrastructure Study.

NSN7	Establish a network of accessible green corridors to link natural and semi natural sites within settlements to other types of local open space and also the wider countryside through the provision of appropriate public rights of way.
-------------	--

- 5.38 Whilst qualitative deficiencies have been identified, the emphasis should also be on addressing the significant quantitative shortfall and addressing accessibility to current and new sites, particularly in rural settlements. Opportunities to provide naturalised areas in these locations should be seized.
- 5.39 New provision should be targeted in localities that are lacking. In terms of the current breakdown in provision, significant quantitative deficiencies can be found in the Maidenhead analysis area and Southern wards analysis area. As discussed below, along with new provision there is potential for other typologies to help alleviate current deficiencies.

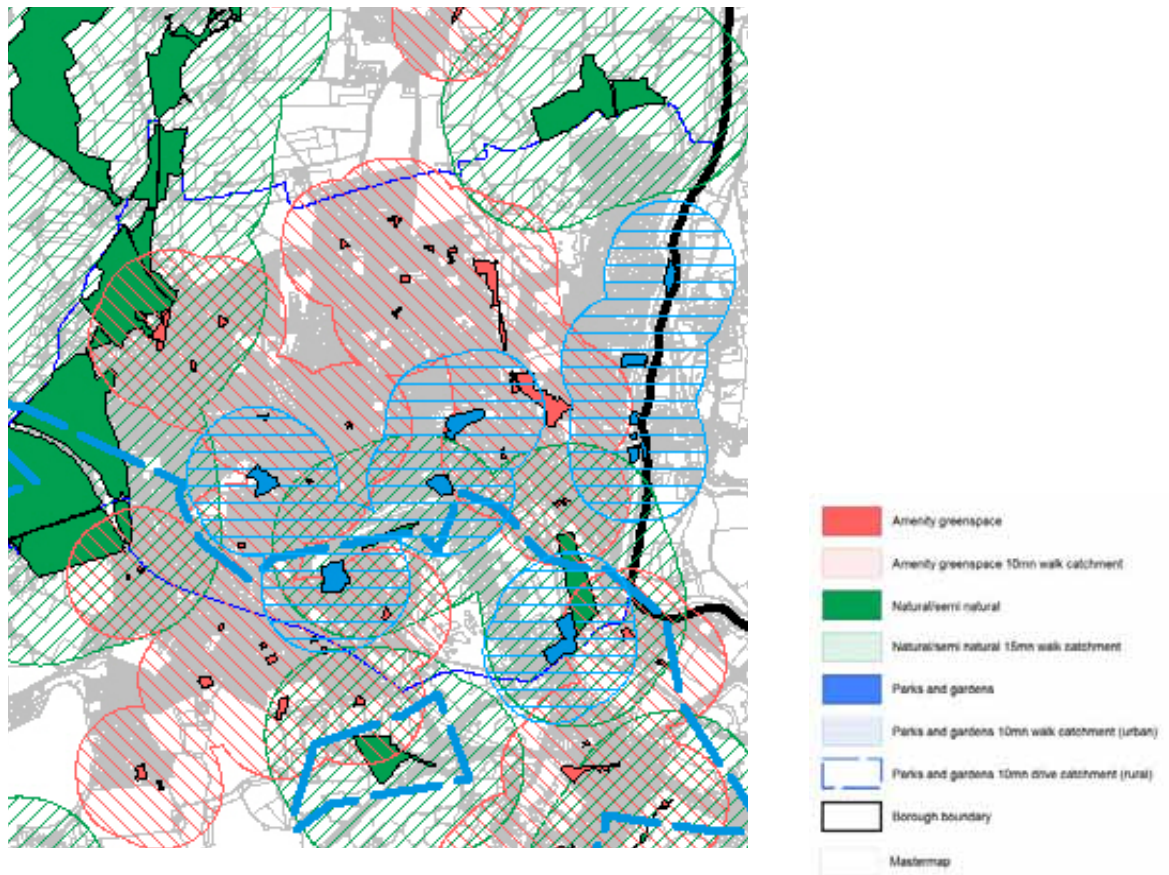
5.40 When considering the provision to the north of Maidenhead, application of the accessibility standard supports the findings of the quantity standards to an extent, as there is a significant lack of provision to the north of the town. This is shown in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 North of Maidenhead analysis area (NSN provision)



5.41 The opportunities to address this shortfall are shown in Figure 5.4. There are several amenity green spaces in the north of Maidenhead that could be developed to provide pocket parks with natural features. Further to this the access routes and public rights of way between the north of Maidenhead and Maidenhead Thicket to the west should also be addressed.

Figure 5.4 North of Maidenhead analysis area



5.42 As consultation highlights, natural and semi natural open space is one of the most popular of all of the open spaces in the Borough. The nature of these spaces and the wildlife and habitat value offered within them means that balancing the ecological value of these sites and monitoring the impact of recreational use is essential.

NSN8	Monitor the impact of recreational use on natural and semi natural open space sites (in all areas but particularly at Windsor Great Park) and ensure that recreational opportunity is balanced with biodiversity.
-------------	---

5.43 As shown by Figures 5.5 and 5.6 overleaf, there are residents to the south of Old Windsor and north of Sunningdale that have limited access to any publically designated open space, especially natural and semi natural sites. Within these areas there is an opportunity to mitigate the pressure on Windsor Great Park by developing a sizeable site (to be identified) that can address the significant quantitative shortfall in the Southern wards analysis area.

Figure 5.5 Sunningdale (general areas for potential provision)

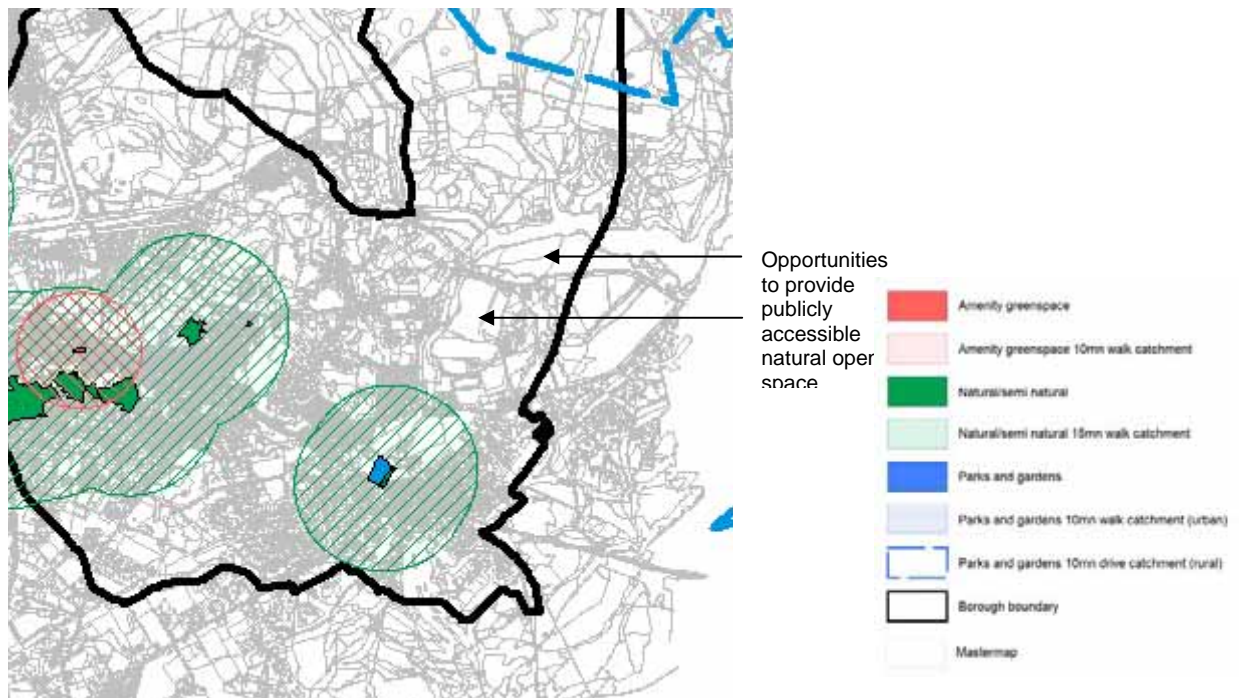
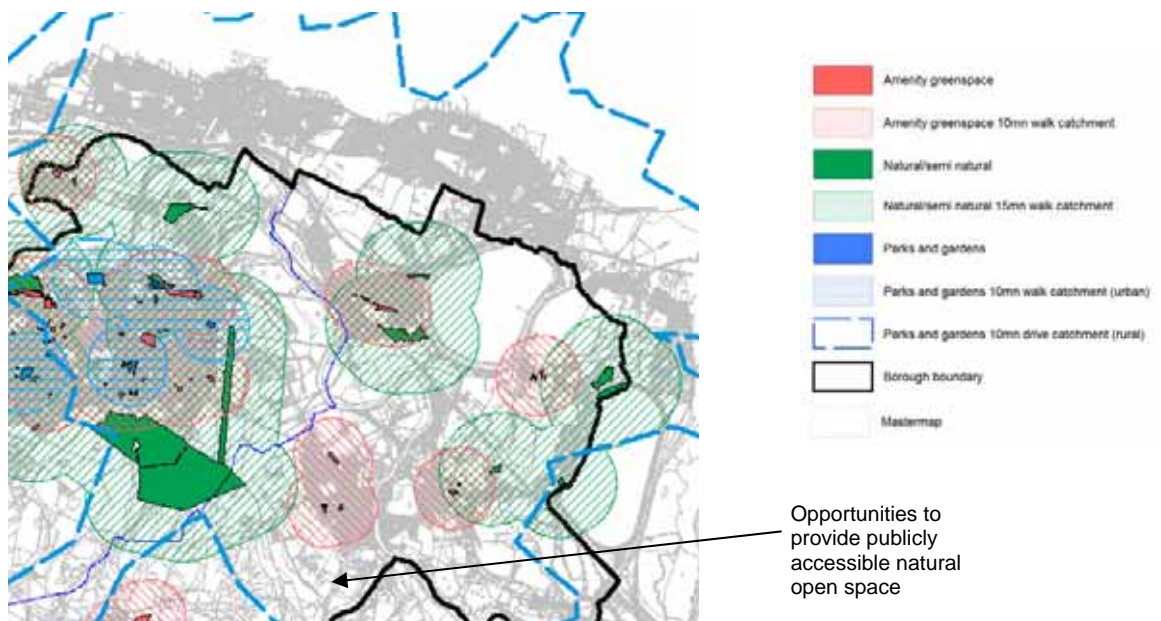


Figure 5.6 Old Windsor (general areas for potential provision)



SECTION 5 – NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE

- 5.44 By 2026, the largest quantitative shortfall of natural and semi natural open space will be in the Southern wards (c. 124 ha). As shown by Figure 5.5 and 5.6 the Council should seek to identify land whereby public rights of way can be established. It is vital that these are well publicised and their impact monitored. As new provision of natural and semi natural areas is largely opportunity led, consideration should be given to the inclusion of naturalised open space within other open space types, particularly in Maidenhead.

NSN9	Seek to implement innovative solutions combining natural and semi natural spaces with other types of open space in order to best meet the needs of local residents and maximise the benefits derived from the available open space.
-------------	---

Summary

- 5.45 Natural and semi natural open space is the second most popular of all types of open space in the Borough, with 68% of residents visiting these spaces more than once a month. This reinforces how highly valued these spaces are to residents of the Borough.
- 5.46 In addition to the recreational value of natural and semi-natural resources, residents also frequently recognise the wider benefits of natural open spaces, particularly in terms of providing opportunities for biodiversity and habitat creation.
- 5.47 Natural and semi natural open spaces, alongside areas of countryside, were perceived to be a key part of the character of the Borough and the value placed on these sites was clear. The need to protect these sites from development was a key theme throughout all consultations.
- 5.48 Application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards highlights that the key priority for natural and semi natural open space is to increase the quantity of sites in specific analysis areas. Maximising access to natural and semi natural sites both within settlements and to those in the surrounding countryside should be a key future priority.
- 5.49 Opportunities to address locational deficiencies in the northern parts of Maidenhead town and in the Southern wards should be taken, however due to the nature of this typology, any new provision will need time to establish and mature.