THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD – OPEN SPACE STUDY

A

FINAL REPORT

BY

PMP

DECEMBER 2008

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APPENDICES (under separate cover)

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Introduction and background

The study

1.1   During December 2007, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake an Open Space Audit and Green Infrastructure Study. This report sets out the study findings and includes an assessment of local needs and existing open space provision. The green infrastructure study is included as a supplementary document to accompany the main open space report.

1.2   The study will assist the Council in the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF), establish appropriate open space standards, identify areas in the Borough where there are deficiencies in provision and identify solutions to meet any deficiencies.

1.3   The two overall objectives for the study are to:

- produce an open space strategy which will examine existing provision as well as mapping and surveying new sites. Recommendations are required relating to the quality, quantity and accessibility of provision

- carry out an assessment of the green infrastructure to identify areas of provision and potential linkages between them, and to look at areas of search, particularly in relation to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

1.4   The findings of this work will enable the Council to adopt a clear vision, priorities for the future (based on local need) and establish a direction for the allocation of resources.

1.5   This study is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of PPG17, and its Companion Guide published in September 2002. Further details of these documents are set out later in this section.

Why public open space?

1.6   Open space and recreation provision in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (the Borough) has an important role to play in supporting the implementation of both national objectives and more locally in the achievement of key Council priorities.

1.7   The provision of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is becoming increasingly important on the national stage and the contributions it can bring to both national and local priorities are now more widely recognised. The popularity of open spaces in local communities is reflected in the recently published Park Life Report (GreenSpace, June 2007), which indicates that 92% of all those questioned had visited a park within the last month.

1.8   In addition, the recently published Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross Government Strategy for England (2008), supports the creation of a healthy society, particularly healthy children, and recognises the role of sport and physical activity in doing this. There is a need for quality, accessible sporting facilities and opportunities as acknowledged in The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (DCSF).

1.9   PPG17 states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:

- supporting an urban renaissance

- supporting a rural renewal

- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion

- health and well being

- promoting more sustainable development.

1.10   The Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper (May 2007) highlights minimising climate change and the protection of the environment as some of the key challenges to be addressed through the planning system in future years. The provision of green space will be instrumental in the achievement of these objectives.

Function and benefits of open space

1.11   Open spaces can provide a number of functions within the urban fabric of towns and villages. For example, the provision for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between built environments and/or a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity.

1.12   Each type of open space has both primary and secondary functions. For example, the primary function of allotments is for the growing of produce; the primary function of play areas for children's play and for playing pitches it is for formal sports training and events. Open space can additionally perform a secondary function. For example, outdoor sports facilities have an amenity value in addition to facilitating sport and recreation. Many types of open spaces can also provide places for young people to meet and hang out.

1.13   There is a need to provide a balance between different types of open space in order to meet local needs. For example, not all residents in a particular area will show a demand for playing pitches or allotments; but there may be a demand for green corridors such as nature walks or bridleways.

1.14   Changing social and economic circumstances, changed work and leisure practices, more sophisticated consumer tastes and higher public expectations have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers. While the provision of open spaces can be challenging, open spaces can also promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector. Open spaces should provide residents with places where they are safe in the face of crime and disorder issues within communities.

1.15   Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wider range of people than some sport and leisure facilities and are better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation is key to a sustainable and thriving community.

1.16   The Park Life report (GreenSpace, June 2007) highlighted that 83% of those surveyed feel that parks are the focal point of a community. In rural areas, village greens are often the centre for village activity.

1.17 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality public realm such as parks and open spaces can help promote an area as an attractive place to live, and can result in a number of wider benefits. These are highlighted in Appendix A.

National Policy Context: Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation & Assessing Needs and Opportunities - PPG17 Companion Guide

1.18 PPG17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities (paragraph 1). It encourages local authorities to plan effectively for the future delivery of appropriate open space, sport and leisure facilities.

1.19 PPG17 states local authorities should undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs and opportunities for new open space and facilities (paragraph 2).

1.20 Paragraph 5 states that *"The Government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and recreational facilities"* and 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".*
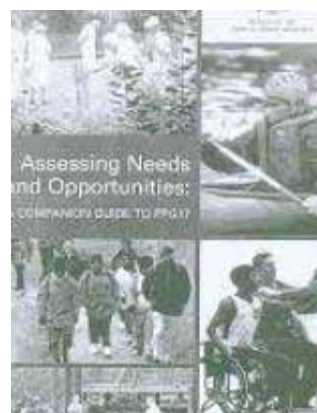
1.21 The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:

- 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.

1.22 The Companion Guide to PPG17 sets out the process for undertaking local assessments of needs and audits of provision. It also:

- indicates how councils can establish the needs of local communities and apply provision standards

- promotes a consistent approach across various types of open space.

1.23 PMP and the Council have followed the recommendations of PPG17 and its Companion Guide throughout the study. In following these recommendations, this study has the potential to make a significant difference to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces in the Borough.

Need for local assessments

1.24 This assessment of open space and local needs will enable the Council to:

- plan positively, creatively and effectively in identifying priority areas for improvement and to target appropriate types of open space

- ensure an adequate provision of high quality, accessible open space to meet the needs of the local community

- ensure any accessible funding is invested in the right places where there is the most need

- conduct Section 106 negotiations with developers from a position of knowledge with evidence to support such negotiations.

1.25 Where no assessment exists, developers can undertake their own independent assessment to demonstrate that open space is surplus to requirements. It is therefore desirable for the Council to have robust data to protect open space within the Borough.

Local features and demographics

1.26 The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead lies in the east of the Berkshire, bordering Slough, Reading, Wokingham, South Bucks, Wycombe, Surrey Heath, Runnymede, Spelthorne and Bracknell Forest. The Borough covers an area of 76 square miles and is divided into 23 wards. For the purposes of this study, these 23 wards have been grouped into four analysis areas: Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton, the Northern wards, and the Southern wards (further detail is provided in Section 2, Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2).

1.27 According to the 2001 Office of National Statistics report, the Borough has a population of 133,641. Population estimates based on the Population in Berkshire 2004 Review suggest that this figure is likely to increase to 136,047 by 2016, should the annual housing requirements be satisfied. This increase raises the pressure on existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and will also create demand for further provision.

1.28 Children under the age of 15 account for around 19% of the population, which is in accordance with the national average and identifies the significance of provision for young people. Equally important is meeting the needs of older people, particularly given that 20% of the population are over the retirement age.

1.29   Maidenhead is the major settlement in the Borough with a population of circa 45,000, followed by Windsor, with a population of approximately 28,000. Besides these, the main urban areas are Cookham, Bisham and Bray in the north and Old Windsor, Eton, Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale in the south. The majority of residents in the Borough live within these urban areas, so there will be a greater demand for localised facilities in these areas.

1.30   Within the Borough there is a noticeable rural and urban divide, with the most affluent wards (in monetary terms) located in the more rural areas of Bray, Maidenhead Riverside, Oldfield, Old Windsor, Horton and Wraysbury, Sunninghill and South Ascot, and Sunningdale. All wards in the Borough have a relatively low level of deprivation compared to national averages. The appropriate provision and enhancement of open space has the potential to reduce this rural/urban divide and also ensure that all residents have good access to local provision.

1.31   The outlying rural areas present a different challenge for the Council in terms of open space, sport and recreation provision, with much of the provision in the ownership and management of parish councils.

1.32   The wards with the highest levels of income deprivation are Furze Platt, Belmont, and Clewer East. The enhancement of open space could lead to the improvement of quality of life within these wards by providing high quality local amenities and encouraging community involvement.

The role of green space in the Borough

1.33   The Borough has an extensive green network. Green space is a key feature of the design of both Windsor and Maidenhead and remains an important characteristic of each town. However, it is recognised that these green spaces need to be better connected to fully benefit from their value in terms of community amenities, recreation and biodiversity. For many residents, the sense of the environment within the town is the main attraction of living in the Borough. The green network of the National Trust, the Crown and publicly managed open spaces also facilitates linkages with settlements in the more rural areas of the Borough.

1.34   Compared to towns such as Cookham and Bray, Maidenhead is relatively new, established as a key crossing point on the Thames and on the main route from London to Bristol. Windsor was developed around the Royal Estate and grew substantially in the 20th Century as a market and commuter town.

1.35   83% of the Borough is Green Belt. The areas to the south around Chobham Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); near Sunningdale and the Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI to the south of Ascot are the nearest parts of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area to the Borough. These areas have been designated under the European Union Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) to protect the habitat of the internationally important bird species of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler. Most of the southern wards fall within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area buffer zone and additional restrictions apply to new housing development in that area.

Structure of this report

1.36   This report is split into 13 sections. Section 2 summarises the methodology used to undertake the study and Section 3 provides the strategic context to the study.

1.37   Sections 4-12 relate to each of the typologies identified within the scope of the study. Each of section sets out the strategic context for its particular typology, the recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards (which are detailed in grey boxes within each section of the report), the application of these standards and the resulting priorities. Section 13 summarises the local standards and recommendations for each typology.

1.38   There are also a number of appendices that support the report, providing further background detail and statistical calculations. These are referenced throughout the report.

SECTION 2

UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

Undertaking the study

Introduction

2.1   This study was undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its Companion Guide. The key emphasis of PPG17 is the importance of undertaking a local needs assessment as opposed to following national trends and standards.

2.2   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 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.

2.3   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 tailored to ensure that the needs and expectations of residents in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are adequately addressed.

Types of open space

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

"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".

2.5   PPG17 identifies 10 typologies including nine types of green space and one category of hard open space. It states that local authorities, when preparing assessments of needs and audits of existing open space and recreation facilities, should use these typologies, or variations of it.

2.6   Table 2.1 sets out the types of open space included within this study. In line with guidelines set out in PPG17, only sites within settlement boundaries have been included in the audit. The significance of sites outside of these boundaries, alongside areas of nearby

Figure 2.1 Grenfell Park (ID 239)

natural countryside will be considered, where appropriate, throughout this report. The study takes into account open spaces provided, owned and managed by public and private organisations to provide an accurate picture of current provision.

Table 2.1 – Typologies of open space, sport and recreation facilities within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

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 or more other open space types within them.	• 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.	• wildlife conservation • biodiversity • environmental education and awareness
Amenity green space	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens.	• 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 age 12. Whilst 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 specifically designed as equipped play facilities.	• children's play
Provision for young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people age 12 and above. Whilst 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: • teenage shelters • skateboard parks • BMX tracks • Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs).	• activities or meeting places for young people

Type	Definition	Primary purpose
Outdoor sports facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields. These include: • outdoor sports pitches • tennis courts and bowls greens • golf courses • athletics tracks • playing fields (including school playing fields).	• 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.	• growing vegetable, fruit and flowers
Cemeteries and churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	• burial of the dead • quiet contemplation
Green corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	• walking, cycling or horse riding • leisure purposes or travel • opportunities for wildlife migration
Civic spaces	Hard surfaced areas located usually located within town or city centres.	• community events • setting for civic buildings

Source: PPG17 Companion Guide (2002)

The geographical area

2.7 Analysis of the open space across the Borough has been undertaken by looking at the supply and demand in four different areas within the local authority boundary (referred to as analysis areas in this report). These areas were discussed and agreed with the Council at the outset of the study.

2.8 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 Borough are understood.

2.9 These analysis areas have been used to ensure that consultation was undertaken proportionately across the Borough, and the application of local standards will enable the identification of priorities at neighbourhood level.

2.10 Table 2.2 details the analysis areas used in this study and the wards within each analysis area.

2.11   Quantity standard calculations in this report have been undertaken using population estimates contained within the 2001 Office of National Statistics. For 2026, projections figures from the Population in Berkshire - 2004 Review have been used.

Table 2.2 – Analysis areas of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Area name	Current Population*	2026 Population	Wards included
Maidenhead	42,850	48,677	Pinkneys Green, Furze Platt, Belmont, Boyn Hill, Oldfield, Maidenhead Riverside
Windsor and Eton	33,304	37,075	Eton Wick, Eton and Castle, Castle Without, Clewer North, Clewer South, Clewer East, Park
The Northern wards	31,597	28,808	Bisham and Cookham, Hurley and Walthams, Cox Green, Bray
The Southern wards	25,890	33,092	Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury, Old Windsor, Ascot and Cheapside, Sunninghill and South Ascot, Sunningdale
Total	**133,641**	**147,652**	**Census 2001 data*

Figure 2.2 Analysis areas in the Borough
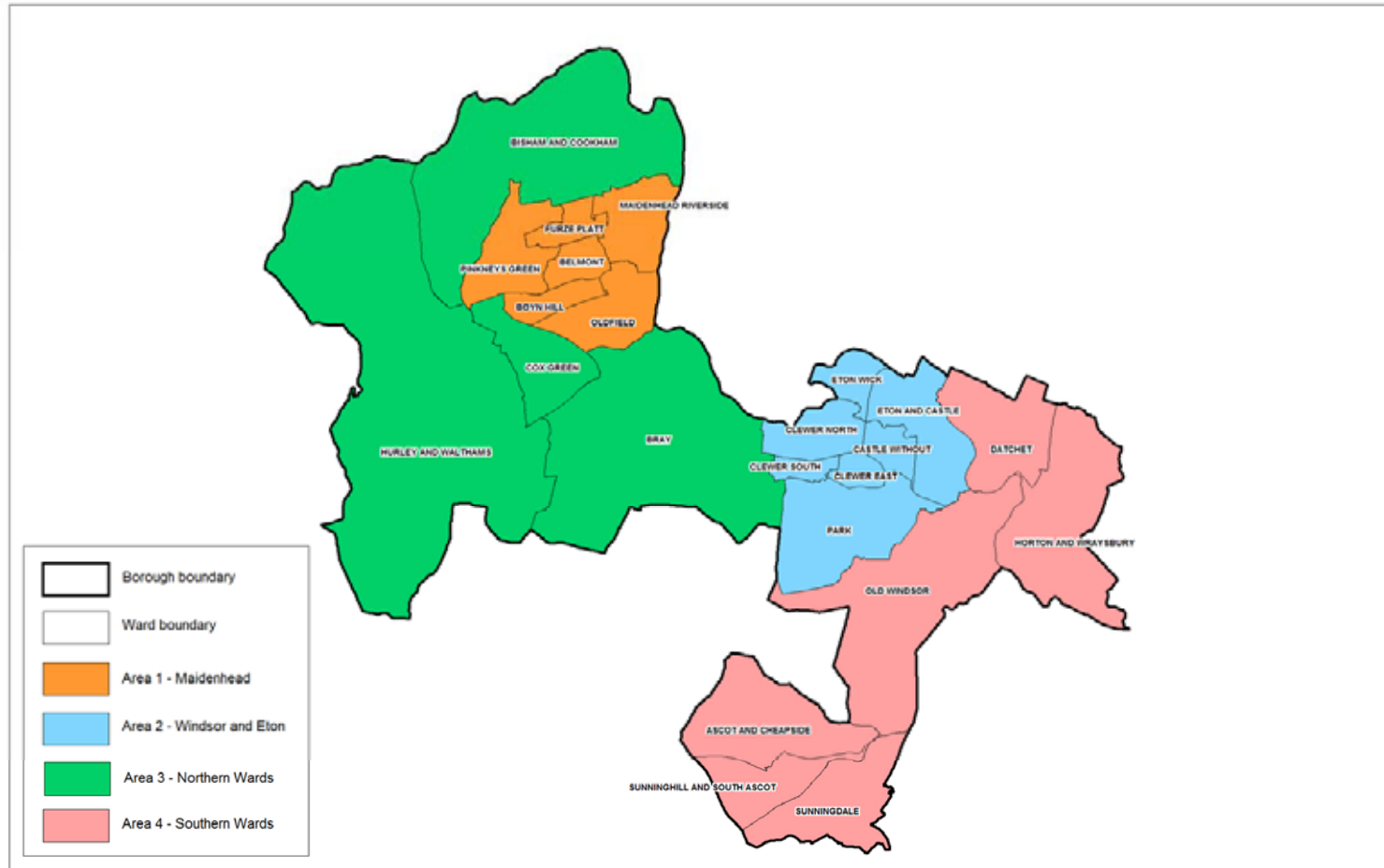
Open space study analysis areas

Based upon the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Officer.
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PPG17 – Five step process

2.12   The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five step process for undertaking a local assessment of open space. This process was followed in this study. The five step process is shown in Figure 2.2. As the figure shows, Steps 1 and 2 were undertaken simultaneously.

2.13   The five step process is as follows:

- Step 1 – identifying local needs

- Step 2 – auditing local provision

- Step 3 – setting local provision standards

- Step 4 – applying local provision standards

- Step 5 – drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.

Figure 2.3 Study process
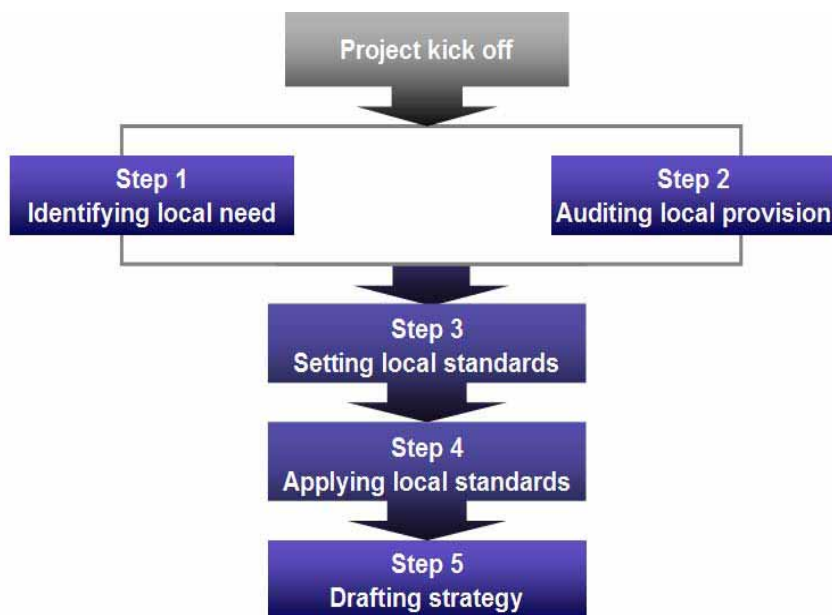
Step 1 - Identifying local needs

2.14   PPG17 states that community consultations are essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision.

2.15   The PPG17 guidance relies less on the implementation of national standards and places increased emphasis on local needs. The assessment of needs should result in qualitative visions and quantity and accessibility standards that reflect the type and amount of facilities that local communities want to see. It is essential that the local standards set are directly reflective of local needs and expectations.

2.16   In order to identify local needs, a series of consultations were carried out including:

- household survey

- neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions

- Internet survey for children and young people

- external agencies survey

- internal Council officers

- parish and town council survey.

2.17   Background is provided on each of the key elements of the consultation in the paragraphs that follow.

Household survey

2.18   The household survey provides an opportunity for randomly selected households to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space provision as well as identifying their aspirations for future provision.

2.19   5,000 questionnaires were distributed to households across the Borough to capture the views of both users and non-users of open spaces. Households were randomly selected using the electoral register.

2.20   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. A copy of the household survey and its covering letter can be found in Appendix B.

2.21   506 postal surveys were returned, providing a statistically sound sample that can be used to estimate responses for the remaining population across the Borough. Obtaining more than 400 responses means that the results are accurate to +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval.

2.22   The household survey provides residents with an important opportunity to give their views on open spaces. However, it should be noted that whilst examples are provided, in some instances, perception of different types of open space may affect comments made and specific comments made regarding types of open space may overlap. For example, some children may call a play area a park. This will be returned to in the typology specific sections where appropriate.

Neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions

2.23   Neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions were held in five locations across the Borough, specifically:

- Nicholson's Centre, Maidenhead

- Windsor Central Station

- Cookham Library

- Waitrose, Sunningdale

- Datchet Library.

2.24   These sessions were advertised to the public via the local press and provided an informal opportunity for residents to give their views on open space in the Borough. These 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

2.25   Consultation with young people and children is traditionally difficult, but it is important to understand the views of this large sector of the community as children are important users of open space.

2.26   A questionnaire was designed to identify key issues applicable to young people and posted on the internet. All schools within the Council boundary were notified of the website address and asked to encourage their pupils to complete the questionnaires. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

2.27   The survey received 150 responses in total. The majority of responses were from students at Windsor Boys School, Datchet St Marys C of E Primary School, and Churchmead School.

2.28   The information obtained through the distribution of these questionnaires has supplemented the findings of the other consultation techniques and guided the development of recommendations in this report, specifically regarding provision for children and young people.

External agencies survey

2.29   Questionnaires were distributed to key regional and local agencies with the aim of obtaining the viewpoint of key stakeholders and ensuring that the recommended local standards dovetail with local and regional priorities. A list of consultees can be found in Appendix D.

Internal Council officers

2.30   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. These sessions facilitated a greater understanding of the priorities of various Council departments and their aspirations for open space. The consultations also identified what plans were in place to develop specific open space sites.

Parish and town Council survey

2.31   A questionnaire was distributed to all parish and town councils in the Borough to gain their views on the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces within their settlements. With a number of open space sites owned or managed by local councils this was an important element of the consultation, particularly in obtaining comments on site specific issues. Follow-up consultation calls were made in an attempt to ensure all parish representatives were given the opportunity to inform the study. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix E.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

2.32   PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space, 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.

2.33   Audits should also include all primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions. It was agreed with the Council that sports provision at schools will be categorised under the outdoor sports facilities typology but that no qualitative analysis will be carried out. This is in line with key recommendations emerging from the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (2007).

2.34   Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space. Audits of quality are particularly important as they allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.

2.35   The multi functionality of some types of open space can present a challenge during the audit process. In order to address this issue, all spaces are classified by their primary purpose. This ensures that all spaces are counted only once, but does not negate the need to consider the inter-relationships between different types of open space as part of the study.

2.36   Additionally, some specific 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.

2.37   The Council provided PMP with all available data on the provision of open space across the Borough. PMP then undertook a detailed desk based exercise to audit all open space provision. Data sources included aerial photography, the local plan, maps and internet search engines.

2.38   It is important to note that only those sites within settlement boundaries have been included in the audit, in line with guidelines set out in PPG17. Grass verges and farmland were also excluded from consideration.

2.39   A total of 424 sites were identified during the audit process. Each site was classified into a relevant typology and site assessments were then carried out at each site.

2.40   Site assessments were undertaken using a matrix developed with Council officers enabling comparisons 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 (such as health and educational).

2.41   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 their scores can be found in Appendix F. The site assessment matrix can be found in Appendix G.

2.42   In addition to assessing the quality, accessibility and wider benefits of open space sites across the Borough, the site visits also provided an opportunity to ensure that no sites had been omitted and that the classification of each open space was correct.

2.43   Each open space site was then digitised by the Council using Geographic Information System (GIS) software and its associated ratings and characteristics were recorded on an Access database. The Access database enables further updates of open spaces and varying forms of analysis to be undertaken. It allows a dynamic reporting and assessment mechanism and enables individual sites or specific geographical locations to be examined in detail.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and applying provision standards

2.44   PPG17 recommends that local authorities use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (Step 1) to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space. These 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).

2.45   The local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility of open space should relate directly to the local consultation undertaken and should therefore be reflective of local needs. PMP has produced locally based standards using the findings of the household survey and other consultations undertaken where appropriate.

2.46   Table 2.3 summarises the process adopted for setting each of the 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, for example, 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 strategies and documents.
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 four analysis areas.
Benchmarking	Figures detailing local standards set by PMP for other open space projects to provide a benchmark when setting local standards.
Consultation (household survey)	Consideration of the findings of the household survey with regards the quantity of provision for each type of open space. This analysis provides a robust indication (at the Borough wide 95% confidence level) of public perception of the existing level of provision of all different types of open spaces.
Consultation comments	PPG17 indicates that where local provision is regarded as inadequate it is important to establish why this is the case. A feeling of deficiency can sometimes be due to qualitative issues of existing open space sites rather than actual quantity issues.

Process Stage	Methodology
	It is therefore important to assess findings of the household survey, the drop in sessions and other qualitative consultation to gain a thorough understanding of local community need. Comments emerging through qualitative consultation are particularly important to test the themes emerging from the household survey.
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: • quantity – x hectares/number of facilities per 1000 population • accessibility – a distance threshold in metres or drivetime • 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.

Quantity

2.47   The open space audit enables an understanding of the quantity of provision for each type of open space in each area of the Borough. This level of detail enables the calculation of the provision of each type of open space per 1,000 population. This information is provided within typology specific Sections 4-12.

2.48   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 Borough

• establish areas of the Borough 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.

2.49   This assessment measures the quantity of provision against the current population of 133,641 (Census, 2001). Consideration is also given to the likely implications of future population growth up to 2026. The Council provided the population projections used in this report, which are based on the potential levels of growth set out in the Population in Berkshire - 2004 Review.

2.50   In order to ensure that 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 – 12. Local standards are subsequently set, taking into account the current level of provision compared to the perceived community need.

Accessibility

2.51   Accessibility is a key criterion for open space sites. Without good accessibility for the public, the provision of good quality or sufficient quantity of open space would be of limited value. The overall aim of accessibility standards should be to identify:

- how accessible sites are

- how far people are willing to travel to reach open space

- areas of the Borough that are deficient in provision (identified through the application of local standards).

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

2.53   Distance thresholds (ie the maximum distance which typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using the preferred mode of transport) are a useful planning tool especially when used in association with a GIS. PPG17 encourages any new open space sites or enhancement of existing sites to be accessible by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. There is a real desire to move away from reliance on the car.

2.54   Accessibility standards are set in the form of a distance in metres where walking is considered to be the most suitable mode of travel, and a drive time where driving to the open space site would be more appropriate.

Quality

2.55   The quality and value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. Examples of this are:

- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Its usage is therefore restricted and its public value is limited

- a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have some significant wider benefit such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a relatively high value to the public.

2.56   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 Borough

- specific types of open space.

2.57   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.

2.58   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.

2.59   These scores are then weighted (multiplied either by 4, 3, 2 or 1) to reflect the importance of the factors 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 factors with lower weightings.

2.60   Full details of the linkages between the quality assessments and the site visits undertaken can be found in Appendix L.

2.61   Scores achieved during site visits are translated into percentages and can then be benchmarked against each other. The application of the process for each typology can be found in typology specific Sections 4 – 12.

Step 5 – Drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities

2.62   The application of the local standards enables the identification of deficiencies in terms of accessibility, quality and quantity and also enables spatial distribution of unmet need.

2.63   Based on this analysis, strategic options can be devised based on existing provision to be protected, existing provision to be enhanced, existing provision to be relocated and proposals for new provision.

2.64   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:

P&G1	Given the low number of sites within the Borough, all park and garden sites should be afforded protection.

SECTION 3

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Strategic context

Introduction

3.1   This section reviews the strategic context and provides background on the national/regional picture relevant to open space, sport and recreation facilities. The Council has provided all documents reviewed within this section of the report. Whilst this review is not exhaustive it provides details on the context considered important within this study.

3.2   For the purposes of this study, PPG17 and the Companion Guide are the key overarching documents. All documents reviewed within this report influence the provision of facilities in the Borough and the strategic priorities of the Council.

3.3   Relevant information from local strategic documents has been included within the individual typology sections, highlighting specific strategic objectives that link into this study. Regional and local documents have been reviewed later in this section. A review of national strategic documents is below. Further detail is provided in Appendix H.

National strategic documents

Voluntary Quality of Life and Cross-Cutting Indicator (Audit Commission, April 2001 – March 2002)

3.4   The Audit Commission consulted on a set of voluntary Quality of Life indicators for local authorities during autumn 2000. The exercise was prompted by the new powers given to local authorities in the Local Government Act 2000 to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of their area.

3.5   32 indicators were identified for the voluntary exercise. All the proposed indicators are designed to paint a picture of the quality of life in the local area and to challenge all partners locally to address the issues within their community strategies.

3.6   Open spaces provide a major factor in the quality of people's lives and this was demonstrated with five of the 32 Quality of Life Factors having a direct link with the provision of open spaces. These factors were:

- area of parks and green spaces per 1,000 head of population (includes urban parks and open spaces plus other 'public open areas')

- percentage of rivers and canals rated as good or fair quality

- area of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) per 1,000 population. LNRs are for both people and wildlife and provide opportunities to study, learn and enjoy nature

- the area of land designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - provide wonderful opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife and landscape

- kilometres of dedicated cycle routes per 100km of principal and other local authority roads.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 - Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002 and its Companion Guide (September 2002)

3.7   PPG17 is the key strategic document relevant to this study. It sets out policies that must be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of regional planning guidance notes and by local authorities in the preparation of development plans.

3.8   It aims to support the wider government objectives of:

- supporting an urban renaissance

- supporting urban renewal

- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion

- health and well-being

- promoting more sustainable development.

3.9   It states that: *"the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and sports and recreational facilities".*

3.10   Its associated Companion Guide sets out the process for undertaking local assessments of needs and audits of provision. It also:

- indicates how councils can establish the needs of local communities and apply provision standards

- promotes as consistent an approach as possible across varying types of open space.

3.11   The major change in the policy guidance compared to the previous version is the requirement for local authority decisions regarding open space to be informed by local needs assessments and an audit of existing provision. Such audits should incorporate qualitative, quantitative and accessibility considerations as well as the overall non-monetary value of the land including the level of use. National standards are no longer considered to meet local needs, although they may be used as benchmarks.

3.12   Other subsequent changes in PPG17 are:

- the definition of open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals and lakes which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation

- a greater emphasis is placed on qualitative considerations – this is particularly important as it will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and/or maintenance of open space

- the setting of local standards appropriate to the local area rather than assessment by national standards although these can be used as benchmarks. Government believes 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

- further guidance on the constituent elements of open space typologies

- acknowledgement of the multiple functions that open spaces can perform.

3.13 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.

Green Spaces, Better Places – Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) – The Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2002)

3.14 This report set the context of much of what was delivered through PPG17 and its Companion Guide. The report recognises that parks and green spaces are a popular and precious resource, which can make a valuable contribution to the attractiveness of a neighbourhood, to the health and wellbeing of people, as well as expanding educational opportunities of children and adults alike. The report is in four parts:

- Parks and Green Spaces and Urban Life - emphasises the benefits urban parks and green spaces bring to people, neighbourhoods and cities

- Challenges and Responses - considers some of the problems affecting urban parks and green spaces and how they can be overcome

- Creating Green Space Networks - makes recommendations for good practice in providing a strategic policy framework

- Making It Happen – indicates that strong civic and local pride and responsibility are necessary to achieve the vision reinforced by a successful green spaces strategy.

3.15 The final report concludes that now is the time for an urban renaissance with these valuable but often neglected areas.

Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces (DTLR, 2002)

3.16 The vital importance of parks and other urban green spaces in enhancing the urban environment and the quality of city life has been recognised in both the Urban Taskforce report and the Urban White Paper. The research was commissioned by the DTLR in April 2001, and was conducted by the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield.

3.17   Urban Green Space is defined as land that consists predominantly of unsealed, permeable, soft surfaces such as soil, grass, shrubs and trees. It is the umbrella term for all such areas whether or not they are publicly accessible or publicly managed. Key findings included:

- research confirms the importance of urban green spaces. It is estimated that, in England, over 33 million people make over 2.5 billion visits to urban green spaces each year

- the five main barriers deterring people from using urban green spaces are:

    - lack of, or poor condition of, facilities (including play facilities for children)

    - other users (including anti-social behaviour)

    - concerns about dogs and mess

    - safety and other psychological issues (eg feelings of vulnerability and inertia)

    - environmental quality issues such as litter, graffiti and vandalism.

- access issues are of concern to the elderly and particularly to people with disabilities

- most of the barriers are resource issues which relate to the location, accessibility or environmental quality of urban green spaces and could therefore be overcome if planners, designers and managers of these spaces could address them satisfactorily

- the most frequently mentioned characteristics of the ideal urban green space were vegetation, play opportunities, comforts, good access, sport and events

- there is no clear link between levels of spending and the extent of good or innovative practice

- there were large differences in the amount of external funding that had been gained by local authorities

- lack of resources for capital spending was identified as a major problem by all local authorities in the research. Heritage Lottery Funding and Section 106 Agreements were seen as the most valuable external sources for capital development. In most cases private sponsorship is not significant

- urban green spaces can act as a catalyst for wider community initiatives. That parks are open every day with free entry and offer neutral ground with non-discriminatory access makes them completely different from many building based activities.

3.18   Urban green spaces have both an existence value and a use value. In particular they:

- contribute significantly to social inclusion because they are free and accessible to all

- can become a centre of community spirit

- contribute to child development through scope for outdoor, energetic and imaginative play

- offer numerous educational opportunities.

3.19 Urban green spaces also provide a range of health, environmental and economic benefits. Demonstrating how parks and other green spaces meet wider council policy objectives linked to other agendas, like education, diversity, health, safety, environment, jobs and regeneration, can help raise the political profile and commitment of an authority to green space issues.

3.20 The Urban White Paper stresses the need to identify opportunities for both building and supporting partnerships for managing open spaces in and around towns, particularly where this involves businesses and local communities. Community involvement in local parks can lead to increased use, enhancement of quality and richness of experience and, in particular, can ensure that the facilities are suited to local needs.

3.21 Evidence has been put forward to suggest that environmental enhancement not only makes places more attractive and pleasant, but that green space initiatives can result in community strengthening and local economic stimulation, as well as improvement to local environmental quality.

3.22 Four levels of integration of urban green space into urban renewal can be identified, characterised by an increasing strategic synergy between environment, economy and community. They are:

- attracting inward economic investment through the provision of attractive urban landscapes

- unforeseen spin-offs from grassroots green space initiatives

- parks as flagships in neighbourhood renewal

- strategic, multi-agency area based regeneration, linking environment and economy.

The Use of Public Parks in England (Sport England, 2003)

3.23 The aims of this national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage were to establish:

- how many adults in England use parks

- what activities people take part in when visiting parks

- the reasons people visit particular parks

- the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer

- why non-users do not use parks.

3.24   The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks and recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land. Key findings include:

- just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months

- there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups, with almost three quarters of adults from the higher social group visiting a park compared with only half of those from the lower social group

- people from black and ethnic minority communities also have relatively low participation as well as those adults with a disability

- over 8 in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring/summer with almost two thirds visiting a park at least once a week, and women tended to visit parks more often than men

- it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits to parks during the spring and summer months and 600 million visits during the autumn and winter months – a total of 1.8 billion visits a year

- the most popular type of park visited was an urban/ city park.

Spatial Planning for Sport and Active Recreation (Sport England, 2005)

3.25   Sport England's aims are for two million more people to be active by 2012 and to provide more places to play sport. Sport England seeks to:

- develop and improve the knowledge and practice of sport and physical recreation in England

- encourage and develop higher standards of performance and the achievement of excellence

- foster, support and undertake the development of facilities

- advise, assist and cooperate with other government departments and local authorities.

3.26   Sport England will provide advice on what type of sports facilities are needed for communities in the future. They will also advise on how to protect and improve the current stock of facilities, in particular protecting playing fields.

3.27   Sport England takes the definition of spatial planning as set out in Planning Policy Statements 1 (PPS1) as its starting point. This states that: *"Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function."*

3.28   Sport England sees the planning system as an opportunity to deliver its own aspirations for sport and recreation, whilst contributing to the goals of partners in public, private and voluntary sectors. With this there is the opportunity to deliver a planned approach towards the provision of facilities helping to reach sustainable development goals. These are:

- taking a broader view of the role of spatial planning as an enabling function which goes beyond the setting and delivery of land-use policy

- identify opportunities for delivering an enhanced quality of life for communities, in the short, medium and longer term

- recognising and taking full advantage of the unique ability of sport and active recreation to contribute to a wide array of policy and community aspirations

- the development of partnership working stimulated by, and perhaps centred on, sport and active recreation as a common interest

- using sport and recreation as one of the building blocks of planning and delivery of sustainable communities.

Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper, Communities and Local Government (DCLG, 2007)

3.29   The correct provision and promotion of high quality, accessible leisure facilities is a vital component of improving quality of life, creating vibrant, healthy communities and improving local and national Infrastructure.

3.30   Particular protection is needed for parks and urban green spaces. New development which positively shapes open spaces, public parks, and sports or other recreational facilities is encouraged and development which has the potential to enhance the surrounding area, as well as improving community access to open green space or to providing additional recreational facilities is welcomed.

3.31   The White Paper:

- recommends the removal of the requirement for leisure and sport facility applications to prove 'need'

- recommends that developments will have to provide links to quality open space.

The Park Life Report (GreenSpace, 2007)

3.32   The key findings of the report are:

- 92% of respondents stated that they visit parks and green spaces – 70% are regular and 20% are irregular visitors

- 68% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied and 14% said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the standard of open space provision

- over 90% of respondents agree that there is a park or green space within walking distance from their home

- 69% of people visit parks and green spaces on foot, while 25% travel to parks in cars

- few people use public transport to visit parks and green spaces with only 2% travelling by bus and less than 1% visiting by public transport

- 62% of respondents reported that their local parks are generally clean and well maintained.

3.33   Table 3.1 provides a strategic review of local and regional documents applicable to this study. This review was completed by the Council.

Table 3.1 – Strategic Context – Implications for this assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
Regional Planning Guidance Note 9 **(December 2000)**	This document provides the Strategic Planning guidance for the South East region of England. **RPG9 will be superseded by the South East Plan during late 2008 when the South East Plan is adopted autumn / winter 2008.**	Overview of documents purpose.
South East Plan: (Proposed Modifications) August 2008	This document, once adopted, will provide the Strategic Planning guidance for the South East region of England. The document is in **draft version** at present and was submitted to the Government in March 2006. The Examination In Public took place between November 2006 and March 2007. The Inspectors Report was published during August 2007. Proposed changes were published during July 2008 and these are open to public consultation until 24 October 2008. The South East Plan will, at the time of writing, be adopted late 2008. Once adopted this document will supersede RPG9.	Overview of documents purpose.
South East Plan: Section D10 Tourism and related sports and recreation	**Policy S1 (Supporting Healthy Communities):** the Planning system can develop and shape healthy sustainable communities by providing good access to these facilities; by promoting mixed and cohesive communities through focussing on access to housing for socially excluded groups, and by encouraging healthier forms of transport (ie incorporating cycle lanes, footpaths in planned developments). **Policy S5 (Cultural and sporting activity):** participation in sport, recreation and cultural activity should be encouraged (with relevant policies in place to encourage participation by disadvantaged/socially excluded persons/groups). An up to date strategy including an audit of current supply against estimated demand/growth should be the basis of cultural and sporting activity provision, and facilities accessible by a number of modes should have joint service provisions in place.	Both Policy S1 and S5 set the regional context for the encouragement of healthy communities through the promotion of recreation and sporting activity.

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
Berkshire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016. Adopted (July 2005)	This document provides the strategic framework for Berkshire. It guides development in the Borough. This document has been adopted for development control purposes by the Council. These policies all provide guidance at the strategic county wide level. Detailed policy/guidance is contained within the Local Plan.	Overview of document's purpose.
Structure Plan Chapter: Spatial Strategy and Development Principles	**DP3 (Green Belt):** the policy sets out the broad extent of the Green Belt and briefly sets out the forms of development that would be acceptable within it. Planning permission will be given only in special circumstances such as, agriculture and forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries etc, providing it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purpose of including land within it. More detail is provided by the Local Plan policy. Boundaries of the Green Belt and of the settlements have been identified in local plans. Green Belt boundary changes will only be made in exceptional circumstances through Local Plan reviews.	Policy DP3 emphasises the importance of the Green Belt and indicates that proposals for development would only be granted planning permission provided that they meet certain limited criteria. One of these criterion related to essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation. This is an important consideration for the Council as 83% of the Borough is designated as Green Belt. Given the location of the Borough to London and major transport infrastructure there is intense pressure for development.
Structure Plan Chapter: Shopping and Leisure	**S1 (Major retail and leisure development in town centres):** the sequential approach in identifying suitable sites should be adopted; the scale and nature of development will be consistent with the role of the centre, and proposals must demonstrate that they will (on their own or cumulatively) not adversely affect the vitality and viability of other town centres nor result in unacceptable increases in the numbers of car borne shopping or leisure trips or in their average length of stay. Where appropriate, developments will be expected to contribute towards improved access and choice of transport to the centre. **S3 (Leisure Development outside major town centres):** development will only be permitted outside the centres where the: • need has been demonstrated • sequential approach has been followed in site selection	Policy S1 stipulates that major leisure developments in town centre areas would be required to contribute towards improved access and transport choices to the centre through developer contributions. Policy S3 refers to the criteria that developers proposing leisure development located outside of the major town centres would be required to meet.

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
	• development will (solely or cumulatively) not adversely affect the vitality and viability of other town centres, nor cause any significant adverse impacts on the environment or upon the amenity of nearby residents. Any changes in travel patterns over the catchment area would be in accordance with the Transport Strategy in Policy T1 and the development of the Strategic Transport Network. **S4 (other sport, recreation, Tourism and Leisure uses):** proposals for these non key town centre uses should be in a location appropriate to their use, and of a scale and form appropriate to their current and future accessibility and level of infrastructure, services and employment. The sequential approach should be followed and proposals for uses in rural locations must be in accordance with other policies regarding development in the countryside. Potential effects of increased visitors on landscape, wildlife, habitats etc will be considered.	Policy S4 provides strategic level guidance on the location of sport and recreation facilities not covered by policies S1 and S3.
RBWM Community Strategy 2007 - 2013	A strategic priority of the Community Strategy is to improve the appearance of the Borough by improving parks, combating litter and vandalism and attaining "green flag" quality assurance status for parks by improving the landscape and design of public open spaces through tree and bulb planting. It also seeks to promote sustainable lifestyles and protect the environment by improving access to the countryside through public rights of way. The Strategy also seeks to promote sustainable and prosperous communities and recognises that a healthy workforce can assist with this through participation in sports and recreational activities. Strengths in this area are that the Borough: • actively safeguards and enhances public rights of way • consults and works with interested parties to achieve the provision of a well maintained and signed network of public rights of way • ensures that the public rights of way network is properly maintained and well publicised and landowners are assisted to understand their responsibilities and rights. One area for development is seen as improving the access to the countryside through public rights of way.	Two key themes of the Community Strategy are to improve the quality of parks and also to improve the health of the Borough's population by encouraging both sport and recreational activity.

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
RBWM Local Plan (incorporating Alterations) Adopted June 2003	This document provides the detailed framework for guiding, controlling and bringing forward development in the Borough at the local level. This document has been adopted for development control purposes by the Council.	Overview of documents purpose.
Local Plan Chapter: Environment	**Policy GB1 (Green Belt):** this policy set out the purposes of the Green Belt and the limited uses considered appropriate within these locations. These purposes are defined in PPG2 and include agriculture, forestry, certain types of residential development, and essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and other uses, which preserve the openness, and purpose of including land in the Green Belt. Objectives for the use of land in the Green Belt include the provision of opportunities for access for outside sport and to the open countryside. Construction of new buildings for essential facilities genuinely required is appropriate development providing it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. **Policy HG1** (Historic Gardens and Formal Landscapes): this policy seeks to prevent development proposals which would have an adverse effect on the "special" historic interest, appearance or setting of the parks and gardens identified in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.	Policy GB1 provides guidance, at the local level, for development located within the Green Belt. It reflects the stipulations set out by the Structure Plan which themselves reflect the national guidance set out by PPG2 (Green Belts). It emphasises the importance of limiting the impact of any development proposal on the openness of the Green Belt. For example, new sporting facilities located in a rural location could need parking facilities, changing facilities, stadium facilities etc. All of this additional development will impact on the purposes of including the land in the Green Belt in the first place. The policy emphasises the importance of limiting the impact on Registered Historic Gardens and formal landscapes of development adversely affecting them. This could include recreational uses and associated built development.
Local Plan Chapter: Leisure	**Policy R1 (Protection of urban open spaces):** Proposals that would result in the loss of existing areas of important urban land (shown on the Local Plan proposals map) will not be permitted unless they are replaced by a similar site or can best be retained and enhanced through a redevelopment of a portion of the site.	Policy R1 seeks to retain open land in urban areas which meets the recreational needs of the community. Some that may not have public access but do contribute to the environmental quality will also be protected by this policy. For example; allotments, private playing fields, detached school playing fields and cemeteries and other privately owned amenity space.

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
Local Plan Chapter: Leisure	**R3, (New Housing Developments will be required to include public open space):** the policy sets out that the minimum standard for open space provision for new housing developments is 4.3ha per 1,000 population.	Policies R3, R4 and R5 set out specifically the open space/equipped play area requirements for the Borough.
	R4, (New Housing Developments will be required to allocate a minimum provision of public open space on site): open space provision for new housing developments should be contained in one area and not spread throughout the development site. A capitalised maintenance payment will be sought by the Council for future site management.	
	R5 (Provision for play areas in new family house developments): sites larger than 0.4ha or 15 units will require the provision of a Local Area for Play (LAP). Sites larger than 0.8ha or 50 units, in addition to LAP, will also require a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP).	
	R7 (Formal sports and leisure facilities): development which results in loss of a built sport or leisure facility available to the public will not be permitted unless a similar size replacement is provided or a smaller facility of greater recreational value is retained on site.	Policy R7 provides protection for the existing level of sports and leisure facilities within the Borough.
Local Plan Chapter: Leisure	**R8 (New developments for recreation use): d**evelopment will be permitted for public or private recreation use except where it would result in significant environmental or highway problems or where it would conflict with other policies.	Policies R8, R11 and R13 all seek to either improve access to sports / recreation facilities or promote additions to the supply of these facilities.
	R11 Recreation facilities in major commercial redevelopment schemes): where appropriate, formal sports facilities will be sought as part of a scheme for the redevelopment of all or part of an identified employment/commercial area. If facilities cannot be provided on site then a contribution will be sought by means of a planning obligation to the Council to provide new facilities.	
Local Plan Chapter: Leisure	**R13 (Other specialist recreation facilities):** use of land or water for specialised or organised activities will be permitted if: • adequate access and parking is provided • it will not harm character, agriculture etc of countryside • it will not adversely affect amenities and safety of local residents/other users of countryside	

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study

Local Plan Chapter:
Leisure
	R14 (Rights of way and countryside recreation): the Council will safeguard and enhance the public rights of way network and recreational cycle routes, particularly by:
	1. Supporting the Countryside Commission in its efforts to establish the Thames Path National Trail, and seek to prevent any encroachment of the route by development
	2. Support establishment of the Green Way Recreational Route between Cookham and Bray through:
	   - signposting and promoting the use of the Green Way
	   - making the route accessible to all including the disabled and elderly
	   - resist proposals which would affect enjoyment of route
	   - encourage improved access and landscape enhancement to areas adjoining the route
	3. Support development of circular walks
		Policies R14 looks at linear recreation facilities in the form of public footpaths and riverside trails. These are of particular importance for the study in regard of promoting the linkages between the other types of open space.

Local Plan Chapter: **Transportation and Movement**	**Policy T7 (cycling):** special provisions will be made for cyclists to: ● provide safe cycle routes, lanes etc ● achieve the network of desirable cycle routes ● provide convenient and secure facilities particularly in town centres ● improve cycle links to public transport facilities ● ensure new development make provision where appropriate- for cyclists ● consider cyclists needs to design and improvement of roads ● strengthen links with Thames Valley Long Distance Cycle Route	Policy T7 promotes the provision of cycle ways within the Borough. The study will look at the linkages between sport and recreation facilities and this policy could help to provide additional linkages.
Local Plan Chapter: **Area based policies and proposals**	**MTC 3 (Maidenhead Town Centre Leisure facilities):** the loss of existing leisure facilities will be resisted and additional provision encouraged, within and adjoining the town centre in order to enhance its role as a focus for recreational, entertainment, social and cultural activities.	Policy MTC3 looks to promote (amongst other things) leisure facilities within and adjoining Maidenhead town centre. The explanatory text to the policy indicates that areas to the north of Saint-Cloud Way and around Bridge Street are considered to be particularly appropriate for this.

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Interpretation of policies R3, R4, R5 and (Public Open Space Provision). **Adopted February 2003 (incorporating amendments May 2004& February 2005)**	The purpose of the SPG is to assist in the interpretation of the public open space policies of the Council's Local Plan (July 1999). It provides no new policies of its own, but provides a greater level of detail for understanding the open space policies already contained in the Local Plan, concentrating on Policy R3. The guidance is area specific to provide greater certainty to residents and developers about requirements throughout the Borough. A general standard of 4.3ha of open space per 1,000 population has been adopted by the Council, which is considered a reasonable amount to accommodate the spread of recreational demands of the local population. The 4.3ha should comprise the following categories: • formal sports provision 1.8ha / 1000 population (pitches, courts, greens, tracks) • informal open spaces 2.5ha / 1000 population (passive recreation). In addition to the quantitative standard the Council has also adopted an accessibility standard of 400m and is based on the standards set by the National Playing Field Association (NPFA).	Overview of documents purpose and main points. The SPG provides a greater degree of detail to enable developers to understand the requirements for open space provision throughout the Borough.
RBWM Playing Pitch Strategy (March 2007)	There are 238 playing pitches in the Borough. The strategy assesses the provision of playing pitches (i.e. the playing surface, safety margins etc) and not playing fields or open spaces (i.e. grass or other areas not used for sport) within the Borough including those not (currently) available for community use. The assessment is primarily concerned with voluntary participation by adults and young people in competitive association football, cricket, rugby union and hockey. The study reveals an undersupply of facilities in relation to demand and recommends all pitch sites to be afforded protection within the LDF. Pitch sites should not be developed unless it can be proved through the application of both the playing pitch methodology and PPG17 that it is surplus to requirements and not providing an important local amenity. The document also recommends identifying opportunities to increase the number of community use agreements at school sites and a more efficient and effective use of recreational facilities and open spaces.	Recommendations for analysis areas include: Maidenhead: only 33.5% of pitches in the area secured for community use – shortfall of 18.6 pitches (specific demand for adult rugby and cricket pitches and all forms of junior pitches) Windsor and Eton: shortfall of junior grass pitches. Oversupply of STPs – focus on improving quality of current grass pitches Northern wards: slight oversupply of adult pitches which should meet the demand for junior pitches. Aim to increase percentage of non-community agreed sites. Southern wards: main undersupply of junior football and adult rugby union. Oversupply of STPs which should be used more.

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
	52% of pitches are secured for community use although if school pitches are included, which are currently used but there is not formal agreement then this increases to 73%.	Overall undersupply of 27.4 pitches across the Borough – the main recommendation was increasing community access and agreement to use school pitches. 1.18ha per 1,000 population of playing pitches is recommended.
	The supply of pitches is above the national average for football 1:1,509 (average 1:1,840), cricket 1:2,551 (average 1:4,243), and rugby union 1:2,976 (average 1:8,968).	The projections for 2011 identify an oversupply of 9.3 adult football pitches, 7.1 adult rugby pitches, and 11.3 hockey pitches. There will be an undersupply of 25.7 junior football pitches, 31.1 mini-soccer pitches, 14.5 cricket pitches, and 10.4 junior rugby pitches across the Borough.
		Across all pitch types, in 2011 Windsor will have an oversupply of 2.5 pitches, and all other areas an undersupply (northern wards 7.3 pitches, Maidenhead 24.9 pitches, southern wards 24.2 pitches).
Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions SPD – Developers Guide (December 2005)	The SPD has been produced to provide advice to developers on how contributions, in relation to their development, will be sought for facilities and infrastructure. Including recreation and leisure matters.	Overview of documents purpose.
RBWM Play Strategy 2007-2010	The document highlights the need for children to be physically active, ideally for at least 60 minutes per day, in an environment that provides the opportunity to experience risk taking in play, without unacceptable danger. The experience should allow the individual to develop their problem-solving, social, language, planning, construction, creativity, co-ordination, and negotiation skills (without an adult necessarily present).	Important to identify what improvements envisaged within the Play Strategy have actually been realised. A Play Partnership was set up to oversee the Action Plan. Key elements of this plan included:
	The National Childcare Strategy is promoting an initiative to open school premises up during out-of-school hours so the facilities, including play items can be used.	• appointing a Play Ranger by January 2008 to champion, co-ordinate and lead on the play strategy (£80k)
	Through the Council's Play Policy, attempts are being made to actively involve and consult with a range of community groups.	• improve play provision in identified localities by June 2008 (£60k)

Document Reviewed	Summary	Links to open space and green infrastructure study
	The RBWM Local Plan 1991-2006 stipulates a standard of 4.3ha per 1,000 population, to include 2.5ha of informal open spaces (which include equipped and unequipped children's play spaces). The plan endorses the Fields in Trust standard, aiming to provide all residents with a play facility within 400m of their homes. Between 1996-2006 the Borough has gained three open spaces, four open spaces and play areas, 18 teenscenes, three play areas and teenscenes, and seven play areas. Within the same period one open space, one play area and teenscene and one separate play area has been lost. The areas that are prioritised for improved play space are Old Windsor, Eton Wick, Sunninghill and Ascot, and Bray.	• improve the play areas at Desborough Park by April 2008 (£100k from S106) • provide a MUGA in Imperial Park by December 2007 (£150k from S106) • installation of floodlights at Vansittart Skate Park by January 2008 (£25k YOF grant by SK8) • sessional community play rangers by July 2007 (£42k) • play ranger/officer to develop the school sports partnership to allow for 'free play' by September 2008 (£35K) While play areas need to offer a range of equipment and diversity of activity, the number of play sites and their accessibility should also be explored, especially in the rural wards. A review of this strategy will be required in light of the PPG17 findings.

Summary and conclusions

3.34   The provision of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities contributes to the achievement of wider governmental objectives such as social and community cohesion, urban renaissance and promoting a healthy and enjoyable life. Any development of open spaces (ie provision of either new or enhancement of existing spaces) should take into account bio-diversity and nature conservation opportunities and develop an increasing environmental awareness, as well as facilitating increased opportunities to participate in sport and active recreation.

3.35   Many organisations are willing to work in partnership together to manage and develop existing open spaces and share similar aims and objectives eg protecting, enhancing and maximising usage and nature conservation value of open spaces. The importance of enhancing biodiversity across the region as well as maintaining and improving the green network is a key feature of many regional strategies.

3.36   Points emerging from the strategic review that are integral to the development of this open space study for the Borough include:

- improvements and continuing enhancement of the local environment are an important feature of the region, providing a tool to achieve many wide-ranging issues impacting on health levels as well as increasing the well-being of residents, workers and visitors

- housing developments and geographical allocations driven by national planning policies, and employment land allocations will have a direct impact on open space, sport and recreation provision and sustainability. High population growth will place increasing demands on existing open spaces as well as generating higher needs for recreational open space provision

- a large amount of the Borough is designated Green Belt and there is a large emphasis on protecting this area and ensuring sufficient green corridors are provided.

3.37   In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the local importance of maintaining and improving open space sites within the Borough. This local needs study and resulting strategy will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.