ethos
Environmental Planning

Castle Point Open Space Assessment (2023)

castlepoint
benfleet | canvey | hadleigh | thundersley

(Final April 2024)

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Contents

Glossary of Terms

Term		Meaning
ANGS		Accessible Natural Green Space
BNG		Biodiversity Net Gain
BwN		Building with Nature
CIL		Community Infrastructure Levy
FIT		Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
GI		Green Infrastructure
GIS		Geographic Information System
IMD		Index of Multiple Deprivation
IPCC		Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LAP		Local Area for Play
LEAP		Local Equipped Area for Play
LNRS		Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LSOA		Lower-layer Super Output Areas
MUGA		Multi Use Games Area
NEAP		Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
NEWP		Natural Environment White Paper
NGB		National Governing Body
NPPF		National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG		National Planning Practice Guidance
ONS		Office for National Statistics
PPG17		Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PPS		Playing Pitch Strategy
SPD		Supplementary Planning Document

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This Open Space Assessment has been undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning (Ethos) to inform Castle Point Borough Council's decision-making processes in relation to open space provision and green infrastructure planning. It will inform the emerging Castle Point Plan, supporting strategic policies, and will be used to secure developer contributions and other funding sources for open space works.

The Open Space Assessment is one of two reports provided as part of the overall assessment. The two reports are the:

- Castle Point Borough Council Open Space Assessment (2023) (this report); and the
- Castle Point Borough Council Consultation Report (2023).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. It requires local planning authorities to set out policies to help enable communities to access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies must be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

High quality, multifunctional open spaces play an important role in helping to tackle the current climate and ecological emergencies and in supporting the health and wellbeing of Castle Point's residents, as part of the borough's green infrastructure (GI) network, and the wider South Essex GI network. The Covid 19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of access to high quality open spaces, and also the inequalities in access, which are linked to poor health outcomes.

The assessment has been carried out in-line with Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[1] and the NPPF (last updated in September 2023). The assessment has primarily been affected by the omission of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) from the NPPF. Whilst the government has not published anything specifically to replace this document, there is however, still a clear reference made in the new guidance to the principles and ideology established within PPG17. As such the underlying principles of this study have been informed

[1] PPG is a web-based resource which brings together guidance on various planning topics in one place. It largely draws on the government's planning policies within the NPPF.

by the former guidance provided in '*Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'*, and its Companion Guide '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities*', which is a tried and tested methodology and takes a consistent approach with many other local authorities.

1.2 Purpose and scope of this report

The overall aims of the open space assessment are to provide a robust and up-to-date evidence base to support the Castle Point Plan and assist in the determination of planning applications and decision making in regard to open space and green infrastructure planning.

The NPPF defines open space as '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 act as a visual amenity'.

The focus of the assessment is on parks and recreation grounds, amenity green spaces, accessible natural green spaces, play spaces (children's and youth) and allotments. The assessment does not include playing pitches, which are covered in a separate Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment (2018 and updated in 2022).

The Assessment meets the following objectives:

- Develop a clear understanding of the current open space in relation quality, quantity and access in Castle Point through an audit of current provision and consultation with the community and stakeholders.
- Outline the current and future demand for open space typologies and identify clear deficiencies or surpluses in provision and options for addressing these.
- Recommend locally derived open space and recreation provision standards for quantity, quality, and accessibility, which are informed by the results of community and stakeholder engagement.
- To provide recommendations for open space to enhance provision in terms of accessibility and quality, and the contribution to the green infrastructure network.
- Where open space recommendations are made, to provide high-level indicative costings.
- To identify potential open spaces sites for delivering biodiversity net gain.
- To provide information to justify the collection of developer contributions towards open space quality and quantity management and improvements.

1.3 Structure of the report

The assessment follows five key stages as summarised below:

- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
- Step 2 – Audit of Existing Open Space Assets
- Step 3 – Setting Local Standards
- Step 4 – Applying Local Standards

- Step 5 – Drafting Policy Recommendations

1.4 The Study Area

1.4.1 Overview

Figure 1 Hadleigh Country Park

Castle Point covers 17 sq. miles and is located within the South of Essex on the northern bank of the Thames Estuary between the larger settlements of Basildon to the west and Southend to the east. The borough is well connected to the wider Essex area and to London by both road and rail.

The borough is modern in character with development taking place mainly between and since the two world wars. Around 55% of Castle Point's land is designation as Green Belt, leading to most of the Borough's population living within the four towns: Benfleet, Canvey Island, Hadleigh and Thundersley.

Canvey Island is the largest town in Castle Point which is separated from the mainland by a series of creeks. It has the borough's largest town centre and the largest employment estate. The western part of the Island is largely undeveloped and covered by an ancient marshland system which has a range of designations.

The mainland towns of Benfleet, Hadleigh and Thundersley sit between the settlements of Basildon and Southend. Here the land is more varied in its topography and landscape with the environment comprising of grassland and woodland.

The Thames Estuary is also a significant feature in the natural environment with the coastline being protected by international, European, and local environmental designations.

1.4.2 Administrative Boundaries

In order to analyse the current provision and future requirements for open space across the study area, the following geographical areas have been used (see Figure 1):

- The study area (the borough boundary); and
- Ward boundaries (these are the ward boundaries that take effect in May 2024).

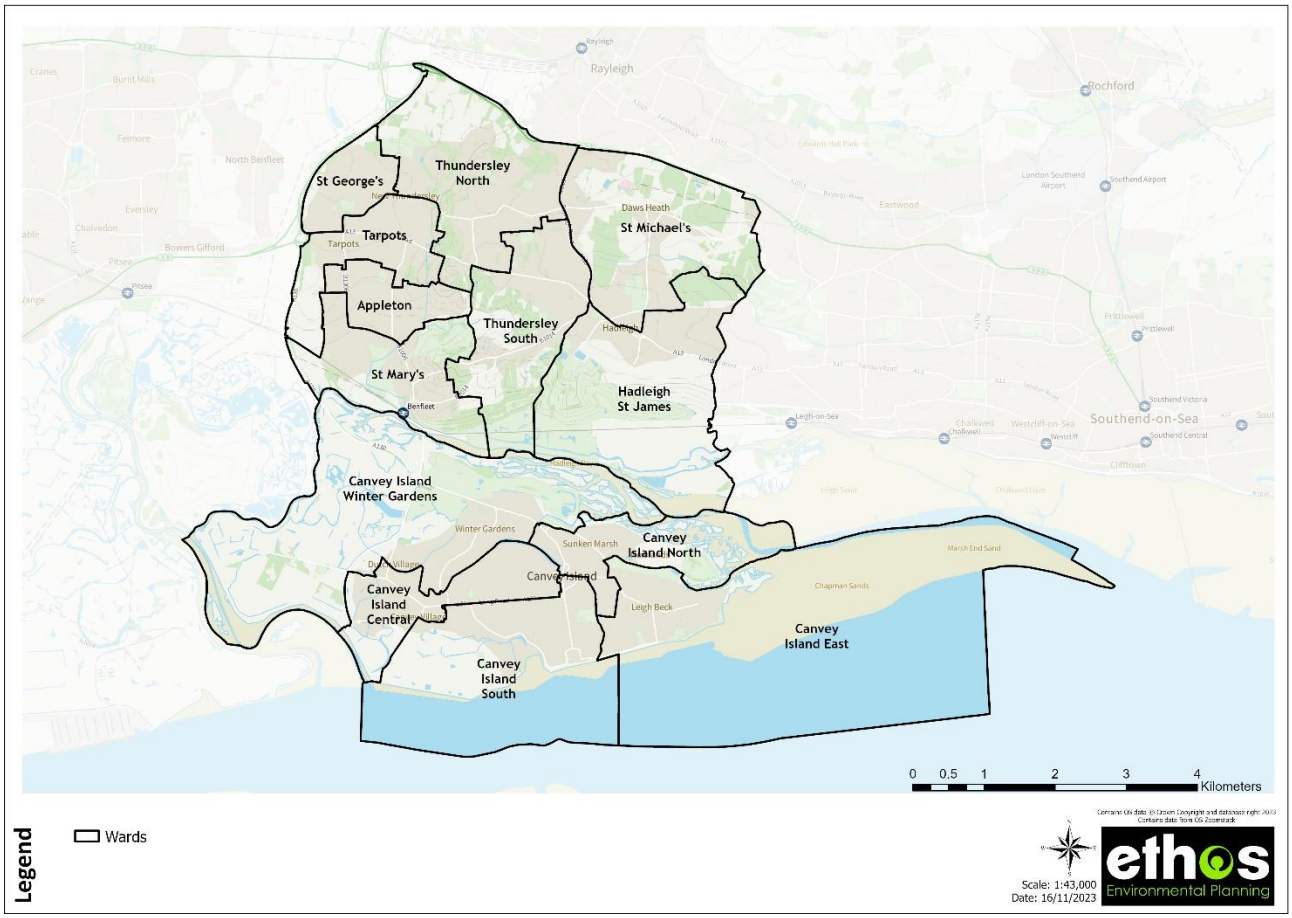


Figure 2 Study area

1.4.3 Population Statistics

The Council provided 2021 population estimates based on new ward (2024) boundaries, which have been used as the basis for much of the current and future assessment of need for open space.

The population of the Study Area is 89,600 The breakdown by ward is shown in the table below.

Table 1 Population figures by ward

Ward	Population (2021 Council Population Estimates)
St Michael's	5,654
Hadleigh St James	6,043
Thundersley South	6,176
St George's	6,351
Appleton	6,550
Thundersley North	6,993
St Mary's	7,043
Tarpots	7,143
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	7,380
Canvey Island South	7,438
Canvey Island East	7,552
Canvey Island North	7,636
Canvey Island Central	7,641
Total	**89,600**

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

The starting point for this study has been the guidance in Section 8 of the NPPF, which adheres to but has superseded PPG17. The policy gives clear recommendations for the protection of, and appropriate provision for, open space but does not provide any detailed guidance on how to conduct an open space assessment. It is therefore both logical and acceptable to reference the guidance for assessment provided in the former PPG17 and its Companion Guide. PPG17 placed a requirement on local authorities to undertake assessments and audits of open space, sports and recreational facilities in order to:

- identify the needs of the population;
- identify the potential for increased use; and,
- establish an effective strategy for open space/sports/recreational facilities at the local level.

The Companion Guide to PPG17 recommended an overall approach to this kind of study as summarised below:

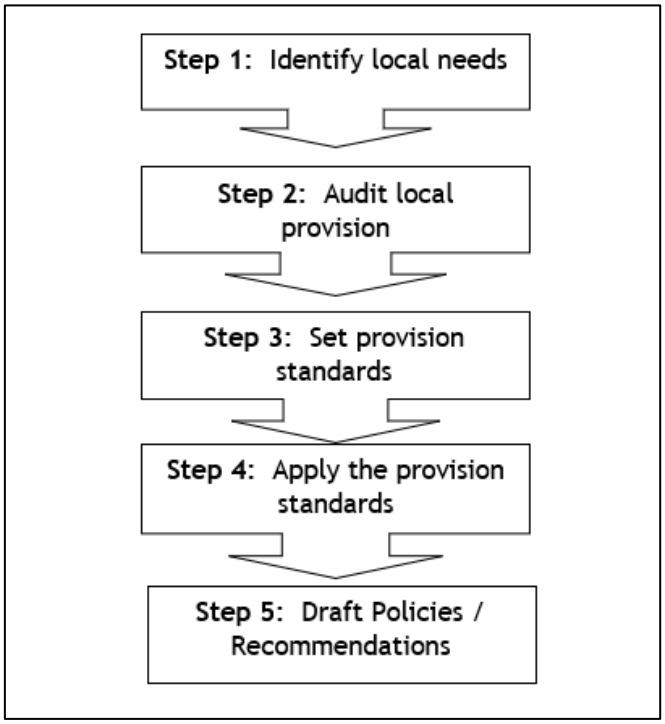


Figure 3 Summary of methodology

Within this overall approach the Companion Guide suggests a range of methods and techniques that might be adopted in helping the assessment process. Where appropriate, these methods and techniques have been employed within this study and are explained at the relevant point in the report. In addition, they are summarised in the paragraphs below.

2.2 Identifying Local Need (Step 1)

The Consultation Report (2023) examines identified local need for various types of open space and recreational opportunities. It has drawn upon a resident's survey and consultation with key stakeholders as well as a detailed review of existing consultation data and other relevant documentation. The findings from the Stakeholder Consultation Report (2023) are summarised in this document.

2.3 Audit of Existing Open Space Assets (Step 2)

2.3.1 Defining the scope of the audit

The Council undertook a review of open space prior to the commencement of the assessment and identified 166 open spaces and 180 small areas of green space, which were provided to Ethos in a GIS layer.

Quality audits were undertaken by Ethos during August 2023 at a total of 311 sites[2]. The quality audit drew on criteria set out in the 'Green Flag Award[3]'. As part of the quality audits, indicative costings were provided to address any recommendations made. The audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach; however, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit.

The site visits also allowed the open space typologies and boundaries to be checked and reviewed, and several amendments were made to the original mapping, which were signed off by the council in September 2023.

The wider value/contribution to green infrastructure (GI) functions of each open space has also been assessed using a number of desktop criteria. Further detail regarding the methodology and the results of the quality and value/GI assessment is provided in Section 7.4.

2.3.2 Approach to mapping

Following the quality audits, sites were mapped into their primary typologies using a multi-functional approach to mapping (explained in further detail in Section 5).

Where open spaces cross ward boundaries, in order to calculate the quantity of open space by ward, these have been split using the ward boundary. This means that there is no double counting of the quantity of sites that fall in more than one ward.

It should be noted that the typologies mapping is as accurate as possible (as of September 2023) following the site visits and liaison with the council.

[2] As not all sites were quality audited e.g. education sites, private sports grounds.
[3] http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/judges/judging-criteria

The open space provision tables (in Section 5) and resulting supply and access maps (Section 7) are based on the mapping of open space which was signed off by the Council in September 2023. Open space provision maps by ward are provided in Appendix 1.

2.4 Set and Apply Provision Standards (Steps 3 and 4)

Local open space provision standards have been set for the borough (in agreement with the project team), with three components, embracing:

- quantity;
- accessibility; and
- quality.

Quantity

The GIS database and mapping has been used to assess the existing provision of open space across the borough. The existing levels of provision are considered alongside findings of previous studies, the local needs assessment and consideration of existing and national standards or benchmarks. The key to developing robust local quantity standards is that they are locally derived, based on evidence and most importantly, achievable. Typically, standards are expressed as hectares per 1,000 population. The recommended standards are then used to assess the supply of each type of open space across the borough.

Access

Evidence from previous studies, the needs assessment and consideration of national benchmarks are used to develop access standards for open space.

A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in this report. The maps are intended to be indicative, and more detailed maps by ward are provided in Appendix 2. The maps show walk time buffers and straight-line buffers, depending on the access standards set[4].

Straight-line walking distances do not account for potential 'barriers', such as busy roads, rail lines, cul-de-sacs etc. So, the actual route walked (the pedestrian route) is generally further i.e., straight-line distances are around 60% of actual distances. The standard walk-time and straight-line/pedestrian route distances are illustrated in the table below as a guide.

[4] Drive-time standards have not been proposed as these are normally only appropriate for strategic sites such as country parks and sports hub sites. Drive-time standards generally do not work well for analysing access to local facilities/open space, as they do not generally show where the gaps in access are.

Table 2 Standard walk-times and distances

Walk-time (minutes)	Pedestrian Route (metres)	Straight-line (metres)
1	100	60
2	160	96
3	240	144
4	320	192
5	400	240
6	480	288
7	560	336
8	640	384
9	720	432
10	800	480
11	880	528
12	960	576
13	1040	624
14	1120	672
15	1200	720
16	1280	768
17	1360	816
18	1440	864
19	1520	912
20	1600	960

Quality

Quality standards have been developed drawing on previous studies, national benchmarks and good practice, evidence from the needs assessment and the findings of the quality audits, which were based on Green Flag Award criteria. The quality standards also include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future.

This section also considers the contribution of open space to the GI network, and a biodiversity net gain assessment for 5 key open spaces in the study area.

2.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 5)

This section outlines higher level strategic options which may be applicable at ward and borough wide level. The strategic options address five key areas:

1. Existing provision to be protected;
2. Existing provision to be enhanced;
3. Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space;
4. Identification of areas for new provision; and
5. Facilities that may be surplus to requirement.

In addition, information on developer contributions and the methodology for calculating costs for the provision and maintenance of open space is provided in Section 8.

3.0 CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out a brief review of the most relevant national, regional, and local policies, strategies, and legislation of relevance to the study which have been considered in developing the methodology and findings of the study. Policies and strategies are subject to regular change, therefore the summary provided in this section was correct at the time of writing. Castle Point Borough Council reserve the right to change and update this section as policies change.

It also provides important contextual information regarding health and deprivation.

The PPG17 companion guide identified the importance of understanding the implications of existing strategies on the assessment. Specifically, before initiating local consultation, there should be a review of existing national, regional, and local plans and strategies, and an assessment of the implementation and effectiveness of existing planning policies and provision standards.

3.2 Strategic Context

3.2.1 National Strategic Context

Tackling the climate and nature emergency

Climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet. In recognition of this, the overwhelming majority of countries around the world adopted the Paris Agreement in December 2015, the central aim of which includes pursuing efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Global Warming Report (2018)** provides the scientific evidence that global warming in excess of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels will undermine life support systems for humanity. It found that global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) would need to fall by about 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' around 2050.

The State of Nature Report (Sept 2023) and **The Global Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Report (May 2019)** show the degradation and deterioration of natural environments and ecosystems which all life depends, the loss of biodiversity and a knock-on impact on human existence. Climate change, agricultural management, hydrological change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland management, and invasive non-native species as among the most significant of pressures on our wildlife.

The climate and nature emergency are inextricably linked. Biodiversity underpins healthy ecosystems that are able to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, however

climate change is driving declines in biodiversity, and the degradation of our ecosystems, which means we are less able to adapt to change.

The **UK government declaration of an environment and climate emergency** in May 2019 has put climate and the environment at the centre of government policy. The government has since made a legally binding commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (through the Climate Change Act 2008, as amended in 2019), and has committed to planting 30,000 hectares of trees annually by 2025 (through the England Tree Strategy), helping to form part of the green recovery from Covid-19 and support the transition to net zero. At the 2022 Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP 15) the Government joined the international commitment to protecting 30 per cent of land and sea for nature by 2030 (the '30 by 30' target). The protected sites network and emerging local nature recovery networks are key to achieving this ambitious target.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF must be adhered to in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The NPPF contains the following references that relate to green infrastructure and open spaces:

- **Para 7** - The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **Para 98** - Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport, and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.
- **Para 99** - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

  a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

  b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

  c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

- **Para 100** - Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
- **Para 126** - The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too if effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.
- **Para 153 -** Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- **Para 174 -** Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- **Para 175 –** Plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in the NPPF; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

This is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) website, which includes guidance on key areas such as Design. The National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code and Guidance Notes for Design Codes illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring, and successful can be achieved in practice.

Green Infrastructure (GI)

The concept of GI is firmly embedded within the NPPF, which requires local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement, and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. It defines green infrastructure as 'A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity'.

The study area has a wide range of existing green infrastructure assets such as open spaces, allotments, woodlands, street trees, fields, hedgerows, treelines, lakes, ponds, rivers, meadows, grassland, playing fields, footpaths, and cycleways.

GI takes many different forms and can be delivered at multiple scales. It provides multiple functions, which in turn provide significant environmental, social, and economic benefits (also known as ecosystem services). The key benefits provided by GI are set out in the table below.

Table 3 Benefits provided by GI

Environmental
• Supports and provides biodiversity (which underpins healthy and resilient ecosystems) and species movement/dispersal including through providing habitat, wildlife corridors and stepping-stones. • Provides climate change mitigation and adaptation e.g., through providing flood and soil erosion protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and urban cooling. • Improves air and water quality (pollution absorption and removal). • Enables food production and supports pollination. • Supports and creates attractive and sustainable places and landscapes i.e., quality placemaking and place keeping.
Social/health and wellbeing
• Provides opportunities for outdoor recreation, exercise, play and access to nature. • Provides attractive and safe spaces for people to enjoy and improve social contacts – a key component of 'liveable' towns and cities where people want to live. • Supports the development of skills and capabilities. • Improves air and water quality, provides urban cooling and shade, reduces noise pollution. • Provides green active travel routes.
Economic
• Provides attractive places to live and work, attracting inward investment and tourism. • Increased land and property values. • Supports sustainable homes and communities e.g., through providing local food and building materials, encouraging low carbon lifestyles e.g., through well connected and attractive walking and cycling routes. • Provides health and wellbeing benefits that result in avoided healthcare costs. • Provides local food, energy, and timber production. • Climate change mitigation and adaption.

Nature-based Solutions

The terms green infrastructure and nature-based solutions are overlapping and are often used interchangeably, with GI falling under the umbrella of nature-based solutions.

Nature-based solutions are defined as '*actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits*' [5]. They have huge potential to help cities and urban areas become more resilient to climate change, and benefit people's health and the economy.

[5] https://www.iucn.org/our-work/nature-based-solutions

Nature-based solutions tend to be focused on six key areas[6]:

- Urban trees – found in parks, gardens, and along streets, trees can help to regulate urban temperatures, reduce flood risk, and clean the air
- Parks and green spaces – natural or planted green spaces are used for recreation and exercise, as well as being rich habitats for wildlife
- Green buildings – walls and roofs covered with vegetation act like sound and heat insulation for buildings, and absorb rainwater, so reducing flood risk
- Riverbank vegetation – plants along riverbanks trap soil and sediment, improving water quality and reducing flood damage by slowing the flow of water
- Wetland and bioswales – natural wetlands and man-made bioswales (or 'rain gardens') help to purify water and reduce flooding
- Lakes and ponds – natural or artificial waterbodies in cities can hold water for irrigation or drinking and support a wide range of wildlife.

Green Infrastructure Standards

Natural England's **National Green Infrastructure Framework** was launched in January 2023 and establishes national standards (voluntary) for GI in England and comprises the following:

- GI Principles – underpin the framework and cover why, what and how to do good GI.
- GI Mapping Database and Analysis– a freely available tool providing GI Mapping layers and analyses.
- GI Standards (5 headline standards – GI Strategy Standards, Accessible Greenspace Standards, Urban Nature Recovery Standard, Urban Greening Factor Standard and Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard).
- GI Planning and design guide (which complements existing guidance such as the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code).
- Process Journeys (to assist different audiences) are still to be published.

The Framework does not seek to duplicate existing standards such as Building with Nature, but rather to learn from best practice and reinforce key messages, such as that green infrastructure and natural capital needs to be considered and incorporated at the earliest stages of development and treated like other types of essential infrastructure.

Building with Nature is the UK's first benchmark for GI. It provides a framework of robust and evidence-based quality standards which define what good looks like at each stage of the development process, so that developments deliver for the natural world and healthy communities. It can be used to guide physical development and also strategic planning policy documents, and there are accreditation options available for both physical developments and policy documents.

[6] https://earthwatch.org.uk/working-with-business/climate-proof-cities

The 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) and The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

In 2018 the 25YEP set out the governments goals for improving the environment, within a generation. The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a key policy commitment in the 25 YEP. The NRN will benefit people and wildlife by increasing, improving and joining-up wildlife-rich places across England. It will create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife habitat outside protected sites, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green infrastructure (such as trees, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests) and urban blue infrastructure (such as rainwater tanks, bioswales, rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, and floodplains).

The EIP (2023) is the first revision of the 25 YEP. It uses the ten goals set out in the 25 YEP as the basis for the document: setting out the progress made against all ten, the specific targets and commitments made in relation to each goal, and the government's plan to continue to deliver these targets and the overarching goals. The apex goal of the strategy is to halt the decline in biodiversity to achieve thriving plants and wildlife.

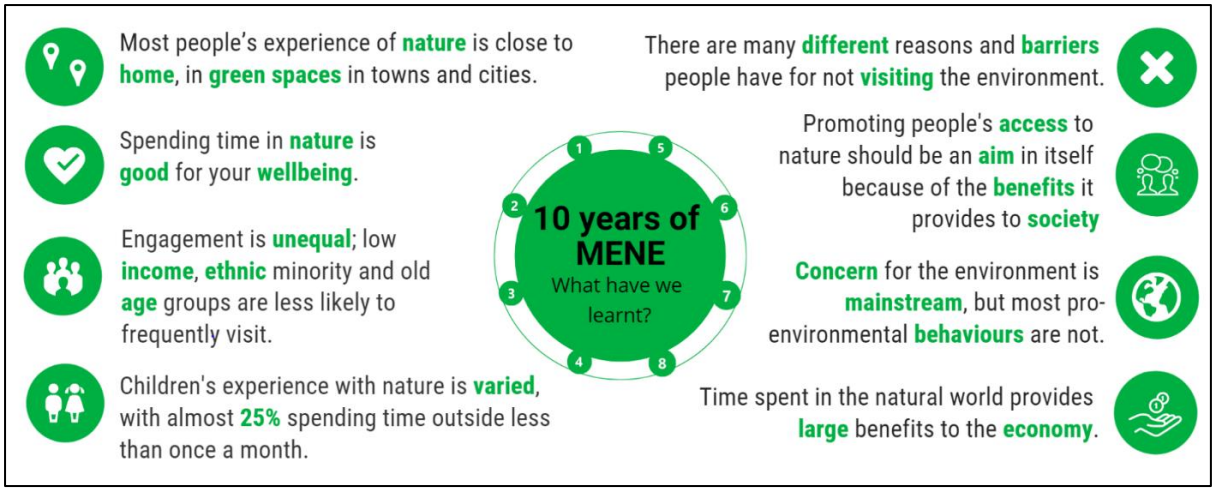
The **Environment Act (2021)** places the 25 YEP on statutory footing and provides a comprehensive legal framework for environmental improvement within the UK. The Act received royal ascent in November 2021 with pending secondary legislation planned for 2023. This makes provision for a mandatory requirement for biodiversity net gain in the planning system, requiring development to deliver a 10% improvement in biodiversity value from 2023.

The Act introduces a statutory requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to be produced by a responsible authority appointed by the Government. LNRS will support the Nature Recovery Network as a spatial plan to protect and restore wildlife. It also makes provision for strengthening the Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities - public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.

Covid 19 and the impact on open spaces and green infrastructure

The value of green infrastructure has also been keenly recognised during the Covid 19 pandemic where access to green space played a key role in people's well-being; alongside a wider appreciation of nature.

From 2009 to 2019, Natural England ran the Monitor of Engagement of the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. It collected data about outdoor recreation, pro-environmental behaviours, attitudes towards and engagement with the natural environment. It was estimated there were 4 billion visits to the natural environment in 2019, up from 2.9 billion over 10 years. The survey highlights the importance of access to nature for our health and wellbeing, but also clear inequalities between different age, ethnic and socio-economic groups, and those with different states of health, in how they use and experience the natural environment.



MENE concluded in 2019 and has been superseded by The People and Nature Survey for England. This has also helped understand how adults and children in England have engaged with nature since the coronavirus pandemic.

The findings continue to demonstrate the importance of spending time in nature for people's wellbeing. During April 2020 (during lockdown restrictions) the survey polled 2000 people and key findings included:

- The survey also revealed that a smaller proportion of adults spent time outside in April 2020 than their reported average over 12 months, which suggests that lockdown restrictions impacted people using green spaces.
- The most regular visits to green spaces were to urban green spaces such as parks and playing fields (41%), followed by fields, farmland, and countryside (25%), woodland and forests (24%) and rivers, lakes, and canals (21%).
- 86% of adults with access to a private garden of allotment felt that these spaces are important to them.
- 89% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that green and natural spaces should be good places for mental health and wellbeing.
- 87% of adults agreed that 'being in nature makes me happy'.

The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)

The White Paper recognises that a healthy natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. It sets out how the value of nature can be mainstreamed across our society by facilitating local action; strengthening the connections between people and nature; creating a green economy and showing leadership in the European Union (EU) and internationally. It responds to the 2010 independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network, chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton, which identifies the need for more, better and bigger joined spaces for nature.

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, (August 2011)

International obligations set out in the United Nations (UN) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)[7] Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011–2020) included 20 targets known as the Aichi biodiversity targets.

In 2011, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published a strategy for England called 'Biodiversity 2020'. This sought to reverse the decline of habitats and species in England. The strategy aligned with international obligations set out in the CBD strategic plan for biodiversity 2011–2020.

The majority of the 2020 outcomes and indicators were not met. The most recent United Nations (UN) Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP) took place in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada (known as COP15). It is an international biodiversity conference held under the UN CBD. COP15 saw the adoption of a new set of international goals for biodiversity called the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which replace the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets. The GBF contains four overarching goals which set out a vision for biodiversity by 2050, and 23 targets.

Fields in Trust

Fields in Trust (FIT) is an independent charity with over 90 years' experience protecting parks and green spaces. They work with landowners, community groups and policy makers to champion the value of our parks and green spaces to achieve better protection for their future at both local and national level.

Fields in Trust works in partnership with landowners to protect land through a Deed of Dedication, a binding legal commitment with the landowner which secures spaces (usually a public park, playing field or recreation ground) in perpetuity for current and future generations to enjoy. Even if a space already has a form of protection (such as a covenant, or town and village green registration), a Deed of Dedication will strengthen the protection[8].

The FIT report 'Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the Six Acre Standard[9] provides benchmark guidelines for practitioners on open space provision and design, which have been considered as part of the development of quantity, access and quality standards in Section 6 of this report.

FIT also conduct research into the benefits that local parks provide, such as the Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces Study (see below).

[7] The CBD is an international treaty for the conservation of biological diversity. The CBD was agreed in 1992 and has seen nearly every country in the world become a party to it. The UK brought the CBD into force in 1993. This put the UK government under a legal obligation to protect biodiversity in its territories.

[8] https://www.fieldsintrust.org/what-is-protection

[9] https://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf

Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces - Measuring their economic and wellbeing value to individuals (Fields in Trust (FIT), 2018)

This report provides a robust economic valuation of parks and green spaces in the UK as well as valuing improvements in health and wellbeing associated with their frequent use. This is the first research study on parks and green spaces to use welfare weighting methodology, allowing for more informed evidence-based policy decisions. The headline figures are:

- **The Total Economic Value to an individual is £30.24 per year** (£2.52 per month), and includes benefits gained from using their local park or green space and non-use benefits such as the preservation of parks for future generations. The value of parks and green spaces is higher for individuals from lower socio-economic groups and from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The findings show that any loss of parks and green spaces will disproportionately impact disadvantaged and underrepresented communities, precisely those who value them the most.
- **The Wellbeing Value associated with the frequent use of local parks and green spaces is worth £34.2 billion per year** to the entire UK adult population.
- **Parks and green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year** based solely on a reduction in GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.

Making Parks Count (The Parks Alliance (TPA), 2020)

This report makes the business case for parks, why they matter, and why they are a 'smart investment'. It illustrates how parks in England deliver over £6.6bn of health, climate change and environmental benefits each year including £2.2bn in avoided health costs alone and worth £140 per year for each urban resident. For every £1 spent on parks in England an estimated £7 in additional value for health and wellbeing and the environment is generated. Some of the other key figures referenced in the report are:

- Urban green spaces raise house prices by an average of £2,500;
- London's parks alone help avoid an estimated £370m of mental health related costs each year;
- Parks are among the most species rich types of urban green spaces, and over 1,500 species of UK's pollinators deliver an estimated £680m in value to the economy;
- The benefits of air pollutant removal by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £60m per year;
- The value of carbon sequestration by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £9m per year;
- Parks in England provide an urban cooling benefit of £4.8m per year.

Sport England Strategy – 'Uniting the movement: A 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity'.

The Uniting the Movement Strategy by Sport England is a 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. It sets out how the sector needs to change to give people opportunities now and, in the future, to allow people to live happier,

healthier, and more fulfilled lives. This includes tackling inequalities seen in sport and physical activity and helping to remove barriers. The three objectives for the strategy are:

1. Advocating for movement, sport, and physical activity.
2. Joining forces on five big issues: recover and reinvent; connecting communities; positive experience for children and young people; connecting with health and wellbeing and active environments.
3. Creating the catalysts for change.

Yearly implementation plans will ensure that Sport England are investing most in those that need it the most with the right blend of national and local action and keeping the plan simple providing information and guidance to support colleagues and partners.

Environment Agency National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2020)

The Environment Agency's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy provides a framework for guiding the operational activities and decision making of practitioners supporting the direction set by government policy to protect people and places. It seeks to better manage the risk and consequences of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater, reservoirs, ordinary watercourses, surface water, sewers, and coastal erosion.

The strategy sets out the long-term delivery objectives the nation should take for the next 10 to 30 years as well as practical measures risk management authorities should take working with partners and communities. It has a vision for *'a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal changes – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100'.* To achieve this vision the strategy has three long-term ambitions:

1. **Climate resilient places** – working with partners to improve resilience to flooding and coastal change both now and in the face of climate change. This includes using nature-based solutions and working with landowners to adapt practices to become more resilient.
2. **Today's growth and infrastructure resilient in tomorrow's climate** – making the right investment and planning decisions to secure sustainable growth and environmental improvements as well as providing resilience to change. This includes contributing to environmental net gain for new development proposals and putting a focus on providing planning advice that helps avoid inappropriate development in areas of risk.
3. **A nation ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change** – ensuring local people understand their risk to flooding and coastal change and know their responsibilities and how to take action. This includes supporting communities to prepare and respond to flooding and coastal change by ensuring they have the skills and capabilities to adapt.

3.2.2 Regional Context

Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

The purpose of the strategy is to take a positive approach to enhance, protect and create an inclusive and integrated network of high-quality green infrastructure in Greater Essex, to create a county-wide understanding of green infrastructure – its functions and values, and to identify opportunities for delivering green infrastructure.

The following vision reflects the Essex Green Infrastructure Partnership's (Steering Group and Partners) position regarding the important future role of green infrastructure within Greater Essex: *We will protect, develop and enhance a high quality connected green infrastructure network that extends from our city and town centres, and urban areas to the countryside and coast and which is self-sustaining and is designed for people and wildlife.*

The Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to deliver the vision through the seven objectives:

- Protect existing green infrastructure, especially designated sites
- Improve existing green infrastructure so it is better functioning for people and wildlife
- Create more high-quality multi-functional green infrastructure, especially in areas of deficiency
- Improve the connectivity of green infrastructure for people and wildlife
- Increase use and inclusivity of green infrastructure across all user groups, social groups and abilities
- Provide green infrastructure facilities to promote health and wellbeing
- Working with partners to build and secure funding, effective governance and stewardship for new and existing green infrastructure to ensure their long term sustainability.

Joint Strategic Framework (South Essex Councils)

South Essex Councils (SEC) comprises of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea, Thurrock, and Essex County Council. The SEC aims to work together to deliver improved prosperity and wellbeing in the region by tackling problems that member councils can't solve individually, creating collective scale and impact and providing the place leadership to promote South Essex.

One of the priorities of SEC is investment in green and blue infrastructure that supports parks and river walks, active use of environmental assets, biodiversity, health, and wellbeing outcomes, promoting active and thriving communities. The South Essex Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy (detail outlined below) will help to deliver this priority along with benefiting the economy, people, and the environment of the region, and helping to deliver biodiversity net gain and net zero carbon.

South Essex Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

The South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy presents a radical vision of how the planning process can boldly utilise GBI to meet the challenges of our time. This strategy creates an exemplary model of adaptable and resilient infrastructure.

Covering one third of Essex (or 70,000ha) the vision for the South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park) will be a single park system that encompasses all of the South Essex. It will comprise five large-scale multi-functional landscapes including Island Wetlands, Central Thames Marshlands, Central Woodland Arc, Mardyke Valley and Brentwood Parklands. It will also deliver, in line with the Government's aim, protect 30% of England's countryside by 2030, deliver a minimum of 90,000 new homes and over 52,000 new jobs.

It is hoped the SEE park will achieve the following objectives of the GBI Strategy:

- Create a resilient infrastructure
- Improve connectivity
- Work with hydrological systems
- Protect and enhance biodiversity
- Support natural resource productivity
- Celebrate a sense of place
- Promote liveable and healthy places
- Define a resilient growth structure
- Ensure sustainable management

Community engagement with and buy in is recognised as being vital to the success of the strategy. A healthier, socially cohesive, and biodiverse South Essex will be created by re-connecting people with their environment and connecting wildlife within and beyond the region.

Local Nature Recovery Network for Greater Essex

Led by Essex County Council, the local nature recovery network strategy aims to find locations for the creation or improvement of habitat which are most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategy will set out biodiversity priorities across the county and highlight proposed actions to achieve the priorities. The network will include a map of important biodiversity area, description and opportunities for the strategy area, agreement of priority areas and potential measures for achieving recovery goals. It is hoped that the final strategy will be published in July 2024.

Essex Design Guide

The Essex Design Guide was established in 1973 by Essex County Council. It is used to guide and create high quality places. The latest publication in 2018 seeks to address the evolution of socio-economic impacts on place making including creating high-quality, sustainable developments. The guide has 6 overarching themes:

- ***Active Design Principles*** – designing and adapting where we live to encourage activity in everyday life. The principles aim to inspire and inform the layout of places to promote sport and active lifestyles.
- ***Ageing Population*** – planning and designing new development with regard to the needs of the ageing population to ensure that older people remain independent and in their own home.
- ***Health and Wellbeing*** – creating spaces that deter crime, help create socially inclusive active communities and provide opportunities for residents to be active through their everyday lives.
- ***Digital and Smart Technology*** – by introducing smart technology it provides an opportunity for spaces to be both commercially viable and sustainable in the long term. It aims to create places that can evolve and progress over time.
- ***Garden Communities*** – environments that are designed to promote community inclusion and walkable, social, vibrant neighbourhoods.
- ***Climate Change*** – a set of project outcomes to drive a change in the approach to planning, delivering, and managing new and existing communities, examples include SUDs, electric vehicles, landscape and green spaces.

3.2.3 Local Context

Corporate Plan 2021 – 24

The Castle Point Corporate Plan focusses on four priority areas of: economy and growth, people, place, and environment to achieve the vision of "great place, great people, one community". Parks, open spaces, and beaches are considered under the environment priority area. The objective is for these spaces to be protected and enhanced with a target of 70% residents' satisfaction with parks and open spaces by 2024. This assessment contributes to the short-term plan for protecting and enhancing open spaces, with the medium term to successfully implement the strategy and finally in the long term to implement new stewardship models.

Local Plan 1998

The current Local Plan was adopted in November 1998 and ran until September 2007. Since 2007 only a handful of policies are still in place. Of those policies still active, the following relate to open space:

Policy RE4: Provision of Children's Play Space and Parks
The Council will seek to provide and facilitate the provision of additional children's play space and parks in areas of identified need. Where possible and appropriate, such provision shall be made in association with new development.

Policy RE5: Public Open Space
Land is allocated for public open space purposes (as shown on the proposals map) at 8 locations across the borough.

Policy RE6: Allotments
The development of sites allocated for allotment purposes will not be permitted. Where appropriate, the council will seek to improve the provision of allotments within the borough.

Policy RE8: Hadleigh Castle Country Park
The Council will continue to seek the expansion of the Hadleigh Castle Country Park. Within the park the council will, in principle, encourage informal recreation. Any planning applications for development within the country park which could frustrate it's present or future use for informal countryside recreation will be refused.

Policy RE9: Informal Recreation in the Countryside
In considering applications for informal recreation in the countryside, the council will have particular regard to: -

(i) the impact upon wildlife of their habitats, agriculture, sites of archaeological importance or ancient monuments.
(ii) the impact upon the enjoyment of other users of the countryside.
(iii) the impact upon residential amenity
(iv) the impact upon the appearance of the landscape
(v) the adequacy of car parking provision and accessibility for those using public transport

Policy RE10: Water recreation
The Council will encourage the provision of recreational facilities within the estuary and creek areas provided that:

(i) such uses would not adversely affect wildlife or threaten their habitats
(ii) use of water by one group does not unduly prejudice its use by another
(iii) that adequate car parking provision is made to cater for the needs of users
(iv) the proposal complies with any other policy contained within the local plan

Policy RE14: Planning agreements and recreational development
In appropriate cases, the Council will expect developers to enter into planning agreements to secure the provision of open space or other recreational facilities such provision to be fairly and reasonably related to the development, in scale and kind.

Work has commenced to develop to new Local Plan (Castle Point Plan) which will guide development up until 2050.

Emerging Local Plan – The Castle Point Plan

In June 2022, the Council took the decision to withdraw its local plan, and to commence work on a new local plan, known as the Castle Point Plan. It will focus on meeting the needs of local people and ensuring that development proposals bring about genuine local benefits that are supported by local communities and stakeholders. Place making, including GI and the natural environment will be at the heart of the Castle Point Plan.

Open Space Appraisal Update (2012)

This study was conducted by the Council and provided an update of the previous 2006 Open Space Appraisal. The appraisal follows the guidance of companion guide PPG17 and updated the data and recommendations for each type of open space. It found that as of 2012, there were 142 open spaces within the borough, with the 24 new spaces since the 2006 appraisal was conducted with significant increases in parks and natural and semi natural spaces being highlighted. 67% of those spaces were accessible to the public.

The recommended standards for the different types of open spaces are set out in the table below, however, these standards were never adopted and the 1998 adopted Local Plan does not use standards.

Table 4 Open space standards recommended in 2012 appraisal

Typology	Quantity	Access
Urban Parks and Gardens	0.103 ha/1,000 people	720m straight line distance or 15-minute walk time
Natural and Semi-Natural Areas	2.377 ha/1,000 people	720m straight line distance or 15-minute walk time
Outdoor Sports Facilities	3.217 ha/1,000 people	2,400 straight line distance or 10-minute drive
Amenity Greenspaces	0.452 ha/1,000 people	480m straight line distance or 10-minute walk time
Provision for children and young people	0.048 ha/1,000 people within existing areas 0.25 ha/1,000 people within new developments	480m straight line distance or 10-minute walk time
Allotments and Community Gardens	0.065 ha/1,000 people	2,400 straight line distance or 10-minute drive
Country Parks	2.34 ha/1,000 people	480m straight line distance or 10-minute walk time

Playing Pitch Strategy (2018 and 2022)

The 2018 playing pitch strategy was a joint commission along with other neighbouring South Essex authorities to assess outdoor sport facility needs. It sets out the supply and demand of

playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities before setting recommendations. In 20222, an internal review of the 2018 was completed internally by Castle Point Borough Council. A summary of the findings of both studies can be found below.

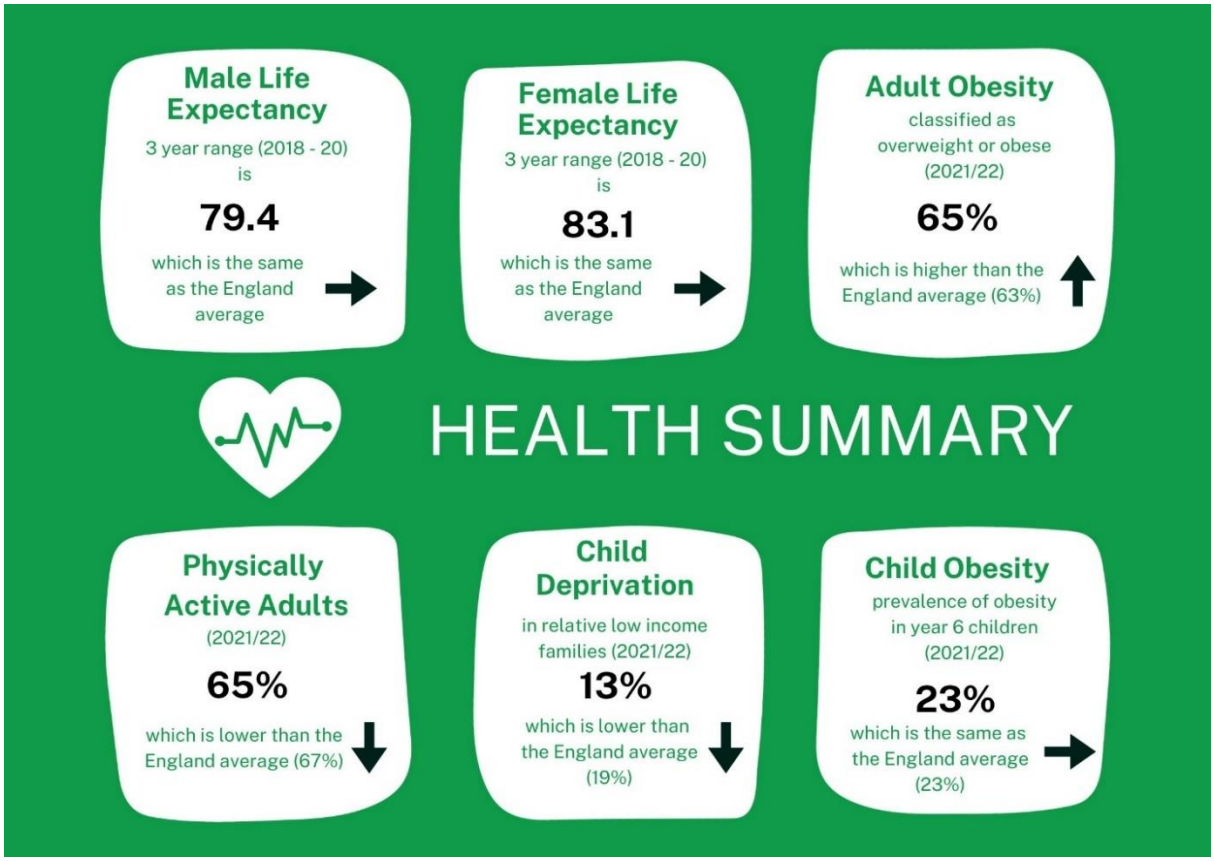
Table 5 Summary of playing pitch strategy by sport/facility

Sport/Facility	2018 Strategy	2022 Update
Football	There is an existing shortfall based on the demand required, with limited spare capacity to demand increase in the future.	Increase in the number of teams per age group especially for adults. No changes in the supply.
3G and AGPS	Only 1 full sized 3G pitch, and there is need for an additional 4 pitches based on existing demand. No AGPS with demand relying on neighbouring authorities.	No changes in supply but still a demand for 3G pitches.
Cricket	Current and future demand can be accommodated.	Increase in teams, and lack of indoor facilities. Need to improve existing quality of facilities.
Rugby	Shortfall for rugby pitches despite there being some spare capacity.	No changes in supply or demand.
Tennis	All facilities are located on the mainland. There is enough capacity to meet the needs to existing clubs.	Need to improve existing facilities and make more accessible.
Athletics	No athletics clubs or tracks with the borough. One disused track at Waterside which has sufficient demand for it to be reinstated.	Still no outdoor facilities, and demand has reduced.
Bowls	3 facilities on the mainland. Increase for demand, therefore a need to protect existing provision.	Demand has reduced and there is a need to protect and enhance the existing facilities.

3.3 Health and Deprivation Context

3.3.1 Health summary

Public Health England publish several indicators which can provide a summary of the health context of Castle Point.



3.3.2 Health Policy

Essex County Council

Essex County Council provides support and advises on work to reduce the gap in life expectancy, increase the years of healthy life expectancy and reduce the differences between health outcomes in the population. It oversees the development of the health and social care needs assessment referred to as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The assessment highlights that the preventative health issues are one of the key issues with almost two thirds of adults being overweight and obese with excess weight in children also being a concern. Physical activity and healthy weight are one of the strategic priorities of this assessment with the environment being a key factor in improving this including access to green spaces and active travel.

There are also health inequalities within Essex especially regarding life expectancy. Spatial planning is recognised as a mechanism to improving this with housing growth and regeneration provide environmental that promote access to green spaces.

The livewell campaign involved the local authorities and partners in Essex to collaborate on the health and wellbeing agenda to achieve better health outcomes for people living in Essex. The six themes that these focus on are:

- **Startwell** – help young families have the best start in life.
- **Staywell** – work with community and professionals to provide access to the best clinical services.
- **Feelwell** – improve access to services that address mental wellbeing.
- **Eatwell** – raise awareness about healthier eating.
- **Bewell** – encourage more people to undertake regular physical activity.
- **Agewell** – encourage people to improve their health and wellbeing now to lead to a better quality of life and provide opportunities for the elderly to be more active during retirement.

Castle Point and Rochford – Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2025

This strategy sets out how Castle Point and Rochford Councils plan to improve the health and wellbeing over the three-year plan period. It was developed with input from the Essex County Council, the CCG and community and voluntary sector organisations. Even though the health profile of Castle Point is relatively good, it has been identified that there are significant differences within wards. Healthy life expectancy also indicates that there are lots of preventative health issues that can be tackled to reduce this – currently in Castle Point there is a 12-year gap in healthy life expectancy for males and a 9-year gap for females.

The four priority areas are:

1. Mental health and wellbeing
2. Physical health and wellbeing
3. Ageing well
4. Community resilience

Having the ability to access open spaces crosses across all four of these priority areas, and the strategy highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed perceptions, such as, people engaging with and are valuing nature, outdoor spaces, and gardens.

3.3.3 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The Indices of Deprivation 2019 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)) across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation:

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills, and Training Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services

- Living Environment Deprivation

Each of these domains is based on a basket of indicators. As far as is possible, each indicator is based on data from the most recent time point available. The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. Figure 4 below shows the IMD rank for each LSOA within the study area, where 1 is most deprived and 10 is least deprived. As can be seen, levels of inequality vary across the borough, with the highest levels of deprivation in Canvey Island.

A Public Health England report[10] highlights that improving access to quality green space has the potential to improve health outcomes for the whole population, in a number of ways:

- Promoting health behaviour including encouraging physical activity and active travel;
- Improving social contacts and giving people a sense of familiarity and belonging;
- Supporting the development of skills and capabilities; and
- Mediating potential harms posed by the local environment for example air pollution, heat, noise and flood risk.

This is particularly true for disadvantaged communities, where the evidence suggests that people's health and wellbeing is enhanced by living in a greener environment. This means that green space also can be an important tool in the ambition to increase healthy life expectancy and narrow the gap between the life chances of the richest and poorest in society.

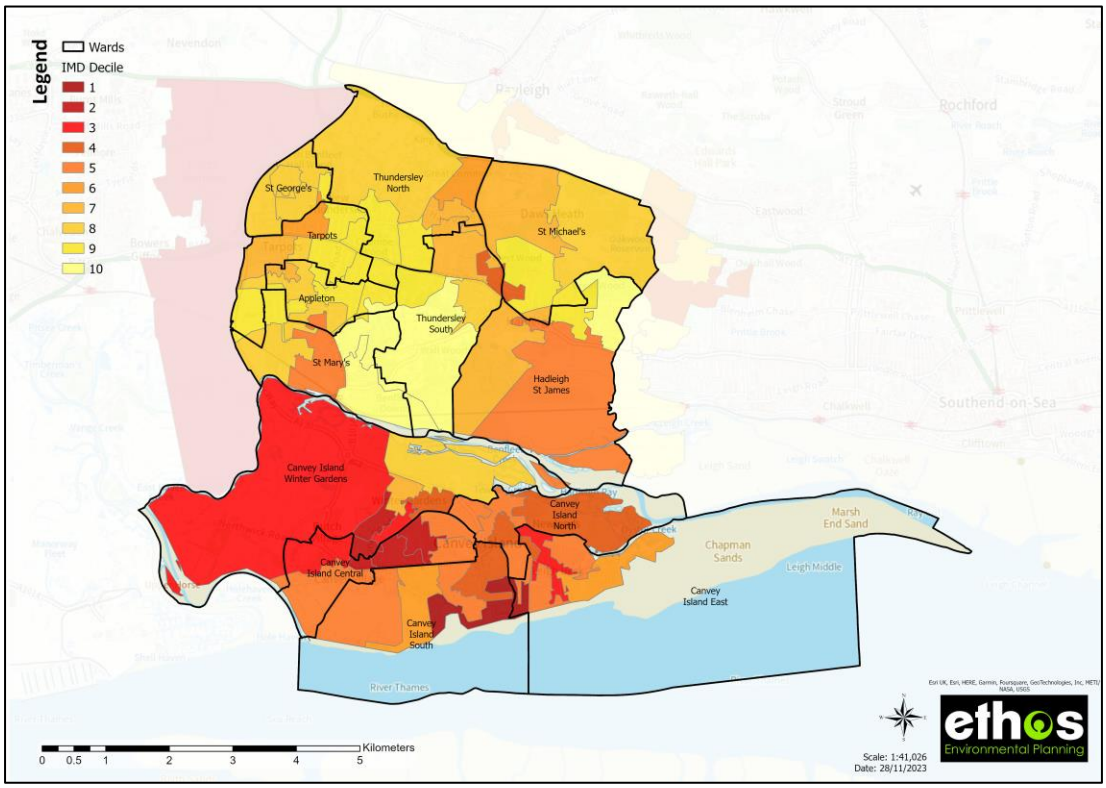
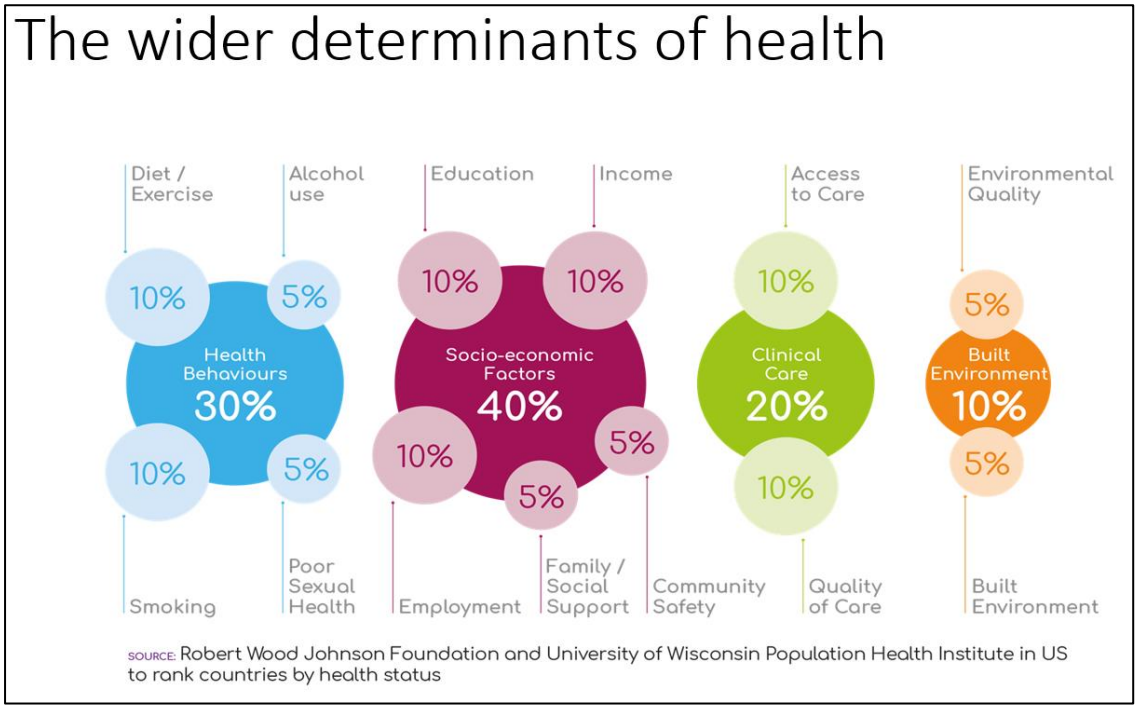


Figure 4 *IMD ranks in the study area (by LSOA) – Where a rank of 1 is most deprived and 10 is least deprived.*

[10] Public Health England Report - Improving access to greenspace: a new review for 2020

3.3.4 South East Essex Alliance – Developing a South East Essex Alliance Plan (Data Trawl)



Key health information of relevance to open space in Castle Point is summarised below:

- Percentage of Physically active children and young people decreased in Castle Point from 2019/20 to 2020/21 and is currently 5th out of 9 in Greater Essex.
- Percentage of Physically inactive adults increased in Castle Point from 2019/20 to 2020/21 and is currently 4th out of 14 in Greater Essex.
- Percentage of Physically active adults decreased in Castle Point from 2019/20 to 2020/21 and is currently 8th out of 14 in Greater Essex.
- Percentage of Obese reception-age children increased in Castle Point from 2018/19 to 2019/20 and is currently 4th out of 14 in Greater Essex.
- Percentage of Obese Year 6 children decreased in Castle Point from 2018/19 to 2019/20 and is currently 7th out of 14 in Greater Essex.
- Percentage of Overweight including obese adults decreased in Castle Point from 2018/19 to 2019/20 and is currently 3rd out of 14 in Greater Essex.
- 98% of houses in Castle Point have a private outdoor space, 3rd of 14 in Greater Essex. 65% of flats in Castle Point have a private outdoor space, 4th of 14 in Greater Essex.
- Castle Point has Green Infrastructure in 49% of the local authority area.
- The latest ONS data (2019) showed that the area with the highest percentage of woodland cover (excluding inland water)[11] in Greater Essex was Brentwood (12%), followed by Castle Point (11%).

[11] Woodland cover for Great Britain is based on areas of trees of at least 0.5ha, wider than 20m, with a minimum of 20% canopy cover, or the potential to achieve it.

4.0 LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (STEP 1)

4.1 Introduction

The consultation report (2023) examines local needs for a wide range of different types of open space and recreation facilities. It provides consultation findings from public consultation and previous consultation findings from other strategies. The work was undertaken from July to September 2023.

The consultation undertaken looked at the adequacy of current provision in terms of the quantity, quality, and access. The results of this consultation and other analyses have helped (amongst other aspects) to inform the content of the recommended local standards (section 6 of this report). It has also helped the study to understand the communities wider appreciated and values attached to open space and recreation facilities.

This section summaries the key findings from the consultation report (2023) in relation to open space under the following headings:

1. Community Consultation
2. Stakeholder Consultation

4.2 Community Consultation – Key Findings

This provides some key consultation findings from the resident's survey, which was hosted by the Council's Consultation Platform and promoted through their website and social media platforms during July – September 2023. A total of 578 surveys were completed, representing 1,329 people. This response rate has provided statistically significant findings at a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of 4.06.

4.2.1 Quantity

- For all kinds of open spaces/recreation facilities respondents thought that there was a need for more provision, however, high numbers also stated that there was sufficient provision.
- A large majority thought that there was a particular need for more woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (58%), informal open spaces (52%) and facilities for teenagers (50%).
- Types of open spaces where respondents thought that there were enough facilities was water recreation facilities (39%).

4.2.2 Quality

- Quality of open spaces were seen as varied in how they were rated with 'adequate' being used as the most common rating.

- Beaches were rated the most highly in terms of quality with 66% of respondents either rating them as good or very good followed by parks and recreation grounds (64%) and woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves (45%).
- Households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor by 37% followed by 32% for water recreation facilities.

4.2.3 Access

In general, a majority of household respondents report that they would not normally travel more than 15 minutes to visit the different kinds of open spaces and recreation facilities. There is considerable variation however between the typologies. For example:

- 66% of households are prepared to travel more than 10 minutes to visit the study area's woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves. 51% would also travel more than 16 minutes to beaches.
- 51% of households would expect children's play areas to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 14% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 43% of households would be prepared to travel between 10 minutes to parks and recreation grounds with only 13% willing to travel up to 5 minutes.
- 75% of households confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved; and 82% of households also said that if the quality of the route was improved, they would make the journey more often.

4.2.4 Priorities

- The category highlighted by the largest number of households as a high priority for potential improvement/new provision was woodlands, wildlife area and nature reserves (68%).
- Other notable high priorities for improvement include footpaths, bridleways, and cycle path provision (62%) and parks and recreation grounds (57%).
- Children's play areas also score quite highly as a priority need (a combined high/medium priority choice for 68% of households - 36% high/32% medium). Youth facilities were rated similarly (a combined high/medium priority choice for 57% of households - 25% high/32% medium).
- Improving access at existing facilities was not deemed particularly significant across any typology except for allotments (26%).

4.3 Stakeholder Consultation

4.3.1 Overview

- Natural England suggests that the accessible natural green space standards developed as part of the National Green Infrastructure Framework should be a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space.
- There are several strategic stakeholders which manage key green spaces within Castle Point including Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB and Salvation Army.
- Many stakeholders also highlighted the importance of biodiversity within open spaces especially given the unique and rare species and habitats that can be found in Castle Point particularly along the coastal areas

4.3.2 Quantity

- Most strategic stakeholders thought that there are enough open spaces across the borough, except for the need for more cycle paths and bridleways.
- The majority of community organisations thought that there was a need for more facilities for teenagers and water recreation facilities.

4.3.3 Quality

- Strategic stakeholders highlighted that the quality of spaces varies across the borough with issues such as anti-social behaviour, littering and poor management being highlighted frequently.
- It was suggested by community organisations that the quality of open spaces varies with the majority rating them as either good or adequate.

4.3.4 *Access*

- Strategic organisations stressed the importance of balancing recreational access with the need to protect biodiversity within Castle Point particularly in terms of natural green spaces and water recreation.
- The cycle network and bridleways restrict access for those users, and this should be also considered when looking at opportunities to connect open spaces.
- Community organisations highlighted that lack of toilet facilities, accessible parking facilities and parking charges can restrict people from accessing open spaces.

4.4 Concluding remarks

Response levels to the resident's survey were high with a good cross-section of the borough geographically as well as a mixture of age groups and disabilities. However, responses from stakeholders were considerably low. There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local and strategic need/aspirations, from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable.

The findings provide evidence to support the spatial planning standards recommended for the different typologies of open space (see Section 6).

5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

5.1 General approach

5.1.1 Review of existing open space typologies

The council's current open space mapping (and as set out in the Council's Open Space Appraisal Update 2012) includes the following typologies, which are based on the PPG 17 guidance, and also include two locally relevant typologies: Thames Estuary/Waterfront and County Parks. These are summarised as follows:

- **Allotments and community gardens -** designated areas where people can grow their own produce. These spaces promote sustainable growth of food, allowing a community to grow produce at the neighbourhood level.
- **Amenity green space -** most commonly found in housing areas. These include informal recreation spaces and greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens. These spaces provide opportunity for informal play and promote social interaction.
- **Churchyards and cemeteries -** areas that serve churches, burial places or memorial gardens. These spaces are used for the burial of the dead and quiet contemplation.
- **Country Parks -** provide vast areas of parkland which are important to biodiversity, wildlife conservation and often are historically and ecologically important landmarks.
- **Green Corridors -** – including linear routes adjacent to river and canal banks, cycle ways, and rights of way used for cyclists and horse riders. These provide opportunity to link other open spaces and neighbourhood areas. These spaces promote exercise and encourage sustainable modes of transport.
- **Natural and semi-natural areas -** including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (downlands, commons and meadows) wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land and rock areas (e.g. cliffs, quarries and pits). These areas provide opportunity for biodiversity and habitat conservation as well as education and environmental awareness.
- **Outdoor Sports Facilities -** includes all outdoor facilities, both natural or artificial, that are publicly or privately owned, that encourage participation in sports. This includes tennis courts, bowling greens, football pitches, golf courses, mountain biking tracks, athletics tracks and other institutional playing fields (such as school playing fields) and other outdoor sports areas. These spaces promote benefits of healthy lifestyles through participation in sport.
- **Parks and public gardens -** PPG17 identifies "parks and public gardens" as two types of space, small "urban parks and gardens" and "country parks". Many PPG 17 open space appraisals categorise these together, however, this often results in small parks (under 0.2ha) being omitted from the appraisal. For this study the term "parks and public gardens" will refer solely to the small urban parks within the borough. These parks have formal or informal planting and management, sculptures and memorials,

served by benches and other street furniture. These spaces provide informal recreation and a community focus.

- **Thames estuary -** the coastal areas such as the promenade and esplanade area of the South of Canvey Island help characterise the borough and gives the borough its unique identity.
- **Young people and children -** including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops and other more informal areas. These spaces can promote social interaction, informal play and help to keep children active.

Generally, these typologies are still considered to be fit for purpose, however, following the site visits, a number of amendments were agreed with the council in order to more clearly separate out private spaces (not freely accessible to the public) and to provide more detail around the definitions of some typologies, in some cases combining typologies and in others separating them out.

The agreed changes are set out below:

Outdoor Sports Facilities: This typology includes private sports and education land that is not publicly accessible as well as playing fields and sports grounds that are freely accessible. It is recommended that the schools grounds go into their own **Education** typology, and publicly accessible playing fields and outdoor sports areas are included within a new **Parks and Recreation Grounds typology**, which will include more formal urban parks as well as accessible recreation/sports grounds. Private sports grounds will go into a new **Outdoor Sport (Private)** Typology. Accessible fixed facilities such as tennis courts will be mapped as **Outdoor Sports (Fixed).**

Young people and children: It is recommended that this typology is split into two: **Children's play space** and **Youth play space.** This will mean that the different types of provision for older children (e.g., stake parks, BMX, MUGAs) can be considered separately to equipped provision for younger children (although it is acknowledged that there will always be some overlap). In our experience, many LA's have shortfalls in youth provision, and having a separate children's and youth standards can help highlight and address this.

Country Parks: it is recommended that this typology is merged with the natural and semi natural green space typology, as these are predominantly natural in character. A sub typology of Country parks will be retained to allow for filtering sites if needed.

Thames Estuary: This typology consists of outdoor bathing pools, linear walkways along the sea front, and linear/amenity type spaces. There appears to be some inconsistency in which spaces are included in this typology, especially with regard to amenity green spaces. It is therefore recommended that a simple approach is taken and that these are reclassified into either: **Green/Blue Corridors** or **Outdoor Bathing.**

5.1.2 Revised typologies

This section sets out the agreed open space typologies which have had standards developed as part of this assessment, and those which have been mapped, but do not have standards. The typologies of open space have drawn on guidance provided within PPG17, and through discussions with the project team. The agreed list of typologies is seen to be locally derived and appropriate for the type and range of open spaces that exist within the study area.

Although sites have been categorised into different typologies, the multifunctionality of different types of open space is important to recognise e.g., amenity green space, accessible natural green space, parks and recreation grounds and allotments may all provide numerous functions and benefits such as providing space for recreation, habitat for wildlife conservation, flood alleviation, improving air quality, and providing food growing opportunities.

The following typologies have been used in this assessment:

Table 6 Castle Point Council Open Space Typologies

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards[12]
• Allotments • Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha) • Parks and Recreation Grounds • Play Space (Children) • Play Space (Youth) • Accessible Natural Green Space	• Green/blue corridor • Outdoor Sport (Private) • Churchyards and Cemeteries • Education • Small Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha) • Outdoor Bathing

5.2 Typologies with Standards

5.2.1 Allotments

Figure 5 Jotman's Farm, Tarpots

[12] An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections.

This typology designated areas where people can grow their own produce, promoting sustainable growth of food. It covers all forms of community growing areas including formal allotments, and growing areas. For the purpose of this assessment, the term 'allotments' will be used throughout, however, it is intended that this does refer to the wider typology as outlined.

Allotments provide areas for people to grow their own produce and plants. It is important to be clear about what is meant by the term 'Allotment.' The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 obliged local authorities to provide sufficient allotments and to let them to persons living in their areas where they considered there was a demand. The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term 'allotment garden' as:

"an allotment not exceeding 40 poles[13] in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family"

The Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called Statutory Allotment Sites, by the requirement for the need for the approval of Secretary of State in event of sale or disposal. Some allotment sites may not specifically have been acquired for this purpose. Such allotment sites are known as "temporary" (even if they have been in use for decades) and are not protected by the 1925 legislation.

5.2.2 Amenity Green Space

Figure 6 Southwick Dyke, Canvey Island

The category is considered to include those spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function such as a park, public playing

[13] 40 Poles equals 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres. A Pole can also be known as a Rod or Perch

field or recreation ground; nor managed as a natural or semi-natural habitat. These areas of open space will be of varied size, but are likely to share the following characteristics:

- Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.
- Predominantly laid down to (mown) grass.
- Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points (unlike parks).
- They may have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
- They may occasionally have other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as play equipment, informal football or ball courts).

Examples might include both small and larger informal grassed areas in housing estates and general recreation spaces. They can serve a variety of functions dependent on their size, shape, location and topography. Some may be used for informal recreation activities, whilst others by themselves, or else collectively, contribute to the overall visual amenity of an area.

Amenity green spaces smaller than 0.1ha are not included within the analysis for this typology, as it is considered that these sites will have limited recreation function and therefore should not count towards public open space provision. However, it is noted that that these spaces may have value in terms of their visual amenity and/or biodiversity value and contribute to the wider network of Green Infrastructure within the borough. These spaces have been mapped as **Small Amenity Green Space.**

5.2.3 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Figure 7 John Burrows Recreation Ground, Daws Heath

This typology brings together the function of Parks and Recreation Grounds and Outdoor Sports Space as identified in the former PPG17 typology. The distinction between the two

typologies in the study area is blurred, with very few formal gardens and many parks and/or outdoor sports spaces having multi-functions used for both informal and formal recreation. Therefore, for the study an overarching typology for Park and Recreation Grounds has been used.

For the purpose of this study, a Park and Recreation Ground is defined as an open space that:

- Has at least two facilities e.g., a children's play area and tennis courts, or;
- Has provision for formal sports pitches e.g., football or cricket pitch (informal football would be excluded); or
- Are formally laid out e.g., with identifiable entrance points, formal paths, formal planted shrub beds and flower beds, car parking; and
- Are actively managed and accessible to the public.

The Parks and Recreation Ground typology comprises those areas laid out as pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis which are accessible i.e., they can be walked over/used informally. Fixed facilities such as tennis courts will be mapped separately as **Outdoor Sport (Fixed).**

Pitches or facilities which have limited access e.g., they are fenced off and/or only open to members or clubs are mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private). The separate Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy (PPS) (2018 and updated in 2022) will provide the detail around the locations of pitches.

The quantity figure for Parks and Recreation Grounds excludes the provision of children and youth play spaces which have been mapped separately/have a separate typology.

Parks and Recreation Grounds take on many forms, and may embrace a wide range of functions including:

- Play space of many kinds;
- Provision for a range of formal pitch and fixed sports;
- Provision of outdoor gyms and fitness trails;
- Informal recreation and sport;
- Providing attractive walks and cycle routes to work;
- Offering landscape and amenity features;
- Areas of formal planting;
- Providing areas for 'events;'
- Providing habitats for wildlife and connection with nature;
- Providing space for food growing;
- Dog walking.

The recommended standards for this typology are intended to provide sufficient space for sports facilities, pitches, and ancillary space e.g., footpaths, landscaping etc. The Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy should be referred to for evidence relating to recommendations for playing pitch requirements and their provision. The quantity standard is designed to be flexible so that the Council can make the case for what type of open space/facilities are

required, this would be justified on the analysis of local circumstances and on a case-by-case basis.

5.2.4 Play Space (Children and Youth)

Figure 8 The Crescent, Hadleigh

Figure 9 Leigh Beck Recreation Ground Basketball, Canvey Island

It is important to establish the scope of the study in terms of this type of open space. Children and young people will play/'hang out' in almost all publicly accessible "space" ranging from the street, town centres and squares, parks, playing fields, "amenity" grassed areas etc. as well as the more recognisable play and youth facility areas such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) etc. Clearly many of the other types of open space covered by this study will therefore provide informal play opportunities.

To a child, the whole world is a potential playground: where an adult sees a low wall, a railing, kerb or street bench, a child might see a mini adventure playground or a challenging skateboard obstacle. Play should not be restricted to designated reservations and planning and urban design principles should reflect these considerations.

Historically, much planned play provision across the country has been in accordance with guidance provided by the then National Playing Fields Association (now known as Fields in Trust or FIT). Categorisation of play space based on this guidance included the designations: Local Areas for Play (LAPs); Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs); and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). Best practice in terms of play provision has evolved greatly in recent years resulting in part from issues arising out of long-term sustainability of facilities provided through applying the above guidance; recognition of the value of more natural environments for play; principles of inclusivity and overall 'play value;' recognition of 'acceptable risk,' and more.

As a consequence of the above, it is not considered appropriate to classify existing play provision in accordance with the hierarchical categorisation of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs, but instead using a classification that provides more flexibility. The assessment therefore covers the following:

- **Play Space (Children)** – equipped areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to and around 12 years of age.
- **Play Space (Youth)** i.e., Teenage facilities – informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 17 age group, including skateboard parks, basketball courts, BMX ramps and 'free access' Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs).

In practice, there will always be some blurring around the edges in terms of younger children using equipment aimed for youths and vice versa.

5.2.5 Accessible Natural Green Space

Figure 10 Little Haven Nature Reserve, Daws Heath

For the purpose of this study, accessible natural green space covers a variety of spaces including meadows, woodland, copses, river valleys and lakes all of which share a trait of having natural characteristics and biodiversity value and are also partly or wholly accessible for informal recreation.

The focus for this typology is those sites where there are definitive boundaries or areas of natural green space which have some form of public access e.g., Local Nature Reserves. In some cases, access may not be fully clear, however, there is evidence of some level of informal use and access. This typology includes Country Parks (as a sub typology), which are predominantly natural in character.

Some sites may provide access in different ways, for example, rivers or lakes are often used for water recreation (e.g., canoeing, fishing, sailing). Whilst access may not be available fully across all areas of these sites (e.g., the middle of a lake or dense scrub in a woodland), the whole site has been included within the assessment.

Some natural spaces have no access at all, and whilst they cannot be formally used by the general community, they can be appreciated from a distance, and contribute to visual amenity, green infrastructure, and biodiversity. Whilst every effort was made to exclude these spaces from this typology (as the focus is on publicly accessible space), as already identified, in certain sites access may not always be clear.

The consultation and research undertaken as part of this assessment have identified the value attached to natural spaces for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of 'connectedness to nature' with its attendant benefits for people is something this is all too easily lost in urban areas. Natural green spaces can make important contributions towards local biodiversity action plan targets and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.

5.3 Typologies with no quantity and access standards[14]

5.3.1 Green/blue corridor

Green corridors are those sites/routes that offer opportunities for walking, cycling or horse riding, for leisure purposes or travel and offer opportunities for wildlife migration. This typology includes linear walkways along the sea front. Key green/blue corridors have been identified and mapped where known, however, no quantity or access standard for provision will be set.

5.3.2 Outdoor Sport Private

Outdoor sports spaces which are privately managed, and which may have varying levels of public access (e.g., private sports grounds), have also been mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private).

[14] However, some of these open spaces have been subject to a quality assessment (further detail is provided in Section 7.4).

This typology includes golf courses (including municipal golf courses), where more often than not, public access is restricted. Nevertheless, these facilities are used by local people, and they form part of the Green Infrastructure network. This typology also includes fixed outdoor sports space (including tennis courts and bowling greens) which are privately managed, and not freely accessible.

5.3.3 Churchyards and Cemeteries

The Study Area has numerous churches and cemeteries, and these provide significant aesthetic value and space for informal recreation such as walking and relaxing. Many are also important in terms of biodiversity. Their importance for informal recreation, aesthetic value and contribution towards biodiversity must be acknowledged, and as such, investment in their upkeep, maintenance and quality is an important factor. Churchyards and cemeteries have been identified and mapped where known, however, no quantity or access standard for provision will be set, as it is outside the scope of this study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision.

5.3.4 Education

Many schools and colleges have open space and sports facilities within their grounds. This may range from a small playground to large playing fields with several sports pitches. More often than not, public access to these spaces is restricted, often forbidden. Nevertheless, many of the sports facilities are used by local people on both an informal and formal basis. Sports clubs may have local informal arrangements with a school to use their pitches, and in some cases more formal 'dual use' agreements may be in place. School grounds can also contribute towards the green infrastructure and biodiversity of an area.

Education grounds will be identified and mapped. Quantity, quality and access standards are not being proposed for education sites. This is because they are not openly accessible to the public and whilst important to the local community, there is less opportunity for the Council to influence their provision and management. Community access to education sites is assessed within the separate playing pitch strategy.

5.3.5 Small Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha)

This typology covers roadside amenity spaces which generally have a visual amenity function and those informal green spaces on housing estates which effectively function as private gardens or have visual amenity value and therefore have limited open space function for the general public. However, the importance of these spaces in terms of their contribution to the overall GI network is recognised. These spaces have therefore been mapped (but not considered in the quantity or access analysis).

5.3.5 Outdoor Bathing

There are a number of outdoor bathing pools along the coast which provide unique recreational opportunities in the borough. These have been mapped but are not subject to quantity and access standards.

5.4 Existing provision of open space

5.4.1 Open space provision across the study area

The existing provision of open space[15] is based on the mapping completed by Castle Point Borough Council and site surveys undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning. Detailed open space provision maps by ward are provided in Appendix 1 of this report, and a GIS database containing all mapped sites alongside quality results and access buffers has been provided to the Council.

The table below provides a borough wide summary for each open space typology which includes numbers of sites, total hectarage (ha), hectares per 1000 population (ha/1000), minimum, maximum and average sizes.

The figures for parks and recreation grounds (combined) are a combination of parks and recreation grounds; and outdoor sport (fixed).

Table 7 Summary of existing provision of open space across the study area

Typology	Number of Sites	Ha	Ha/1000	Minimum Size (ha)	Maximum Size (ha)	Average Size (ha)
Allotments	8	7.24	0.08	0.11	2.24	0.91
Amenity Green Space (>0.1Ha)	56	47.01	0.52	0.10	7.26	0.84
Parks and Recreation Grounds (combined)	19	102.58	1.14	0.28	25.09	6.42
Parks and Recreation Grounds	17	101.70	1.13	0.06	24.43	5.98
Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	2	0.88	0.01	0.22	0.66	0.44
Play Space (Child)	24	2.52	0.03	0.01	0.53	0.10
Play Space (Youth)	10	1.04	0.01	0.00	0.49	0.10
Accessible Natural Green Space	27	854.61	9.45	1.15	257.67	31.65
Small Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha)	97	3.89	0.04	0.01	0.24	0.04
Churchyards and Cemeteries	8	13.68	0.15	0.07	4.78	1.71
Education	28	94.34	1.05	0.60	14.93	3.37
Green/Blue Corridors	16	84.48	0.94	0.04	38.63	5.28
Outdoor Bathing	2	0.47	0.01	0.22	0.25	0.24
Outdoor Sport (Private)	11	113.14	1.26	0.14	60.08	10.29

Tables 8 and 9 summarise the provision of open space for each typology, by ward and study area, in hectares (ha) and hectares per 1000 population (ha/1000).

[15] As of September 2023, when the mapping was signed off by the Council. It is acknowledged that new open spaces will come forward, and there may have been sites that are used by the local community that have not been recorded. The open space dataset will be monitored and refined by the Council, taking into account the best information available at that time, to feed into future updates of this assessment.

5.4.2 Open space provision by ward

Table 8 Existing provision of open space (hectares) by ward

Ward	Allotments	Amenity Green Space >0.1Ha	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	*Parks and Recreation Grounds*	*Outdoor Sport (Fixed)*	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Green/ Blue Corridors	Outdoor Bathing	Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha)
St Michaels	2.24	1.44	8.47	*8.25*	*0.22*	0.06	0.00	126.18	0.07	12.13	0.24	0	0	0
Hadleigh St James	1.03	0.97	0.06	*0.06*	*0.00*	0.24	0.00	188.86	0.52	2.92	0.14	18.21	0	0
Thundersley South	0.00	5.61	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.13	0.00	74.92	0.00	7.28	3.31	4.08	0	0.01
St George's	0.00	2.71	0.02	*0.02*	*0.00*	0.08	0.00	3.60	0.00	6.86	0.00	0	0	0.08
Appleton	0.00	1.59	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.10	0.00	0.06	0.00	9.89	0.06	0	0	0.01
Thundersley North	0.19	0.63	19.01	*19.01*	*0.00*	0.22	0.02	27.00	5.72	6.88	0.27	0.07	0	0.03
St Mary's	0.62	0.12	24.43	*24.43*	*0.00*	0.24	0.23	35.22	0.94	1.39	43.22	2.58	0	0.19
Tarpots	1.60	0.00	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.00	0.00	6.54	0.00	4.09	0.00	0.05	0	0
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	1.23	15.14	27.03	*26.37*	*0.66*	0.69	0.24	362.62	4.88	25.05	60.85	6.27	0	1.3
Canvey Island South	0.00	0.21	7.59	*7.59*	*0.00*	0.30	0.49	0.00	0.00	13.23	1.89	14.14	0.47	0.37
Canvey Island East	0.33	3.98	14.56	*14.56*	*0.00*	0.39	0.05	0.22	0.00	2.81	1.08	38.11	0	0.37
Canvey Island North	0.00	2.85	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.04	0.00	17.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.96	0	0.28
Canvey Island Central	0.00	11.75	1.39	*1.39*	*0.00*	0.02	0.00	3.92	1.55	1.81	2.08	0.00	0	1.26
Borough wide	**7.24**	**47.00**	**102.56**	**101.68**	**0.88**	**2.51**	**1.03**	**846.56**	**13.68**	**94.34**	**113.14**	**84.47**	**0.47**	**3.9**

Table 9 Existing provision of open space (hectares per 1000 population) by ward

Ward	Allot-ments	Amenity Green Space >0.1Ha	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	*Parks and Recreation Grounds*	*Outdoor Sport (Fixed)*	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Church yards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Green/ Blue Corridors	Outdoor Bathing	Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha)	2021 Population Estimates Provided by council
St Michaels	0.40	0.25	1.50	*1.46*	*0.04*	0.01	0.00	22.32	0.01	2.15	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	5654
Hadleigh St James	0.17	0.16	0.01	*0.01*	*0.00*	0.04	0.00	31.25	0.09	0.48	0.02	3.01	0.00	0.00	6043
Thundersley South	0.00	0.91	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.02	0.00	12.13	0.00	1.18	0.54	0.66	0.00	0.00	6176
St George's	0.00	0.43	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.01	0.00	0.57	0.00	1.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	6351
Appleton	0.00	0.24	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	1.51	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	6550
Thundersley North	0.03	0.09	2.72	*2.72*	*0.00*	0.03	0.00	3.86	0.82	0.98	0.04	0.01	0.00	0.00	6993
St Mary's	0.09	0.02	3.47	*3.47*	*0.00*	0.03	0.03	5.00	0.13	0.20	6.14	0.37	0.00	0.03	7043
Tarpots	0.22	0.00	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.00	0.00	0.92	0.00	0.57	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	7143
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	0.17	2.05	3.66	*3.57*	*0.09*	0.09	0.03	49.14	0.66	3.39	8.25	0.85	0.00	0.18	7380
Canvey Island South	0.00	0.03	1.02	*1.02*	*0.00*	0.04	0.07	0.00	0.00	1.78	0.25	1.90	0.06	0.05	7438
Canvey Island East	0.04	0.53	1.93	*1.93*	*0.00*	0.05	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.37	0.14	5.05	0.00	0.05	7552
Canvey Island North	0.00	0.37	0.00	*0.00*	*0.00*	0.01	0.0	2.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.04	7636
Canvey Island Central	0.00	1.54	0.18	*0.18*	*0.00*	0.00	0.00	0.51	0.20	0.24	0.27	0.00	0.00	0.16	7641
Borough wide	**0.08**	**0.52**	**1.14**	**1.13**	**0.01**	**0.03**	**0.01**	**9.45**	**0.15**	**1.05**	**1.26**	**0.94**	**0.01**	**0.04**	**89600**

6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

6.1 General

Following the completion of the assessment of local needs and the audit of provision (the first two steps of this study), new standards of provision for open space have been set. This section explains how the standards for the study area have been developed and provides specific information and justification for each of the typologies where standards have been developed.

The standards for open space have been developed in accordance with the NPPF. Standards comprise the following components:

- **Quantity standards:** These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity, consideration of existing local and national standards and benchmarks and evidence gathered from the local needs assessment. It is important that quantity standards are locally derived and are realistic and achievable. The recommended standards need to be robust, evidence based and deliverable through new development and future mechanisms of contributions through on-site or off-site provision.

- **Accessibility standards:** These reflect the needs of all potential users including those with physical or sensory disabilities, young and older people alike. Spaces likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and to have safe access. Other facilities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent, for example country parks, can be further away. Consideration is also given to existing local or national standards and benchmarks.

- **Quality standards:** The standards for each form of provision are derived from the quality audit and existing good practice and include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future.

The principles behind applying the standards

The standards are explained and justified in more detail below. The efficacy of standards will depend heavily on the way that they are applied. Here are some important and interrelated principles:

- An inability to provide sufficient quantity might be at least partly compensated for through better quality and access. Investment in the quality and robustness of open space can also often improve the 'carrying capacity' of open spaces and therefore offset some shortcomings in quantitative provision.
- Consideration of other types of open space (which do not have quantity and access standards developed) in meeting needs where there are deficiencies in open space should be taken into account e.g. green/blue corridors.
- New and improved open space should be designed to optimise multi-functionality to benefit both people and nature/the wider environment e.g., offering wildlife habitats,

flood management opportunities, providing recreation opportunities etc. Wherever possible it should heighten residents' overall appreciation, understanding of, and respect for that environment so it becomes an important and valued local resource. Good practice guidance for the design of high-quality green space should draw on best practice guidance such as the Green Flag Award guidance, the Building with Nature Benchmark, and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards Framework.

- Standards will need to be applied to a variety of circumstances, and flexibility of interpretation is the key to success. A pragmatic approach will be essential given the range of circumstances in which they will be used.

6.2 Allotments

Table 10 Summary of quantity and access standards for allotments

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.2 ha/1000 population	15 minutes' walk-time (720m straight line)

Existing national or local standards

National standards for allotments and other such open spaces are difficult to find. The closest comparison to such standards appears to be those set out by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG). These are as follows:

- Standard Plot Size = 330 sq. yards (250sqm)
- Paths = 1.4m wide for disabled access
- Haulage ways = 3m wide
- Plot holders shed = 12sqm
- Greenhouse = 15sqm
- Polytunnel = 30sqm

Justification of a new quantity standard for allotments

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.08ha/1000.
- Provision varies by ward, with 6 out of the 13 wards having no provision.
- The research undertaken as part of this assessment highlights the value of open space such as allotments in providing access to outdoor physical activity and associated benefits for health and wellbeing.
- The residents survey (2023) found that 53% of respondents never use allotments. 38% think there is a need for more, 21% think there is enough, 38% had no opinion.
- The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended a standard of 0.065ha/1000. This is considered to be very low in Ethos' experience.
- The propensity for higher density new housing with smaller gardens is likely to increase demand.
- With the above in mind, a standard that is higher than the existing average level of provision is recommended. Therefore, a standard of **0.2 ha/1000** is proposed for analysing existing provision and for new provision.

- It is considered that the allotment standard would be used flexibly to meet local needs – for example, in some areas the standard might be used to deliver other types of community food growing, such as community orchards; unfenced/informal growing plots e.g., within open spaces; and urban farms.

Justification of a new access standard for allotments

- The 2023 residents survey found that the normal mode of travel to allotments is by foot (51% walk) and driving (41%). Only 6% cycle and 3% take public transport.
- Responses received in relation to acceptable travel times[16] to allotments from the recent resident's survey identified a mix in responses, with 34% wanting allotments within 10 minutes, 34% within 15 minutes and 21% up to 20 minutes.
- It is considered that the availability of allotments is more important than having them very close to home, nevertheless there is some demand for facilities relatively nearby.
- The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended an access standard of 2400m straight line distance or 10-minute drive.
- The concept of the 15-minute neighbourhood is growing momentum which, which aims to transform urban spaces into connected and self-sufficient cities/neighbourhoods. This means that a resident can fulfil their basic needs such as gaining access to local goods, services, and leisure within a 15-minute walk or cycle ride of their home. Essentially, it creates self-sufficient communities. This is also in line with Natural England's headline accessible green space standard.
- Therefore, a standard of no more than **15 minutes' walk time** (or 720 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standards for allotments

The stakeholder consultation (2023) highlighted issues with the quality of some allotment sites. 50% of community organisations that responded to the 2023 survey thought that allotments were of average or poor quality (although 50% had no opinion).

The 2023 residents survey found that the majority of respondents (48%) don't have an option on the quality of allotments. However, 21% think they are poor or very poor, 19% think they are adequate and only 13% think they are good or very good. This highlights issues with the quality of allotments. Out of the 7 sites that were audited as part of the quality audits undertaken by Ethos in 2023, 5 were rated as good and 2 rated as fair.

A number of general recommendations are made in relation to quality, which should include the following where possible (especially applicable to new provision):

- Well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard.
- A sunny, open aspect preferably on a southern facing slope.
- Limited overhang from trees and buildings either bounding or within the site.

[16] Mode of transport was not specified

- Adequate lockable storage facilities, and a good water supply within easy walking distance of individual plots.
- Provision for composting facilities.
- Secure boundary fencing.
- Good access within the site both for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Good vehicular access into the site and adequate parking and manoeuvring space.
- Disabled access.
- Toilets.
- Notice boards.

6.3 Amenity Green Space

Table 11 Summary of quantity and access standards for amenity green space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.6 ha/1000 population (minimum size 0.1 ha)	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)

Existing national or local standards

The Fields in Trust (Previously known as the National Playing Fields Association) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' (2018) proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.6ha/1000 population of amenity green space, and a walking distance guideline of 480m. FIT recommend that the quantity guidelines are adjusted to take account of local circumstances.

The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended a standard of 0.452ha/1000.

Justification of a new quantity standard for amenity green space

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.52 ha/1000 (for sites greater than 0.1 ha in size).
- Provision varies by ward, with some areas falling well below the average, and others exceeding it.
- The Fields in Trust proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.6ha/1000 population of amenity green space.
- The 2023 residents survey identified that 53% of respondents visit informal spaces at least weekly (with 25% visiting almost every day). 52% of people felt there was a need for more informal open space areas, whilst 32% felt there were enough.
- Considering the above, a minimum standard of **0.60 ha/1000** (a small increase against existing levels of provision) is recommended for analysing existing levels of provision and for new provision of amenity green space.
- When delivering new provision, consideration should be given to combining this with the natural green space standard (i.e., a combined standard of **2.4 ha/1000**) in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces.
- The minimum size of a space that will be considered acceptable and count towards open space provision is recommended to be 0.1 ha in size. This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. Any

spaces below this size will be acceptable in terms of their visual amenity but would not count towards the required level of provision.

Justification of a new access standard for amenity green space

- Amenity green spaces provide important local access to green space for informal recreation and therefore should be close to home.
- FIT 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' proposes a walking distance guideline of 480m.
- The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended a distance threshold of 480m straight line distance or 10-minute walk.
- The 2023 residents survey identified people want spaces relatively close to home (16% less than 5 mins, 32% less than 10 mins, 28% less than 15 minutes and 15% less than 20 minutes), and that they access these spaces by foot (70%).
- Therefore, a standard of no more than **10 minutes' walk time** (480 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standard for amenity green space

The 2023 residents survey found that the majority of respondents thought the quality of amenity green space was generally average (31%). 23% thought they are good or very good, and 26% thought they are poor or very poor. Out of 55 amenity green spaces (>0.1ha), 25 were rated as good and 29 rated as fair with 27 of these were identified as having an issue i.e., scoring 4 (poor) or below for at least one criterion.

The value of informal/amenity green space must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise, visual amenity, and biodiversity that are almost immediately accessible. It is important to strike the correct balance between having accessible and attractive space to meet the needs of the community and having too much which may be difficult to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that amenity green space should be capable of use for at least some forms of public recreation activity.

It is therefore recommended that, in addition to the minimum size threshold identified above (0.1 ha), all amenity green space should be subject to landscape design, ensuring the following quality principles:

- Capable of supporting informal recreation such as a kickabout, space for dog walking or space to sit and relax;
- Include high quality planting of trees and/or shrubs to create landscape structure and biodiversity value;
- Include paths along main desire lines (lit where appropriate);
- Be designed to ensure safety and personal security; and,
- Be designed to ensure easy maintenance.

6.4 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Table 12 Summary of quantity and access standards for parks and recreation grounds

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.1 ha/1000 population	15 minutes' walk time (720 metres straight line)

Existing national or local standards

The Fields in Trust (FIT) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' (2018) proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens, with a walking distance guideline of 710m.

The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended a standard of 0.103 ha per 1000 population for urban parks and gardens and 3.217 hectares per 1,000 people for outdoor sports facilities.

Justification of a new quantity standard for parks and recreation grounds

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 1.14 ha/1000.
- There is an additional 1.26 ha/1000 of outdoor private sports space which includes a variety of uses (including golf courses).
- Green spaces including parks are vital to physical and mental health and wellbeing, and this was demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (including through the results of the Natural England MENE survey[17]).
- The 2023 residents survey identified that 74% of respondents visit local recreation grounds and parks at least weekly (with 34% visiting almost every day). 48% of people felt there was a need for more of this type of open space, whilst 45% felt there was enough.
- The Fields in Trust proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens.
- Considering the above, a quantity standard of **1.1ha/1000**, in line with the existing average level of provision is recommended for analysing existing provision and the requirements for new provision.
- It should be reiterated that this standard is intended to provide sufficient space for a variety of park uses and facilities and is designed to be flexible so that the council can make the case for what facilities/sports are required. The separate Playing Pitch Strategy will deal with the detail around pitch/sports requirements.

Justification of a new access standard for parks and recreation grounds

- The 2023 residents survey identified that 81% of people walk to local recreation grounds and parks, and that 13% walk up to 5 minutes, 30% up to 10 minutes, 29% up to 15 minutes and 16% up to 20 minutes.

[17] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results

- FIT 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' proposes a walking distance guideline of 710m for parks and gardens and 1,200m for playing pitches and outdoor sports.
- The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended an access standard of 720m straight line distance or 15-minute walk.
- Natural England's green space standard for accessible green space recommends that accessible green space should be within a 15-minute walk time.
- Considering the above, a standard of no more than **15 minutes' walk time** (or 720 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standard for park and recreation grounds

The 2023 residents survey found that 44% of respondents thought the quality of local recreation grounds and parks was good or very good. 30% thought they were adequate and 20% poor or very poor. 17 parks and recreation grounds were audited by Ethos in 2023, and a large proportion scored as good (10 sites), with 6 being rated as fair and 1 site as poor.

The stakeholder consultation (2023) found that respondents thought the quality of parks is varied, with comments including some parks look uninviting, and others have issues with anti-social behaviour and littering.

National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the 'Green Flag' quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces. New and emerging guidance is also available from Building with Nature and the Natural England Green Infrastructure Standards Framework.

For outdoor sports provision, Sport England and the various national governing bodies of sport have produced a wealth of useful documents outlining the quality standards for facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, MUGAs and tennis courts plus associated ancillary facilities. It is recommended that the guidance provided in these documents is adopted by the Council, and that all new and improved provision seeks to meet these guidelines.

6.5 Play Space (children and youth)

Table 13 Summary of quantity and access standards for play space (children and youth)

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Children's Play Space	0.07 ha/1000 population	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Youth Play Space	0.07 ha/1000 population	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)

Existing national or local standards

The FIT guidance 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' (2018) recommends provision of 0.25ha/1000 population of equipped/designated play areas, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). It also recommends a quantity standard of 0.30ha/1000 for MUGAs and skateboard parks and a walking distance of 700m.

The following minimum size guidelines and buffers are recommended by FIT:

Playable space (LAP type - need not be equipped)

1. Minimum active playable space of 100 sq. m (need not be equipped).
2. Buffer zone of 5m minimum depth between the active playable space and the nearest dwelling.

Equipped play area (LEAP type)

1. Minimum activity zone area of 400 sq. m.
2. Buffer zone of not less than 10m in depth between the edge of the equipped activity zone and the boundary of the nearest dwelling and a minimum of 20m between the equipped activity zone and the habitable room facade of the dwelling.

Teen Play including a MUGA (NEAP type)

1. Minimum activity zone area of 1000 sq. m divided into two parts; one part containing a range of playground equipment; and the other a hard surface MUGA of at least 465 sq. m.
2. Buffer zone of not less than 30m in depth between the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest dwelling. A greater distance may be needed where purpose built skateboarding facilities are provided.

The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended 0.048 ha per 1,000 people within existing areas and 0.25 ha per 1,000 people within new developments for provision for children and young people.

Justification of new quantity standards for play spaces

- The existing average level of provision of children's play space across the study area is 0.03 ha/1000, and for youth play space it is 0.01 ha/1000.
- The 2023 residents survey identified that 43% of people felt there was a need for more children's play space, whereas 31% thought there are enough. Regarding facilities for teenagers, 50% felt there was a need for more, while 16% thought there are enough.
- The 2023 Stakeholder Consultation highlighted that consultees think there are shortfalls in both children's and youth play spaces, but with the greatest shortfalls being in youth provision.
- The FIT guidance 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' recommends provision of 0.25ha/1000 population of equipped/designated play areas, and 0.30ha/1000 for MUGAs and skateboard parks. These standards are considered to be high and difficult to deliver (this is in Ethos' experience).
- Considering the above factors, it is recommended that the standards for children and youth play spaces are increased against the current average levels of provision (with a greater increase for youth provision), with a standard of **0.07ha/1000** recommended for analysing existing provision and the requirements for new provision for both children's and youth play space.

- It should be reiterated that these are minimum standards for equipped provision and do not include the need for surrounding playable space as recommended by FIT and Play England[18] i.e., this surrounding playable space will need to be provided in addition to the quantity standard.
- It is considered that the minimum size of equipped play provision would be 100 sqm (0.01ha). In addition to this, buffer zones (which will take a landscape design approach) will be provided between 5m and 30m, depending on the size of the play area. Proximity to housing requires careful consideration in order to avoid conflict.
- It is also recognised that open space (not only equipped children's play areas and youth facilities) provides 'playable space'.

Justification of new access standards for play spaces

- Generally, there is a requirement for children's play spaces closer to home, due to the reliance on walking, whereas for youth play spaces older children can walk further and will often use other modes of transport such as cycling.
- This is reflected in the FIT 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard', which proposes a walking distance guideline of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). For MUGA's and skateboard parks FIT propose a walking distance guideline of 700m.
- The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended and access standard of 480m straight line distance or 10-minute walk for provision for children and youth.
- The 2023 residents survey found that 51% of respondents would expect children's play areas to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 14% would not wish to walk more than 5 minutes. 29% would be prepared to travel up to 15 minutes. For youth facilities, there is spread of results with 27% expecting youth facilities to be within 6 to 10 minutes, 30% between 11 to 15 minutes, 18% between 16 to 20 minutes, 18% more than 20 minutes. The preferred mode of travel is by foot (75% walk to children's play areas, compared to 22% who drive, and for youth facilities 61% walk or cycle (of which 12% cycle), compared to 37% who drive (there is also similar picture for Multi Use Games Areas).
- Considering the above, the following access standards are recommended:
    - Children's play space - **10 minutes' walk time** (480 metres straight line)
    - Youth play space – **15 minutes' walk time** (720 metres straight line).

Justification of a new quality standard for play spaces

The 2023 residents survey found that the perception of the quality of children's facilities ranges – 26% thought children's play areas are good or very good, 24% thought they are average and 22% poor or very poor. The perception of the quality of teenage facilities is worse – 37% thought they are poor or very poor, 16% adequate, and only 5% good or very good. Out of 23 children's play spaces which were audited by Ethos, 10 were as good quality, 12 were rated as fair and 1 rated as poor. All those sites that were rated as fair also were

[18] Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces

identified as having an issue i.e., scoring 4 (poor) or below for at least one criterion. For youth provision, 6 sites were visited, and all of these were rated as fair quality.

It is expected that the design of new play provision would take a landscape design approach (designed to fit its surroundings and enhance the local environment), incorporating play into the overall landscape masterplan for new development, and could include natural play e.g. grassy mounds, planting, logs, and boulders to make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment, and planting which can also help attract birds and other wildlife to literally bring the play space alive. In densely populated urban areas with little or no natural or green space, this more natural approach can help soften the hard, urban landscape.

The challenge for play providers is to provide the best possible play opportunities, and to create play spaces which will attract children, capture their imagination and give them scope to play in new, more exciting, and more creative ways e.g. moving away from fencing play areas (where it is safe to do so), so that the equipment is integrated with its setting, making it feel more inviting to explore and so people are free to use the space without feeling restricted.

Moving forward, Play England would like their new Design Guide; 'Design for Play' to be referenced and added as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in standard configuration. Play England have also developed a 'Quality Assessment Tool' which can be used to judge the quality of individual play spaces. It is recommended that the council considers adopting this as a means of assessing the quality of play spaces. Play England also highlight a potential need for standards for smaller settlements and rural areas where the doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination hierarchy is unlikely to be appropriate.

Disability access is also an important issue for Play England, and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS[19] publication; '*Inclusion by Design'* as an SPD. Their most recent guidance document, '*Better Places to Play through Planning'* gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space and is considered as a background context for the standards suggested in this study.

Make space for girls is a campaign for parks and public spaces to be designed for girls and young women, not just boys and young men. In their 'Research Background Report (2023)' they identify that currently provision for young people consists almost entirely of facilities such as skate parks, MUGA (aka fenced pitches) and BMX tracks. These are seen as meeting the needs of all young people when in fact they are places dominated by boys. Girls feel that parks are unsafe, and offer nothing for them, yet these issues are seldom acknowledged or addressed. Race and national heritage, religion, culture, relative deprivation and disability all affect girls' access to public spaces. Many boys are also not interested in the facilities which are on offer or don't feel they can access them. Furthermore, improving parks, in particular lighting and toilets, could have benefits for many other groups too, such as older people, women and other marginalised genders, and the disabled. One of the most important actions

[19] KIDS, is a charity which in its 40 years, has pioneered a number of approaches and programmes for disabled children and young people. KIDS was established in 1970 and in 2003, KIDS merged with KIDSACTIVE, previously known as the Handicapped Adventure Play Association.

is to ask girls what they want and provide facilities which they are interested in and will use. Only by doing this can councils, designers and planners find out what girls want from parks, and what the problems are with the current provision.

6.6 Accessible Natural Green Space

Table 14 Summary of quantity and access standards for accessible natural green space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.8 ha/1000 population (for new provision)	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line) and Natural England's Accessible Natural Green Space standards

Existing national or local standards

Natural England's **National Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)** establishes national standards for GI in England. They recommend the following:

Capacity criteria: Local authorities have at least **3 hectares of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 population** (n.b. not only accessible natural greenspace).

Size and Proximity criteria: The Green Infrastructure Headline Standards states everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature, to meet the Accessible Greenspace Standards, with an initial focus on **access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home.** Those in bold below relate specifically to accessible natural green space.

Within 15 minutes' walk:

EITHER a Doorstep OR Local Accessible Greenspace

- A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, or
- **A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.**

AND

- **A medium sized neighbourhood natural greenspace (10ha) within 1km.**

AND, beyond 15 minutes' walk:

- **A medium/large wider neighbourhood natural greenspace (20ha) within 2km, and**
- **A large district natural greenspace (100ha) within 5-km**, and
- A very large subregional greenspace within (500 ha) within 10 km.

Quality criteria: Accessible greenspace meets the **Green Flag Award Criteria**, (Ellicott, 2016) and **best practice in accessibility for all**: By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors (The Sensory Trust, 2020).

The Woodland Trust has researched and developed the Woodland Access Standard (WASt) for local authorities to aim for which is written in the Space for People publication[20]. They believe that the WASt can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards using in delivering green infrastructure for health benefits. The WASt is complimentary to Natural England's ANGST and is endorsed by Natural England. The Woodland Access Standard recommends:

- that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible natural woodland of no less than 2ha in size.
- that there should be at least one area of accessible natural woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round-trip) of people's homes.

The FIT guidance 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' also recommends a quantity standard of 1.8ha per 1000 population for natural and semi-natural green space, with a walking distance of 720m.

Justification of a new quantity standard for accessible natural green space

- The existing average level of provision of accessible natural green space (this includes country parks) across the study area is 9.45 ha/1000.
- Many of the wards fall below this average level of provision, with a small number of wards having comparatively very high levels of provision.
- The 2023 residents survey found that 65% of respondents used woodlands, wildlife areas and nature reserves at least weekly (29% used daily). 58% of respondents thought that there was a need for more natural green spaces with 36% saying that there are enough.
- The Stakeholder Consultation (2023) also that on the whole there are enough accessible natural green spaces but there should also be an aim to deliver, more, bigger and less fragmented sites.
- The importance of natural green spaces (along with other open spaces) is recognised not only in their contribution to recreation and health and wellbeing, but also importantly in terms of green infrastructure and nature conservation/biodiversity and climate change mitigation/adaptation.
- FIT recommends a quantity standard of 1.8ha per 1000 population for natural and semi-natural green space.
- The 2012 Open Space Appraisal recommended a quantity standard of 2.377 ha per 1000 population for natural and semi natural areas and 2.34 hectares per 1,000 people for country parks.
- Considering the above, a standard of **1.8 ha/1000** (in line with FIT) is proposed for analysing existing provision and the requirements for new provision. This is considered realistic and achievable in terms of new provision.
- Just because a ward may have levels of provision above the minimum standard, it does not mean these spaces are surplus to requirement (as access and quality also need to be considered, and they may be important in terms of heritage, biodiversity, green

[20] Space for People: targeting action for woodland access – May 2017

infrastructure etc). The minimum standard for assessing existing provision serves to highlight those areas with low levels of provision, and therefore where new provision should be focused.

- As already mentioned under the quantity standard for amenity green space, when delivering new provision, consideration should be given to combining this with the amenity green space standard (i.e., a combined standard of 2.40 ha/1000) in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces, in accordance with the NPPF.

Justification of new access standards for accessible natural green space

- The 2023 residents survey found that a large proportion of respondents are prepared to travel up to 15 minutes to visit spaces/facilities including water recreation sites (56%) and wildlife areas, nature reserves and woodlands (64%). Significant numbers are also willing to travel that long to access footpaths, bridleways, and cycle paths (70%).
- The FIT guidance 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' recommends a walking distance of 720m for natural and semi-natural green space.
- Natural England's green space standard for accessible green space recommends that accessible green space should be within a 15-minute walk time. The standards based on different size thresholds will be applied to identify key gaps in access.
- It is therefore recommended that an access standard of **15 minutes' walk time** (720m straight line) is used to identify key gaps in access to all accessible natural green spaces, in addition to the Natural England Accessible Green Space Standards.

Justification of a new quality standards for accessible natural green space

The 2023 residents survey found that that respondents generally think the quality of woodland, wildlife areas and nature reserves are either good or adequate (61%) with a smaller amount (46%) saying the same for water recreation facilities. 27 sites were quality audited by Ethos in 2020, 21 of which were rated as either excellent or good quality, with only 6 sites being rated as fair.

The shape and size of space provided should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. Provision might be expected to include (as appropriate) elements of woodland, wetland, heathland, and meadow, and could also be made for informal public access through recreation corridors. For larger areas, where car-borne visits might be anticipated, some parking provision will be required. The larger the area the more valuable sites will tend to be in terms of their potential for enhancing local conservation interest and biodiversity. Wherever possible these sites should be linked to help improve wildlife value as part of a network.

In areas where it may be impossible or inappropriate to provide additional natural green space consistent with the standard, other approaches should be pursued which could include (for example):

- Changing the management of marginal space on playing fields and parks to enhance biodiversity.

- Encouraging living green roofs as part of new development/ redevelopment.
- Encouraging the creation of native mixed species hedgerows.
- Additional use of long grass management regimes.
- Improvements to watercourses and water bodies.
- Innovative use of new drainage schemes / Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- Use of trees and plants with biodiversity value in high quality soft landscaping of new developments.

The above are principles to be pursued and encouraged at all times.

Protecting, creating, enhancing and retro-fitting accessible natural and semi-natural features is a cost-effective and win-win approach to delivering positive outcomes for people and wildlife. The Building with Nature[21] benchmark quality standards for the design and delivery of GI could be advocated by the council and included within their GI policy.

6.7 Summary of open space quantity and access standards

Table 15 Summary of open space quantity and access standards[22]

Typology	Quantity standards for existing provision and new provision (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments	0.2	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Amenity Green Space (sites >0.1 ha)	0.6	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Parks and Recreation Grounds	1.1	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Play Space (Children)	0.07	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Play Space (Youth)	0.07	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Accessible Natural Green Space	1.80	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line) and Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standards.
Total for new provision	**3.84**	

These quantity and access standards are in line with Natural England's recommended capacity and proximity standards for Green Infrastructure (summarised in Section 6.6).

[21] https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/about

[22] In addition to these open space standards, the PPS sets out the requirements for playing pitches.

7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

7.1 Introduction

This part of the report uses the proposed new standards in respect of 'quantity', 'quality' and 'access' to analyse open space provision across the study area. This section provides an overview of provision and supply across the study area and individual wards, with maps by ward provided in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

It also looks at the contribution of open spaces to the green infrastructure network, with a summary of the methodology and results provided. The full results are provided as part of the GIS database.

A biodiversity net gain assessment has also been completed for five open spaces within the borough. A summary of the methodology and results is provided, with further detail in Appendix 4.

Quantity analysis

The quantity of provision is assessed using the recommended quantity standards for each of the typologies where a quantity standard has been developed. Recommended standards are expressed as hectares of open space per 1000 population.

The quantity assessment looks at the existing levels of provision, then uses the recommended standard to assess the required level of provision. From this a calculation is made of the supply, which will either be sufficient or insufficient.

Access analysis

This section of the report provides analysis of the recommended access standards for each typology across the study area. The maps and analysis in this section are intended to be indicative, providing an overall picture of provision and highlighting any key issues across the study area.

However, the key to access analysis, is understanding the picture at a more localised level, therefore, maps showing local access provision by ward are included in Appendix 2.

Quality analysis

This section of the report makes analysis of each typology across the study area – it highlights any common themes or issues that have arisen from the consultation and provides a summary of the quality audit results at the study area level. The detailed quality audits have been provided to the Council as part of the GIS database, and maps by ward are provided at Appendix 3 which show the ranking of each open space audited (excellent, good, fair, or poor).

7.2 Application of quantity standards

7.2.1 Current supply against the standards

The table below shows the existing supply (in hectares) of open space for each typology for each of the wards, and at the study area level. The supply is calculated using the population figures (using 2021 ward estimates provided by the council – see Section 1.4.3) and the quantity of open space compared to what the requirements for open space are against the recommended standards.

Positive figures show where the study area/wards meet the quantity standard for the open space typology, and negative figures show where there is a shortfall in supply against the quantity standard.

Although these figures highlight where there are shortfalls in supply against the quantity standards and therefore where new provision should be sought, in many cases new provision will not be achievable (unless, for example, through new development). These figures can help inform decisions about the form of new open spaces and improvements to existing open spaces, rather than it being imperative that every ward must achieve a '+' number.

It is important that these figures are considered alongside the access analysis (see section below), as even if a ward is showing a shortfall in the supply of a particular typology, there may be access to open space in a neighbouring ward.

Table 16 Open space supply (ha) by ward and study area

Ward	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space
St Michael's	1.11	-1.95	2.25	-0.34	-0.40	116.00
Hadleigh St James	-0.18	-2.66	-6.59	-0.18	-0.42	177.98
Thundersley South	-1.24	1.90	-6.79	-0.30	-0.43	63.80
St George's	-1.27	-1.10	-6.97	-0.36	-0.44	-7.83
Appleton	-1.31	-2.34	-7.21	-0.36	-0.46	-11.73
Thundersley North	-1.21	-3.57	11.32	-0.27	-0.47	14.41
St Mary's	-0.79	-4.11	16.68	-0.25	-0.26	22.54
Tarpots	0.17	-4.29	-7.86	-0.50	-0.50	-6.32
Canvey Island Winter Gardens	-0.25	10.71	18.91	0.17	-0.28	349.34
Canvey Island South	-1.49	-4.25	-0.59	-0.22	-0.03	-13.39
Canvey Island East	-1.18	-0.55	6.25	-0.14	-0.48	-13.37
Canvey Island North	-1.53	-1.73	-8.40	-0.49	-0.53	3.68

Ward	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space
Canvey Island Central	-1.53	7.17	-7.02	-0.51	-0.53	-9.83
Borough wide	**-10.68**	**-6.76**	**4.00**	**-3.76**	**-5.24**	**685.28**

Table 16 shows that open space provision varies across wards and typologies, with some meeting the standards and some falling below. Looking across the borough, most typologies have a shortfall except for parks and recreation and accessible natural green space. All wards have a shortfall in youth provision and children's play space (except for Canvey Island Winter Gardens). This will be an important consideration when determining the need for on-site open space as part of new development.

Just because a typology is in sufficient supply, this does not mean it is 'surplus' to requirements, as the access and quantity standards also need to be considered alongside the quantity requirements. There may also be other factors such as a sites nature conservation, historic or cultural value, or its contribution to the Green Infrastructure network which mean it should be protected, or if it can be re-designed/re -designated used to reduce the shortfalls in other types of open space (see Section 8.2 of this report).

7.2.2 Future need for open space

The Local Housing Needs Assessment (2023) identifies a need for 255 homes per annum in Castle Point. This will be used by the Council to prepare a plan for the period 2023 – 2043.

Over the 20 year period this equates to 5,100 homes. Using an average household size of 2.4 persons/household (based on Census 2021), this results in an estimated population increase of 12,240.

Based on an estimated population increase of 12,240, this is likely to result in the following indicative open space requirements up to 2043 (using the quantity standards set out in Section 6.7, Table 15):

- Allotments: 2.45ha[23]
- Amenity green space: 7.34ha
- Parks and recreation grounds: 13.46ha
- Play space (children): 0.87ha
- Play space (youth): 0.87ha

[23] The quantity requirement for open space is calculated as follows: The open space quantity standard is divided by 1000 and then multiplied by the proposed population increase. An example for allotments is provided: 0.2/1000 x 12,240 = 2.45.

- Accessible natural green space: 22.03ha

The figures for open space requirements are for indicative purposes - the calculations are based on all open space being provided on site (which will not be the reality in some cases, as consideration of the individual development size and proximity to existing open spaces needs to be taken into account (see Section 8)).

More detail around the application of the open space standards and a recommended costings methodology for open space provision/contributions is provided in Section 8.7 of this report.

The effectiveness of standards will depend heavily on the way that they are applied. Some important principles have been set out in Section 6.1 to help guide their application.

7.3 Application of access standards

This section provides an overview of access to different types of open space typologies across the study area, using the access standards summarised in Table 15. **The maps are intended to provide an overview and are for illustrative purposes only.** More detailed maps by ward are provided for each typology within Appendix 2.

The maps show the walk-time buffers for each open space typology and are created using QGIS and the OSM Tools plugin which relies on the OpenStreetMap paths and street network to accurately map realistic potential walking routes. The buffers are based on a walk-time of 5 kilometres/3.1 miles an hour[24].

Table 2 (Section 2.4 of this report) shows how walk-time relates to straight-line distances and pedestrian route distances. The straight-line walking distances do not take into account roads or barriers to access and so the actual route walked (the pedestrian route) is generally further i.e., straight-line distances are around 60% of actual distances. The more basic straight-line buffer access analysis approach has been used for the Natural England ANGSt standards, which define straight line buffers and not walk time

[24] This is in line with the British Heart Foundation state as an average walking pace on country and forestry footpaths: https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/training-zone/walking-training-zone/walking-faqs

7.3.1 Access to allotments, amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and play space (children and youth)

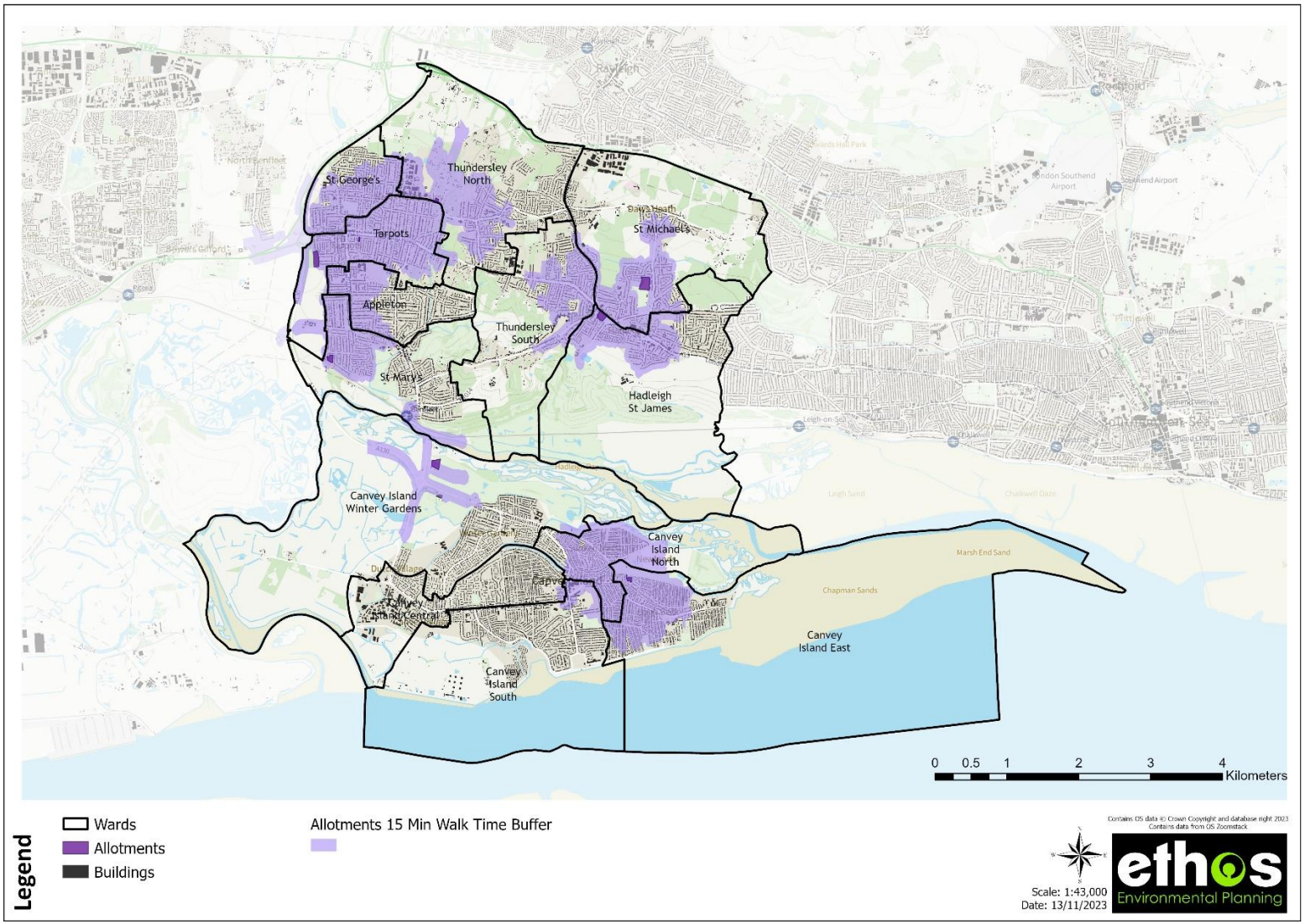


Figure 11 Access to allotments (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

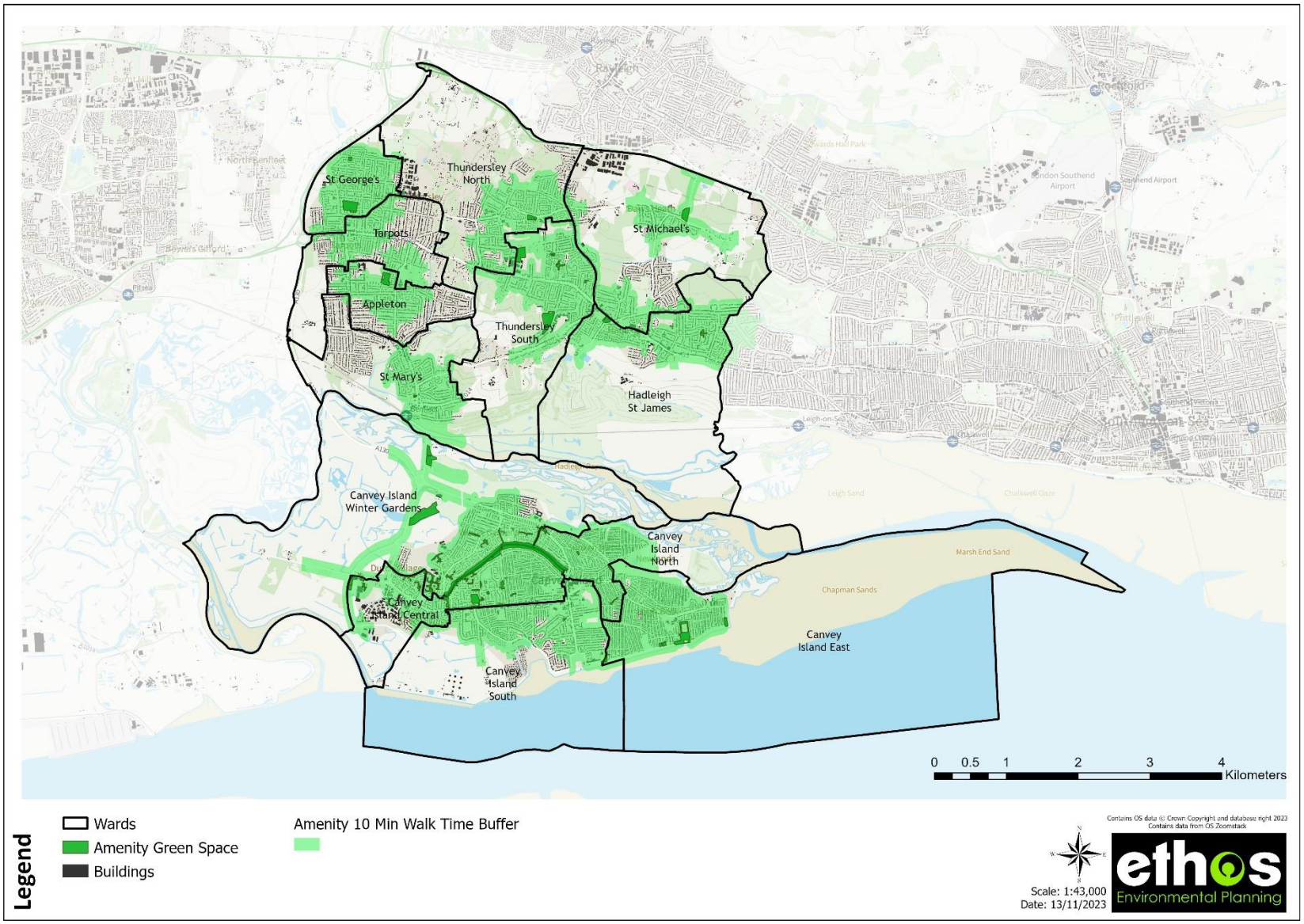


Figure 12 Access to amenity green space (10 minutes' walk time buffer)

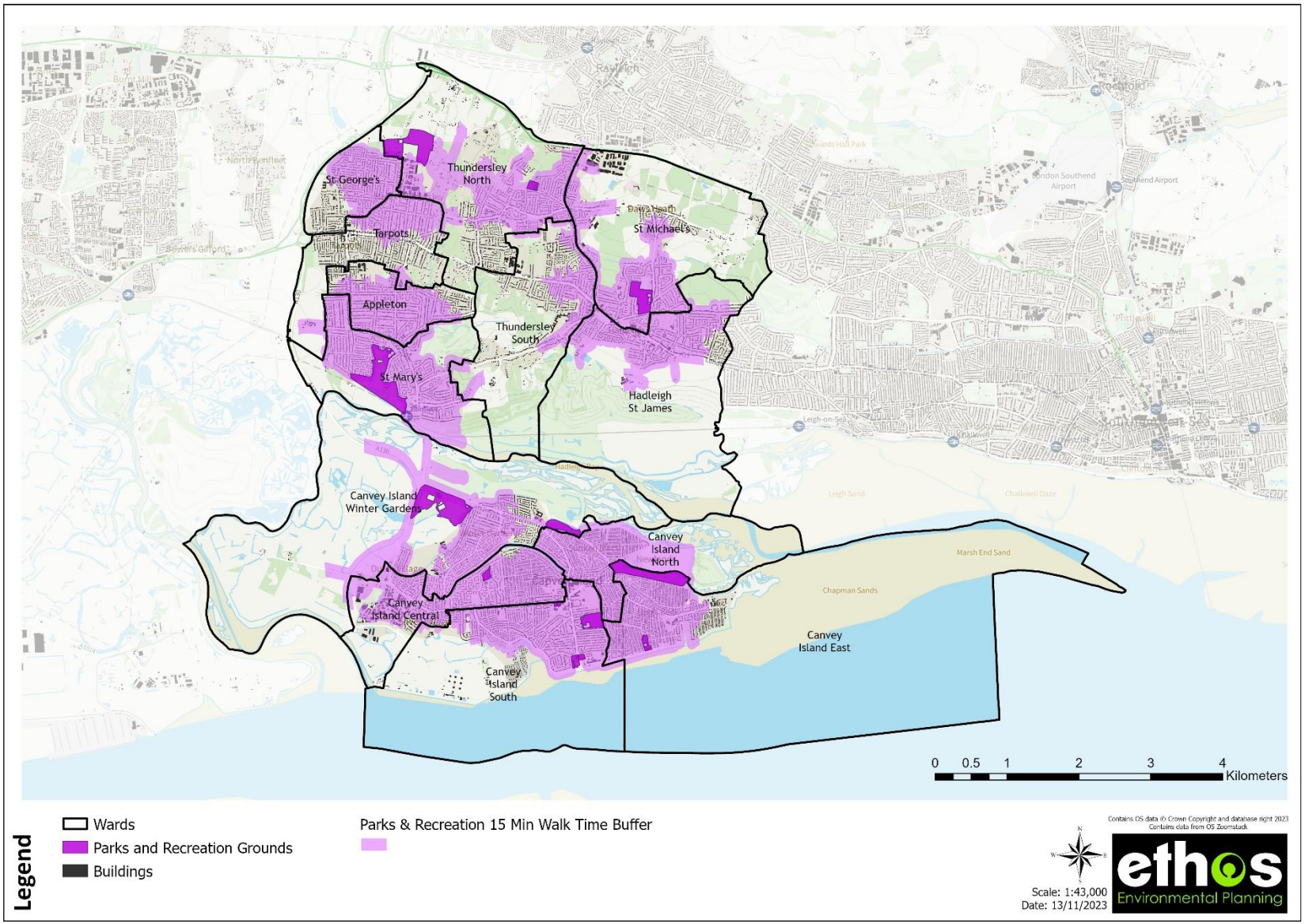


Figure 13 Access to parks and recreation grounds (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

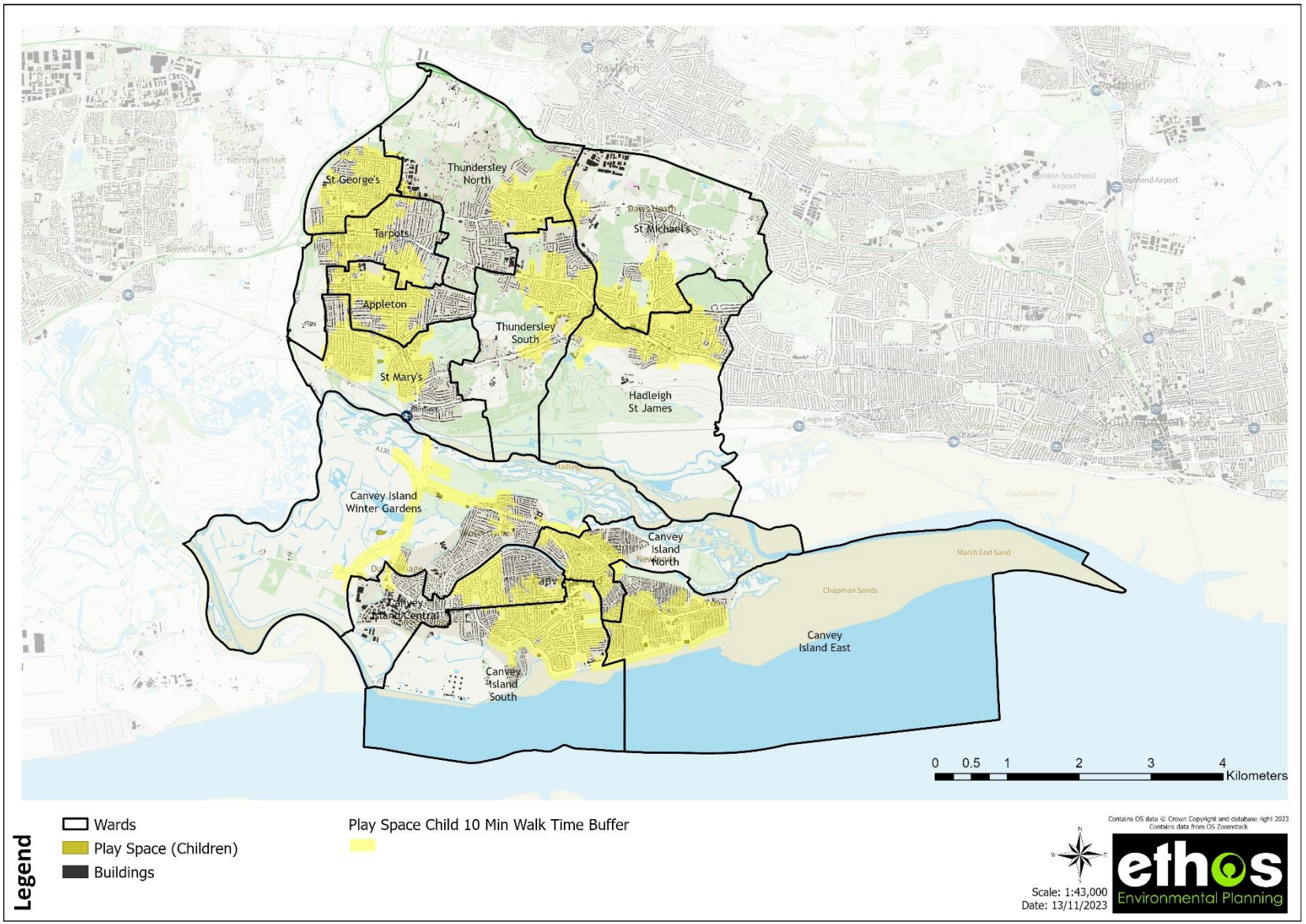


Figure 14 Access to children's play space (10 minutes' walk time buffer)

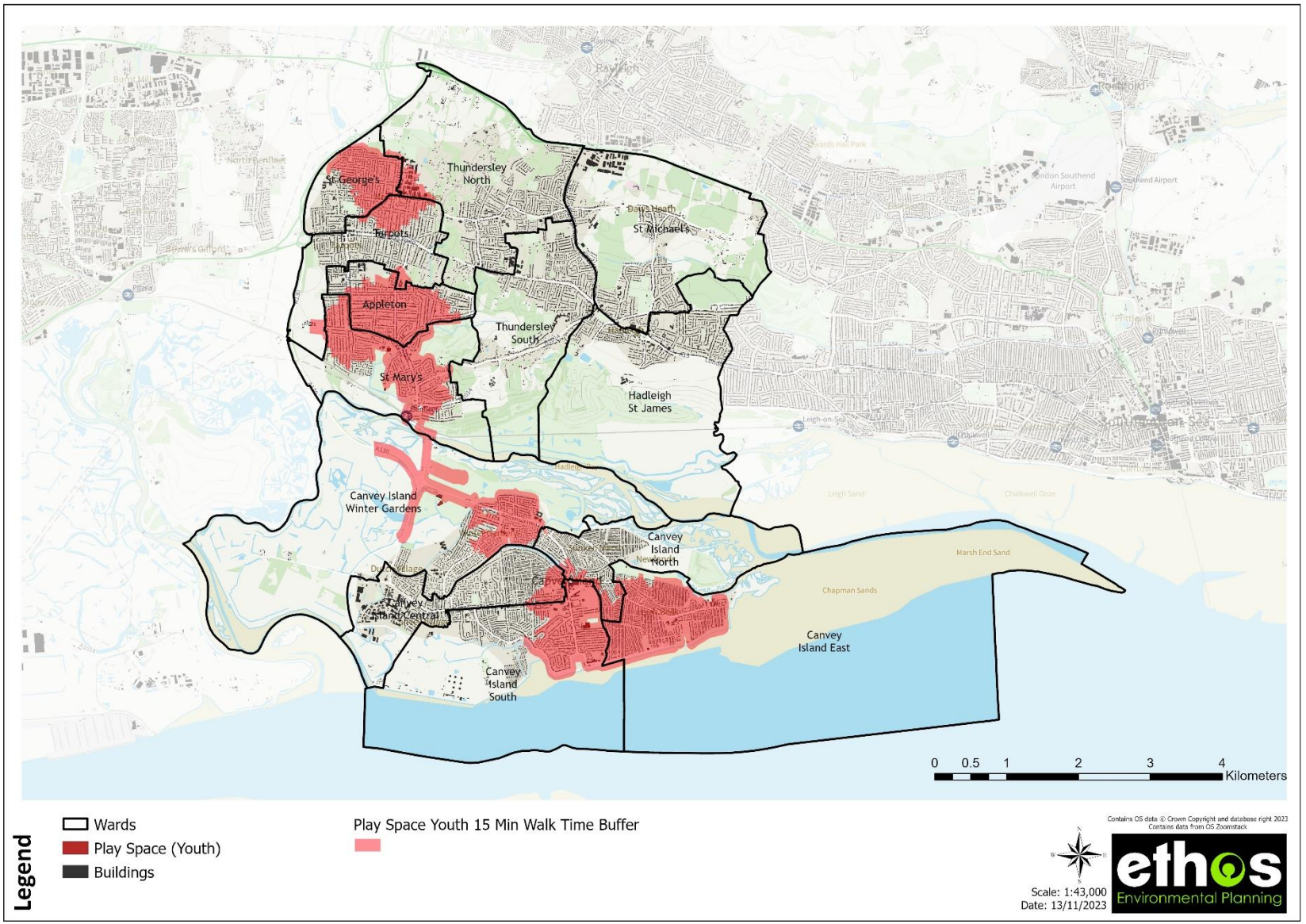


Figure 15 Access to youth play space (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

Table 17 *Summary of access issues for allotments, amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and play space (children and youth)*

Typology	Key Access Issues
Allotments	There are some large gaps across the borough, in particular the majority of Canvey Island has no access except for the eastern side of the Island. The mainland has better access to allotments apart from in St Marys ward, west of Appleton and south Thundersley.
Amenity Green Space	Generally good access across the built-up areas of the borough, although there are small gaps within several wards. This includes the west of St Marys, east of Tarpots and Appleton. In Canvey Island, access is generally good with a small gap in the south of Canvey Island Central.
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Largely good access across the majority of the study area, although there are some significant gaps across the central part of the mainland (south Tarpots, south Thundersley Noth and Thundersley South).
Play Space (Children)	There are significant gaps across the borough, although all wards have some access to provision. The most significant gaps are in the east of Canvey Island, St Michaels and in the south of Thundersley North.
Play Space (Youth)	Access to youth play space is poor across the borough with six wards having no access provision. The only ward with good access is Canvey Island East, east of Canvey Island Winter Gardens, Appleton, St Marys and St Georges.

7.3.2 Access to accessible natural green space across the study area

This section looks at access to accessible natural/semi-natural green space within the study area, through the application of the locally derived access standard (see Figure 15), and the Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards, in order to identify the main gaps in access. As already mentioned under Section 5.2.5, this typology only includes those natural green spaces which have a definitive boundary and public access e.g., Local Nature Reserves, and not the open countryside where the only access is via the Public Right of Way network.

Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards (2023)

The Green Infrastructure Headline Standards states everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature, to meet the Accessible Greenspace Standards, with an initial focus on **access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home.** Those in bold below relate specifically to accessible natural green space.

Within 15 minutes' walk:

EITHER a Doorstep OR Local Accessible Greenspace

- A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, or
- **A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.**

AND

- **A medium sized neighbourhood natural greenspace (10ha) within 1km.**

AND, beyond 15 minutes' walk:

- **A medium/large wider neighbourhood natural greenspace (20ha) within 2km, and**
- **A large district natural greenspace (100ha) within 5-km**, and
- A very large subregional greenspace within (500 ha) within 10 km

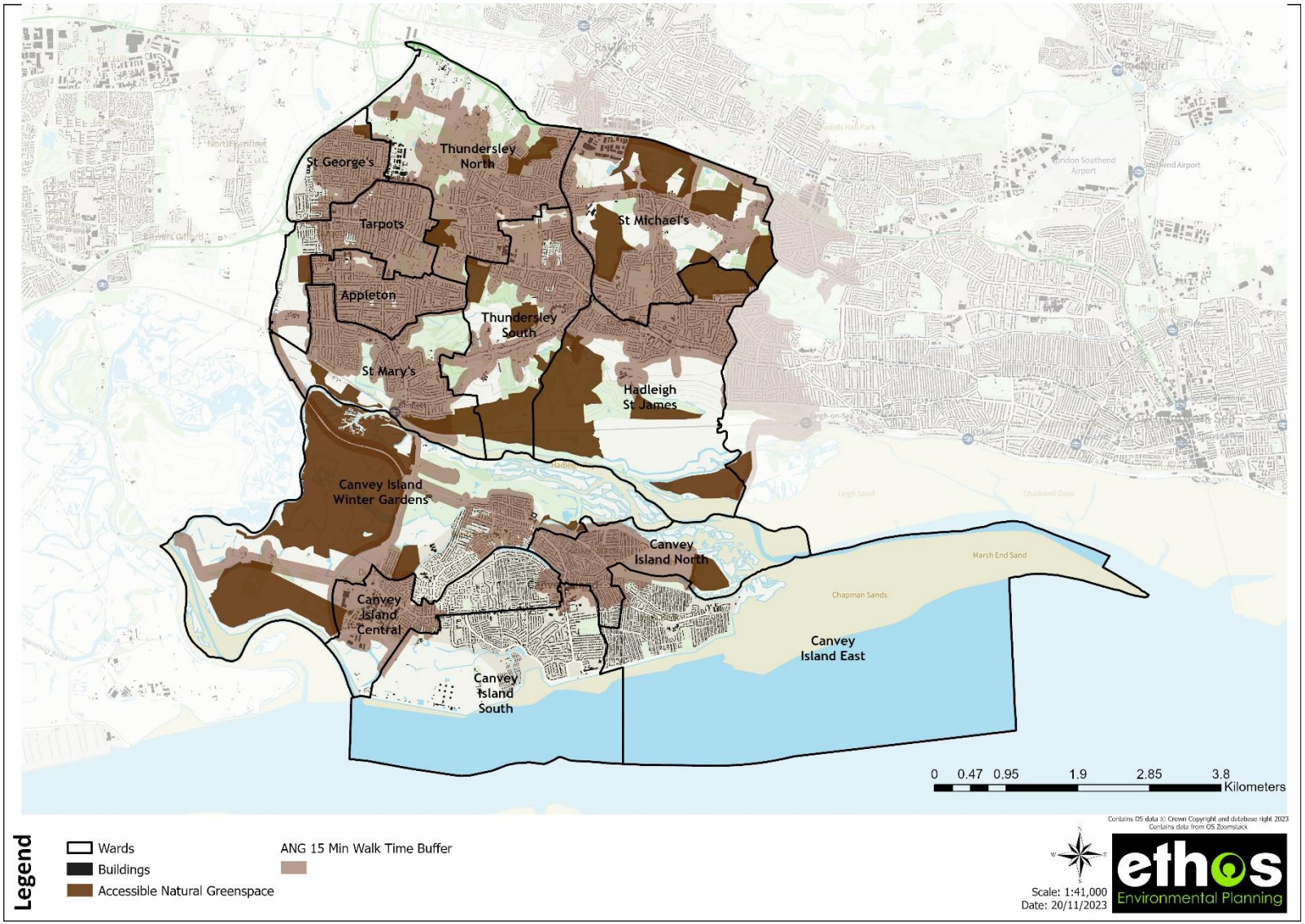


Figure 16 Access to accessible natural greenspace (15 minutes' walk time)

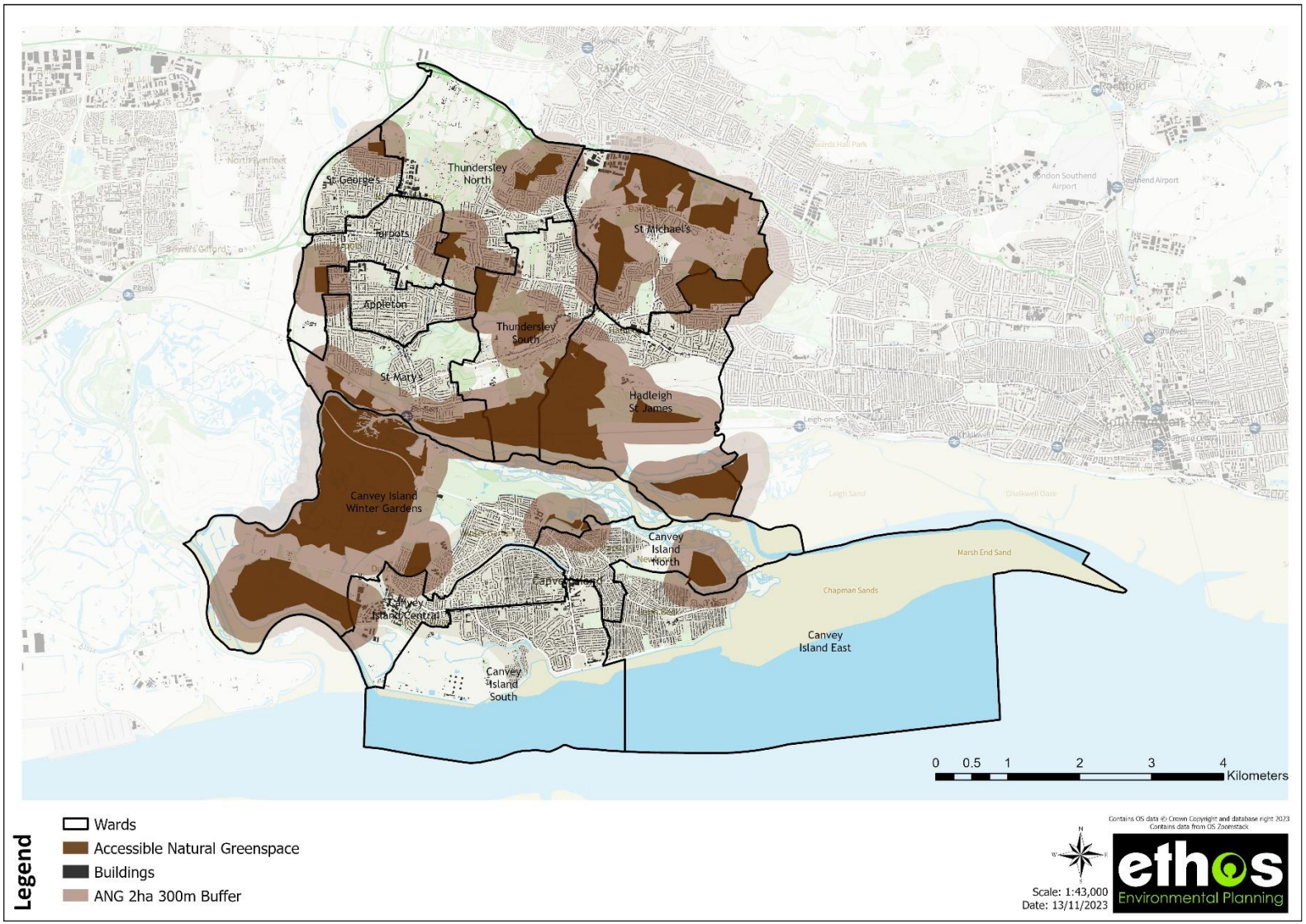


Figure 17 *ANGSt Standard: Access to 2ha+ sites within 300m*

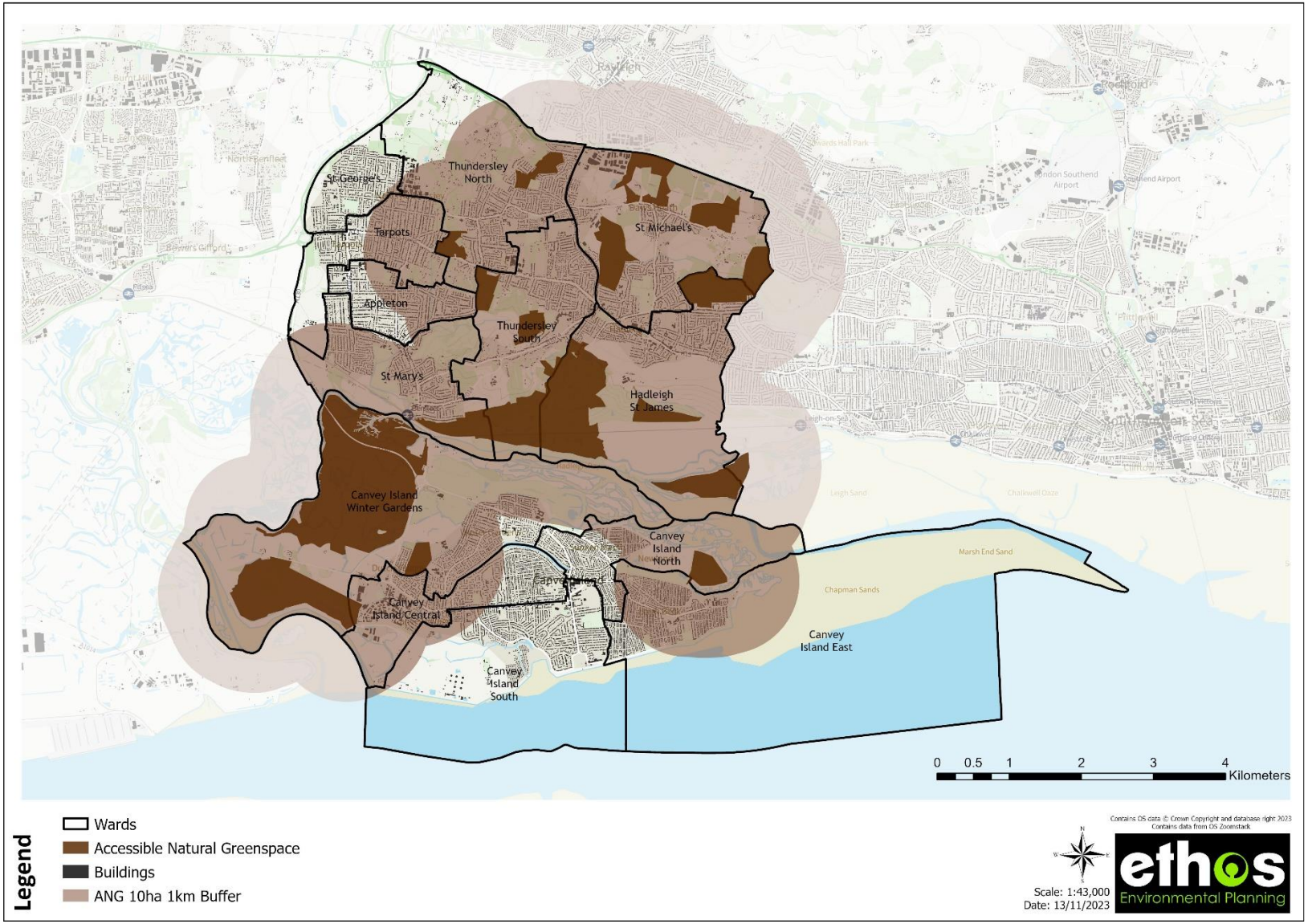


Figure 18 ANGSt Standard: Access to 10ha+ sites within 1km

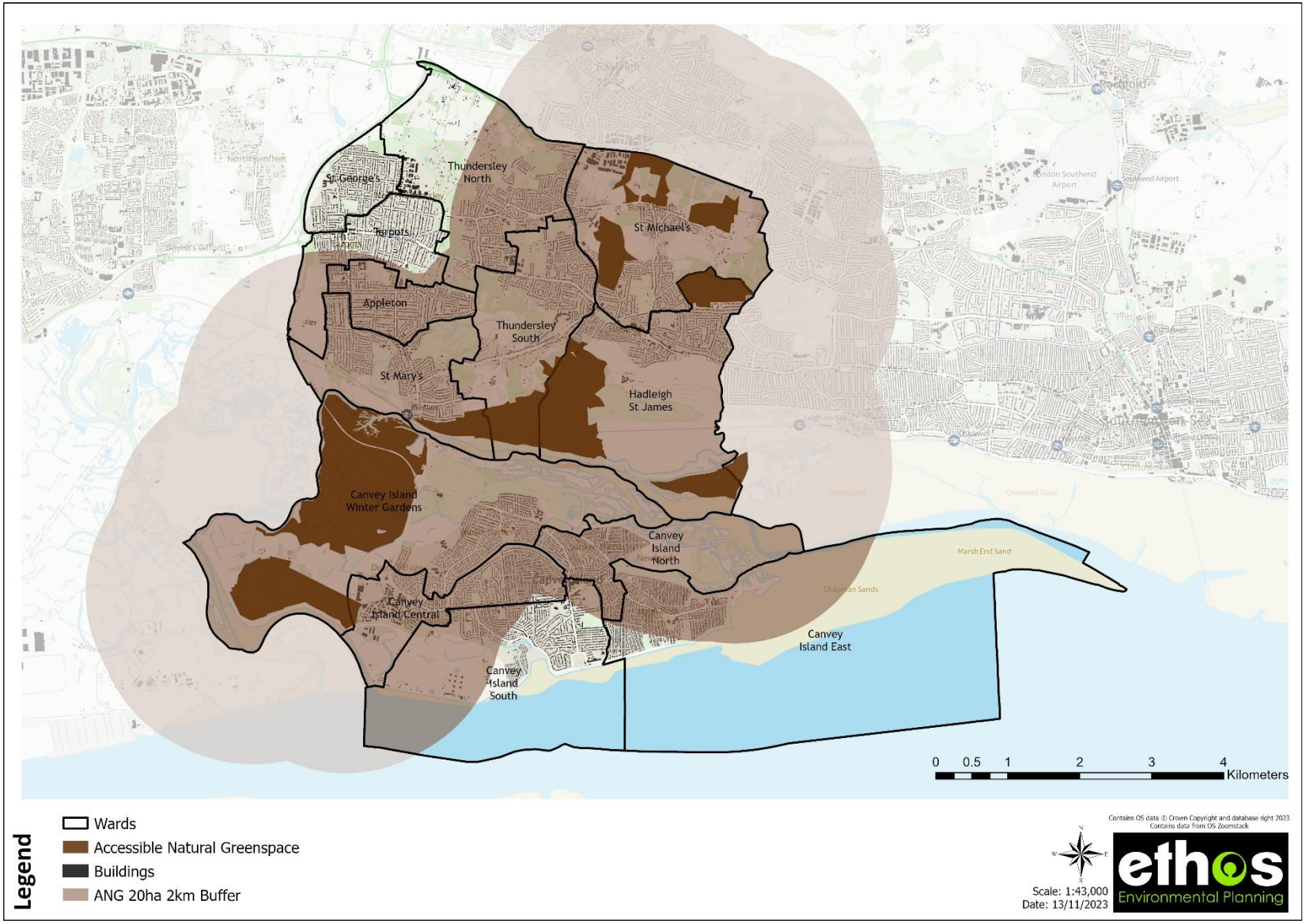


Figure 19 ANGSt Standard: Access to 20ha+ sites within 2km

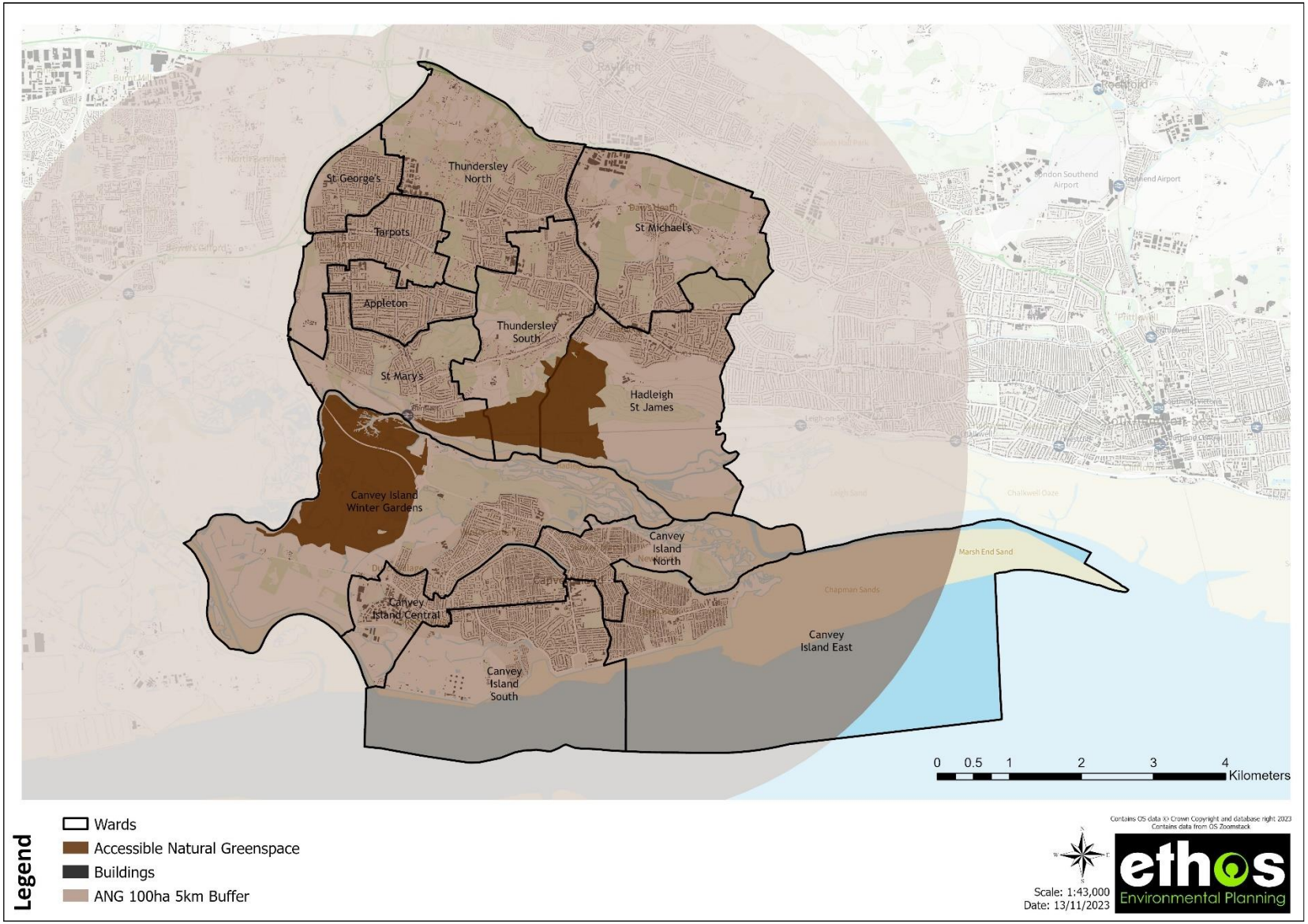


Figure 20 ANGSt Standard: Access to 100ha+ sites within 5km

Table 18 Summary of key access issues for accessible natural green space

Standard	Key access Issues
Access to accessible natural green space – 15 minutes' walk time	There is generally good access across the majority of the borough, however there is a large gap in access across the southern part of Canvey Island.
At least one accessible 2ha site, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home	When applying this access standard, it can be seen that there is good access across large parts of the study area. However, there is a significant gap across the most populated parts of Canvey Island and the western part of the mainland.
At least one accessible 10ha site within 1km from home	There is good access across the majority of the study area with some small gaps in the centre of Canvey Island and in the western part of the mainland (wards of St George's, Tarpots and Appleton).
At least one accessible 20ha site within two kilometers of home	Good access across the study area with the central large ANGS providing good access to the majority of the study area. There are some small gaps in the south of Canvey Island and the north western parts of the mainland.
One accessible 100ha site within five kilometres of home	There are two 100 ha sites mapped within the study area. These provide access to the whole of the borough.

Appendix 1 of the Woodland Trust report 'Space For people – targeting action for woodland access' (May 2017) sets out how the percentage of the population within Castle Point that has access to woodland against the Trust's recommended standards, and also considers the need for woodland creation and the picture if existing inaccessible woods were made publicly accessible. This is summarised in the table below.

Table 19 Access to woodland in Castle Point against the Woodland Trust recommended standards (2017)

Accessible woods		Inaccessible woods		Woodland creation	
% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% of population with access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km	% extra population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m if existing woods opened	% extra population with access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km if existing woods opened	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km
24.5	**72.2**	**19.6**	**27.4**	**55.9**	**0.4**

7.4 Application of quality standards

7.4.1 Quality of open space – residents' consultation (2023) key findings

Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the study area in terms of quality. The responses on specific categories of facility are illustrated in Figure 20 below.

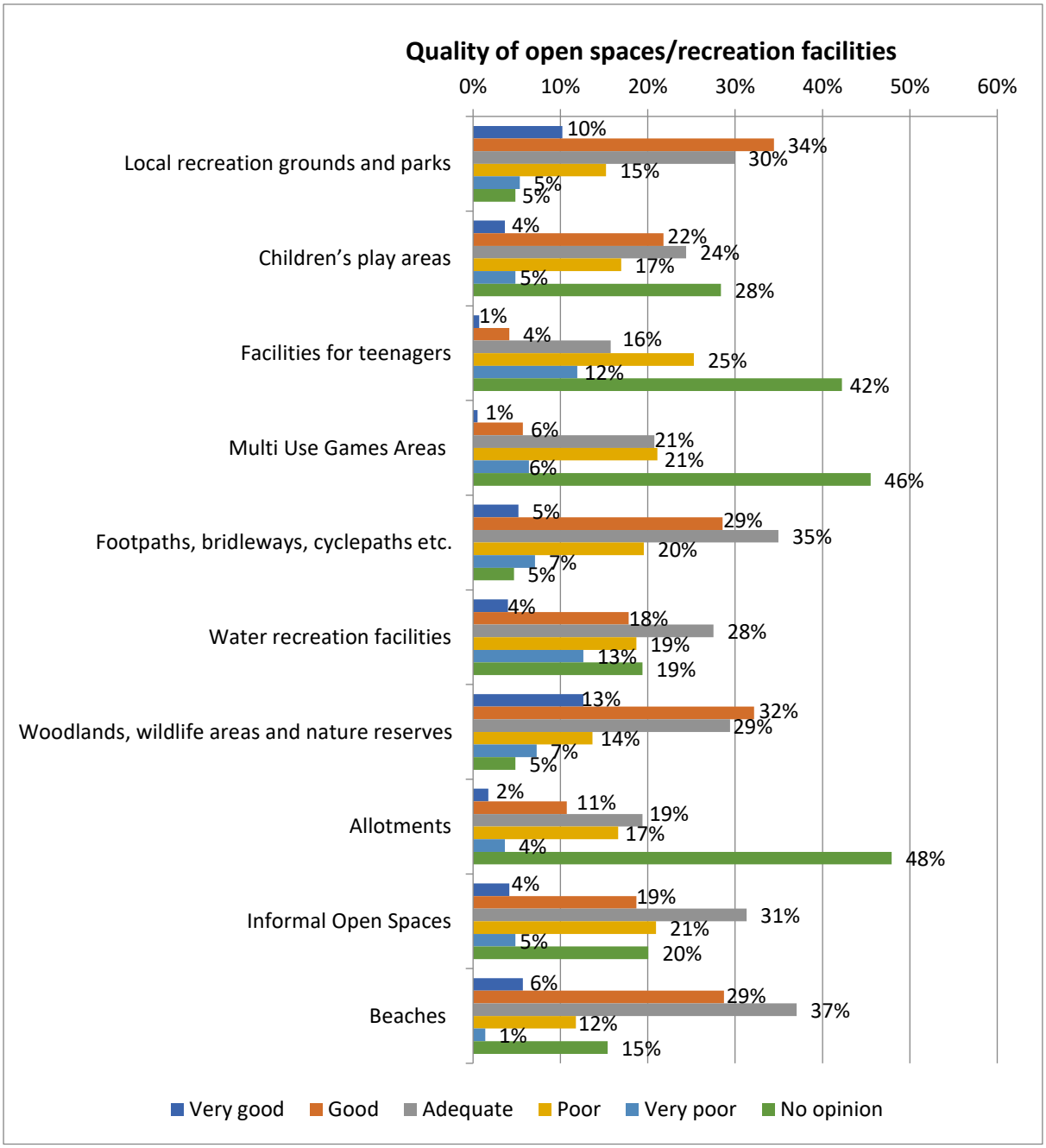


Figure 21 Quality of open space (responses from community consultation 2023)

Quality of open spaces were varied as to how they were rated by respondents. Beaches were the most highly rated in terms of quality with 66% of respondents either rating them as adequate or good followed parks and recreation grounds (64%). The lowest rated provisions

are facilities for teenagers with 37% rating them either as very poor or poor and 32% water recreation facilities.

For most kinds of open spaces, the general weighting of respondent's opinions was towards adequate and good, rather than adequate or poor. The main exception to this is provision for teenagers, allotments, and informal green spaces, where the weight of opinion was 20% adequate or good, against 41% adequate to poor (for provision for teenagers), 30% adequate or good, against 36% adequate to poor (for allotments), and 50% adequate or good, against 52% adequate to poor (for informal green space).

7.4.2 Quality of open space - audit methodology

The quality audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach. However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit. Quality audits were undertaken at 311 open spaces in August 2023.

Sites were visited, and data captured using a phone/tablet with ArcGIS Field Maps and Survey 123. A photographic record was made of key features (geolocated within the GIS database), along with a description of the site and recommendations for improvements. An assessment of the quality of the open space was undertaken using the agreed criteria, set out in Table 20 below. These criteria are based on the Green Flag Award assessment.[25]

Scoring

Table 20 Quality scoring line

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Exceptional
1	2, 3, 4	5, 6	7	8	9	10

Each of the 10 criteria below were scored between 1 (very poor) and 10 (exceptional), and there is also an N/A option for some of the criteria. The scores for each site are added together and the mean calculated based on how many criteria were scored (e.g., If 'Appropriate signage and information' is given N/A for a site, the total will be divided by 9). This mean is then multiplied by 10 to produce the percentage final score.

The final percentage score was used to group sites into categories (poor, fair, good excellent) based on the range of site scores (using equal intervals):

- Excellent ≥ 81%
- Good 66-80%
- Fair 45-65%
- Poor ≤ 45%

If a site scores fair, good or excellent overall but has particular issues e.g., scores poor (or 4 or below) for any particular criterion, this has been flagged up within the analysis.

[25] https://www.greenflagaward.org/

The table below also highlights how each of the criteria link to the South Essex Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure Study Objectives and the Natural England 'Why' (Benefit Principles) and 'What' (What good GI looks like) GI Principles.

Criteria

Table 21 Quality criteria for open spaces

Criteria	Key points for consideration	Links with South Essex GI Study Objectives	Links with NE GI Principles
Welcoming	• Are the entrances well maintained and safe? • Is the site managed/laid out so that there is an overall sense of welcome? • Are they clear and well-maintained signs/maps/information boards, which are appropriate to the site.	Ensure Sustainable Management, Promote Liveable and Healthy Places	Thriving and prosperous places, Accessible, Active and healthy places
Good and safe access	• Are the paths clean and tidy? • Are the paths accessible for mobility scooter/wheelchair users? • Are there good links to adjacent green spaces/community facilities? • Is the site easy to find, with directional signage where needed?	Improve Connectivity, Promote Liveable and Healthy Places	Thriving and prosperous places, Accessible, Active and healthy places, Resilient and climate positive places
Personal security	• Is the site overlooked by housing? • Are there clear sight lines? • Does it look like the site has a problem with anti-social behaviour (e.g., graffiti, dumping)?	Ensure Sustainable Management, Promote Liveable and Healthy Places	Thriving and prosperous places, Accessible, Active and healthy places
Dog fouling and litter	• Are dog bins available and visible and is there dog fouling present? • Are litter bins/signs available and visible and is there a litter issue/fly tipping across the site?	Ensure Sustainable Management, Promote Liveable and Healthy Places	Thriving and prosperous places, Accessible, Active and healthy places
Site maintenance	• Are the grounds, horticultural areas and trees managed appropriately? • Is equipment fit-for-use and well-maintained and has	Ensure Sustainable Management, Promote Liveable and Healthy Places	Thriving and prosperous places, Accessible, Active and healthy places

Criteria	Key points for consideration	Links with South Essex GI Study Objectives	Links with NE GI Principles
	redundant equipment been removed? • Is the infrastructure (paths, lighting, fencing, seating) and buildings (if present) well-maintained and safe? • Are equipment and facilities safe and dangers/hazards cordoned off? • Do surfaces drain well?		
Functionality	• Does the site offer a range of functions/ flexibility of use appropriate to the site size and typology e.g., space for relaxation, formal and informal recreation, food growing, children's play, shaded areas, sunny areas, planted areas, open areas • Are there a range of good quality facilities which are appropriate to the site?	Promote Liveable and Healthy Places, Improve Connectivity, Support Natural Resource Productivity	Multifunctional, Active and healthy places, Varied, Accessible
Biodiversity	• Does the site contribute positively to biodiversity through providing a diversity of habitats which are well managed and connected within the site? • Do habitats on site provide opportunities for people to connect with nature?	Protect and Enhance Biodiversity	Nature rich beautiful places
Landscape, heritage and sense of place	• Does the site contribute significantly to the quality, character and setting of the area through the overall character and quality and visibility of the site? • Does the site offer attractive plant assemblages that support place character and quality • Is the cultural or historical significance of the site clearly evident, with features well maintained and appropriate interpretation, significantly	Celebrate a Sense of Place	Thriving and prosperous places, Responds to Local Character

Criteria	Key points for consideration	Links with South Essex GI Study Objectives	Links with NE GI Principles
	contributing to the sense of place and providing distinctive/memorable features.		
Climate change mitigation and adaptation	• Are there mature trees which provide shade and cooling, help attenuate rainwater and store and capture carbon? • Are there a range of habitats e.g., scrub, meadow, rough grassland providing natural infiltration and carbon storage. • Are there well managed wetlands or SuDs on site to help attenuate rainwater and store carbon?	Create a Resilient Infrastructure, Work with Hydrological Systems.	Resilient and climate positive places, Improved water management.

Costings

In addition to setting recommendations for improvements, Ethos also set indicative costings for achieving these recommendations. The costings were based on a number of sources including the Spon's Architects and Builders Price Book (2021), Sport England facility cost guidance (2023), Action Play and Leisure and the experience of the Council's Operations Services Team. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 22 Costings for works

Works	Details	Cost
Bench		£600
Bin		£350
Small sign	Small sign on play area or minor sign throughout the site	£150
Large sign	Large sign such as big welcoming sign or information board.	£1,000
Small play refurb	This could be either a small play area or a couple of pieces of equipment/minor refurbishment.	£5,000
Medium play refurb	This could be a medium sized play area or larger/more pieces of equipment.	£20,000
Large play refurb	This is a new large new play area, significant level of refurbishment or a complete overhaul.	£70,000
Small youth provision	Small MUGA provision such as a small skate ramp, minor MUGA, BMX	£10,000
Medium youth provision	Provision such as adding other half to a MUGA or large skate ramps.	£50,000
Large youth provision	Full sized MUGA or a large skate park	£100,000
Gate		£800

Works	Details	Cost
Infrastructure	This would include a variety of requirements such as painting, minor surfacing fixes, new equipment such as goal posts, lighting, basketball hoops	£600
Fencing and railings per linear meter		£100
Tree planting per tree		£200
Woodland planting per sqm		£6
Wildflower planting per sqm		£4
Hedgerow planting per linear meter		£35
Tarmac path per linear meter		£150
Gravel path per linear meter		£50

7.4.3 Quality audit results

The quality audit was undertaken at 260 open spaces across the study area. The details of the quality audits are contained within the GIS database provided to the council. For each of the wards within the study area, a map showing the results of the quality audit has been produced, showing the sites which scored excellent, good, fair, or poor quality (see Appendix 3).

Figure 21 and Table 23 below provide an overview of the quality audit results across the study area. The majority of open spaces (127 sites or 48%) were assessed as being of good quality overall, however 23 of these (18%) scored 4 or less (poor) for at least one criterion and may therefore still be a priority for improvement. A large proportion of sites were also assessed as being fair (117 sites or 45%), with nearly all these sites (106 sites or 90%) scoring poor for at least one criterion.

Table 23 Overview of quality audit scores across the study area

Typology	Excellent	Good	Good with 1+ poor criterion	Fair	Fair with 1+ poor criterion	Poor
Allotments	0	4	1	0	2	0
Accessible natural green space	5	15	1	3	3	0
Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha)	0	18	7	2	27	0
Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha)	0	36	6	5	33	7
Churchyards and Cemeteries	0	5	1	1	1	0
Green/Blue Corridors	0	3	1	0	11	0
Outdoor Bathing	0	2	0	0	0	0
Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	0	0	0	0	2	0

Typology	Excellent	Good	Good with 1+ poor criterion	Fair	Fair with 1+ poor criterion	Poor
Outdoor Sport (Private)	0	3	2	0	3	0
Parks and recreation ground	0	8	2	0	6	1
Play space (child)	0	8	2	0	12	1
Play space (youth)	0	2	0	0	6	2
Total	**5**	**104**	**23**	**11**	**106**	**11**

Of the 260 sites that were quality audited, 156 sites had recommendations for improvements. The recommendations were then costed based on Table 23 above, with total costs combined and ranked into the following categories:

Table 24 Open space improvement cost bands

Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
>£150,000	£70,000 - £150,000	£30,000 - £70,000	£10,000 - £30,000	<£10,000

The majority of open spaces that had recommendations for improvements were ranked in the very low investment category (64%). Only 7 sites (4%) were assessed as requiring either high or very high investment at over £70,000.

Table 25 Number of open spaces with recommendations in each cost band

Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
2	5	12	37	100

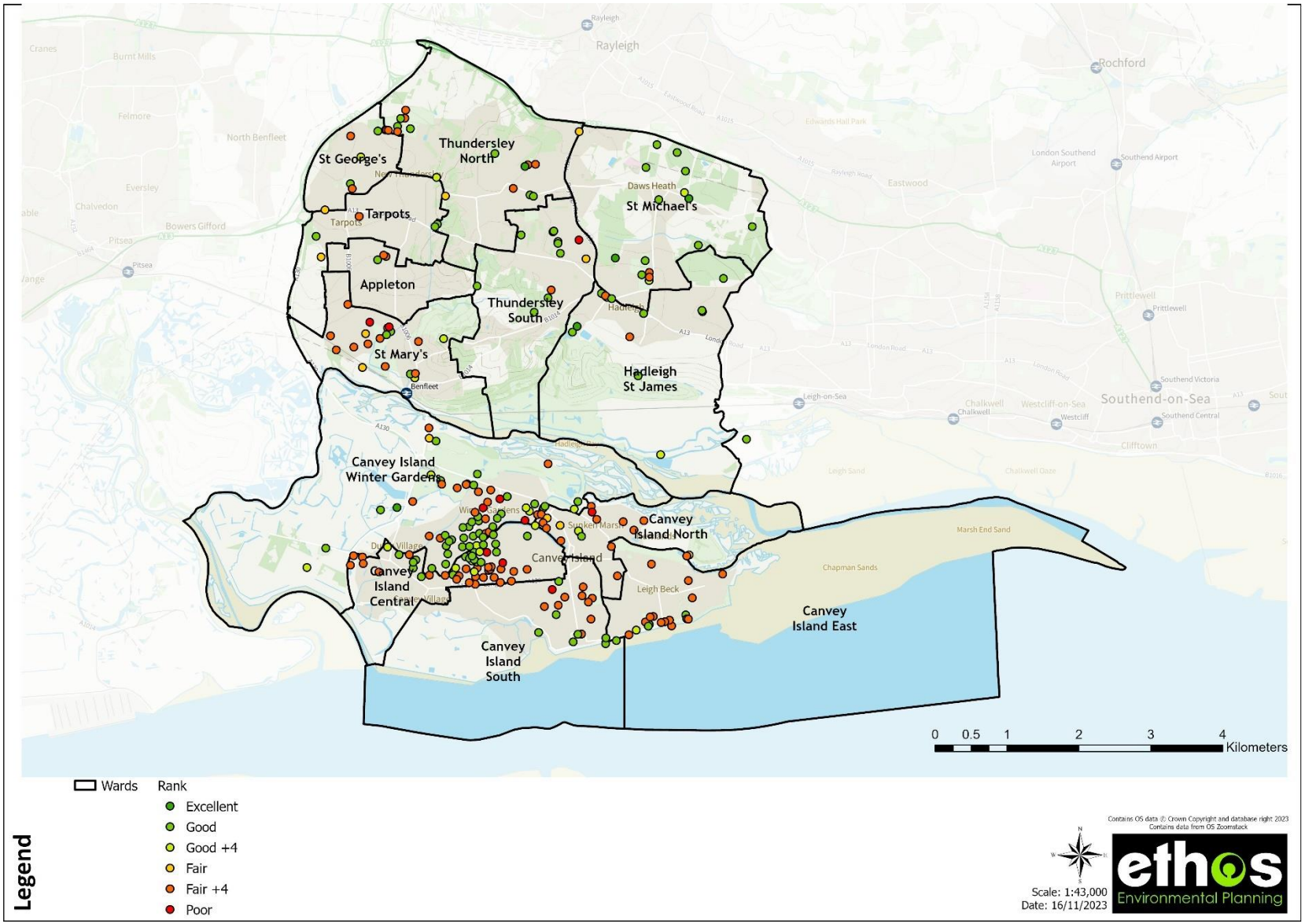


Figure 22 *Overview of open space quality scores (August 2023)*

7.5 Contribution to GI

Alongside the site visits/quality assessments, desktop criteria have been used to help identify how open spaces are contributing to the overall GI network and GI functions. The table below summarises the data and scoring used.

Table 26 GIS data used in assessing an open spaces contribution to Green Infrastructure functions

Contribution to GI network	Criteria/GIS dataset	Scoring
Links with Strategic GI network	Proximity to mapped Essex strategic GI assets (Green infrastructure map of Essex by School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia (2019) – Green Infrastructure Assets)	Within network – score 3 Within 100m – score 2 100 – 500m - score 1 500m+ - score 0
Biodiversity/nature conservation	Proximity to biodiversity opportunity areas (BOAs) (GIS data provided by the council)	Within network – score 3 Within 100m – score 2 100 – 500m - score 1 500m+ - score 0
Water management	Proximity to area of surface water flooding (GIS data provided by the council 2023).	Within area of surface water flooding - score 3 Within 100m – score 2 100 – 500m - score 1 500m+ - score 0
Health and wellbeing/reducing health inequalities	Proximity to areas with high levels of deprivation (IMD 2019).	Within an IMD decile of 1 to 3 - score 3 Within an IMD decile of 3-6 - score 2 Within an IMD decile of 6 to 9 - score 1 Within an IMD decile of 9 to 10 - score 0
Heritage	Proximity to heritage designation/heritage features: • SAM • Historic Park and Garden • Ancient woodland • Ancient or veteran trees	Site falls within or contains a heritage feature/designation – score 3 Within 100m – score 2 100 – 500m - score 1 500m+ - score 0
Tree canopy cover	Does open space fall within an area of low tree canopy cover? (Forest Research UK Urban Canopy Cover Map).	Site falls within an area of very low canopy cover (10% or below) – score 3 Site falls within an area of low canopy cover (10-20%) – score 2

		Site falls within an area of higher canopy cover (20% and above) – score 1

The scoring is added together for each site to show which sites are contributing the most to the GI network against the measurable criteria assessed[26]. The bandings are as follows:

- High: 14 – 16
- Medium: 11 – 13
- Low: 7 – 10

This information could be used to prioritise sites for improvement, including the nature of the improvement e.g., open spaces that score poorly for biodiversity from the site visit score, but fall within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) could be prioritised for biodiversity improvements.

A summary of the results is provided in the table and figure below.

Table 27 Results of desktop assessment for contribution to GI network

Typology	High	Medium	Low
Allotments	1	5	2
Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha)	6	45	15
Amenity Green Space (<0.1ha)	3	63	31
Accessible Natural Green space	9	14	4
Green/blue Corridors	2	10	4
Churchyards and Cemeteries	0	6	2
Outdoor Bathing	0	2	0
Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	1	0	1
Outdoor Sport (Private)	2	7	2
Parks and recreation ground	3	11	3
Play space (child)	3	7	14
Play space (youth)	2	1	7

[26] It should be noted that GI provides many functions, and this desktop assessment does not consider all of them.

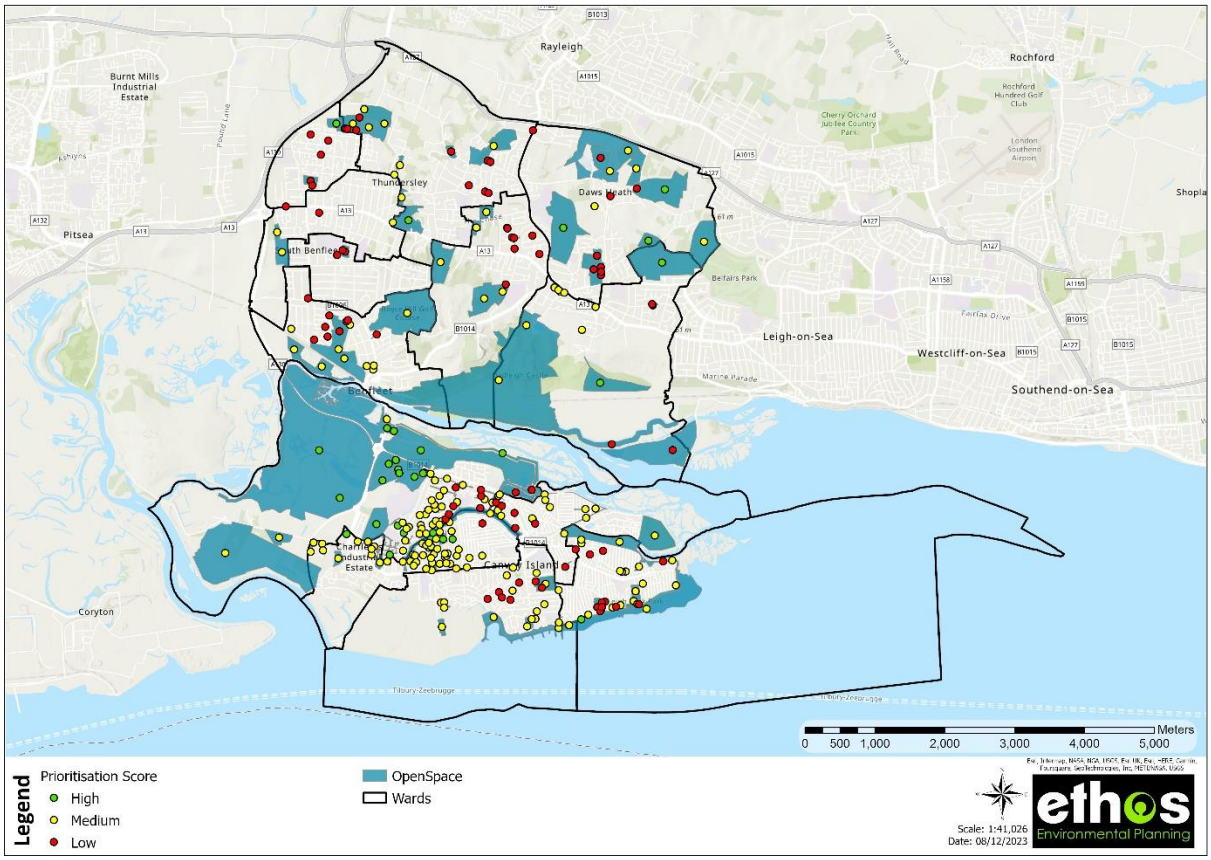


Figure 23 Open space contribution to GI (high, medium, low scores)

7.6 Potential for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

7.6.1 Overview

Five of the largest open spaces within Castle Point (shown in the figure below) have been surveyed (site visits were undertaken in August 2023) as part of this assessment, for their potential for biodiversity net gain.

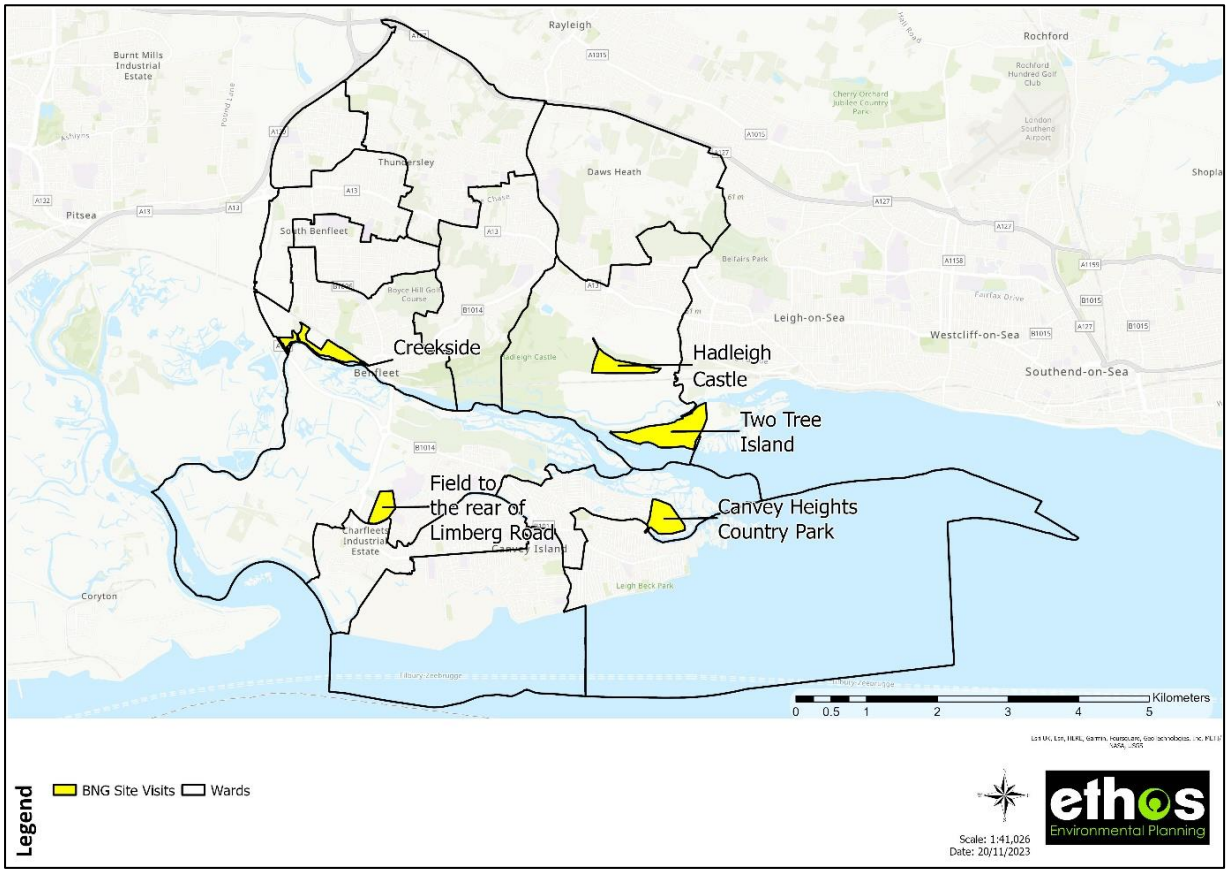


Figure 24 Castle point open spaces assessed for BNG

7.6.2 Method

This assessment for BNG uses the following industry recognised best practice methods:

- CIEEM, IEMA & CIRIA (2016). Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development
- Natural England (2023). Biodiversity Metric 4.0 – Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity
- CIEEM (2021). Biodiversity net gain report and audit templates

Applying these standardised methods results in the calculation of a baseline biodiversity value, a post-development biodiversity value and a net change in biodiversity value associated with the proposed development.

The quantitative outcomes of the calculations are one component of the BNG assessment and associated good practice principles. A BNG assessment also requires the collation of qualitative evidence on the application of the mitigation hierarchy, stakeholder engagement and post-development habitat management. Collectively, these quantitative outcomes and qualitative evidence are used to inform the outcomes of the project wide BNG assessment.

7.6.3 UK Habitat Classification Survey

The habitat surveys (site visits) were carried out in August 2023 according to the UKHab Classification system. The survey included a detailed assessment of the land within the development boundary, including a description and mapping of all key features and habitat types. The survey was carried out to identify the range of habitats within the site and the predominant and notable species of flora.

Grasslands were surveyed using a systematic approach, using 1x1m^2 quadrats sample. A minimum of three quadrats were undertaken of each grassland section. However, this can be increased to take into account variation across the grassland or the extent of the field. Information collected within each quadrat included aspect, slope, average ground cover, sward variation, species, and their percentage cover.

Where the grassland differed to a certain extent or was divided by field boundary such as hedgerows it was considered that the grassland was a different habitat parcel, and another assessment was undertaken.

This survey methodology provides information required to classify the grassland to the correct grassland habitat type and provides sufficient information to undertake a metric 4.0 condition assessment.

7.6.4 Condition Assessments

Condition assessments were undertaken for each habitat which require condition assessment sheets. Following the methodology and criteria provided within the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 – Technical Annex 1 – Condition Assessment Sheets.

7.6.5 Assigning Proposed Conditions

Based on the baseline assessment, each habitat parcel was assigned a proposed condition against what is reasonably achievable, considering its location and function. Considerations have been made to ensure continued use of each site if they already have a dedicated function.

In some cases, a habitat parcel would be allocated for retention due to it either already being at its biodiversity potential, given its location etc, or if the habitat is poor due to its function, and changing it might change the function of the overall site.

7.6.6 Results

Table 27 below shows the baseline value, the proposed value and the projected biodiversity uplift. Holistically, the sites project a borough-wide net gain of 215.47 biodiversity units. Detailed habitat management plans for each site would be required to demonstrate how the

units would be achieved and maintained for the mandatory 30-year period, as set out in the DEFRA Biodiversity Guidance.

Table 28 BNG results

Site Name	Baseline Value	Proposed Value	BNG Uplift
Canvey Heights Country Park	109.66	149.58	39.92
Creekside	44.78	63.67	18.89
Hadleigh Castle	85.5	121.79	36.29
Limberg Road Openspace	38.28	77.88	39.60
Two Tree Island	246.35	327.12	80.77

8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out strategic options and policy recommendations for open space within the study area. It draws on all the previous steps of the study to bring together informed recommendations and addresses a number of specific requirements of the study brief.

8.1 Strategic Options

8.1.1 Introduction

The strategic options address six key areas:

1) Existing provision to be protected;
2) Existing provision to be enhanced;
3) Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space;
4) Identification of areas for new provision;
5) Facilities that may be surplus to requirement;
6) Developer contributions and recommended thresholds for on-site provision of open space

8.1.2 Delivering Strategic Options

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social, and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Open spaces (provision, protection, enhancement) and their associated intrinsic benefits are key components of all three of the objectives.

Whilst local authorities have an important role in delivering open space, sport, and recreation facilities (as do the private sector), in some cases their role may move from that of 'deliverer' to 'facilitator'. The aim will be to work with community organisations to make local decisions about how facilities and services will be provided. Organisations such as residents' groups, voluntary organisations, sports clubs and societies will all have a key role in this.

Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities (such as through neighbourhood plans) the information provided within this study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision of open space.

The following sections consider the key issues for open space in the study area, and the recommendations that emerge need to be taken in context with national policy and legislation and consider how they can fit into local decision making. The following sections serve to highlight issues, but do not necessarily resolve how they may be delivered. The information provided within this study will also form the basis for potential future strategies.

The recommended policies within this study can also be used to help form the basis of any open space policies within the Castle Point Plan.

8.2 Existing provision to be protected

The starting point of any policy adopted by the local authorities should be that all open space should be afforded protection unless, it can be demonstrated it is not required/is surplus to requirements (in accordance with the NPPF). Even where open spaces are in sufficient supply within a given area, this does not necessarily mean there is a 'surplus' in provision of open space, as additional factors such as access to open space, the supply of other typologies of open space, the quality of open space and where new development is planned needs to be taken into account (as explained further in the sections below and covered in section 7 of this report).

Existing open space or sport and recreation facilities which should be given the highest level of protection by the planning system are those which are either:

- Critically important in avoiding deficiencies in accessibility, quality or quantity and scored highly in the quality assessment; **or**
- Are of particular nature conservation, historical or cultural value.

The quantity analysis, summarised in Table 16 (Section 7.2) shows that in every ward, there is a deficiency in at least two typologies of open space. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

Open Space Policy Direction (protecting open space):	
OS1	The starting point is that all open space will be protected, unless it can be demonstrated that it is surplus to requirements. The distribution of open space varies across the study area, however, there are identified shortfalls of at least two typologies of open space in all wards, and in addition, gaps in access to open spaces. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there are existing shortfalls against the quantity and/or access standards, and also those open spaces which have scored highly in the quality assessment.
OS2	Sites which are critical to avoiding deficiencies, or making deficiencies worse, in respect of quantity, quality or accessibility should be protected unless suitable alternative provision can be provided which would compensate for any deficiencies caused.
OS3	Sites which have significant nature conservation, historical or cultural value (or other functions contributing to the overall connectivity and functioning of the green and blue infrastructure network, such as water management) should be afforded protection, even if there is an identified surplus in quality, quantity, or accessibility in that local area.

8.3 Existing provision to be enhanced

In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision but no accessibility issues, then quantitative deficiencies could be met by increasing the capacity of existing facilities through quality improvements e.g., increasing the size and quality of a play area.

In areas where facilities or spaces do not meet the relevant quality standards, then enhancements will be sought. These can be delivered either through development where opportunities arise as above, or through other funding sources identified by the council.

This includes those spaces or facilities which:

- Are critically important in avoiding deficiencies in diversity, accessibility, or quantity, **but**
- Scored poorly in the quality assessment.

Those sites which require enhancement are identified within the quality audit that was undertaken (although there may also be local priorities that have not been picked up as part of the quality audits). Some of the key observations related to site quality, functionality and enhancement include:

1. The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as parks and recreation grounds and play space.
2. The need for additional and improved facilities for children and young people.
3. The need to ensure high quality open spaces which optimise multi-functionality are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
4. The importance of rights of way and accessible natural green space within the study area, and the need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity.
5. The role of open space in contributing to wider priorities such as biodiversity, health and wellbeing and climate change adaptation and mitigation.
6. The role of open space in extending and enhancing the network of green and blue infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

Appendix 3 provides maps by ward showing the sites that were quality audited and their overall score (excellent, good, fair, poor), as identified within the quality audit database. An overview of the open space quality scores is provided in Section 7.4.3. The following recommendations are made in relation to the quality of open space:

Open Space Policy Direction (enhancing open space):	
OS4	Where new housing development is proposed, and open space is not practicable on site, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the ward or neighbouring ward to which the development is located. Priority should

	be given to any sites identified as poor or fair as detailed in the quality audit database[27].
OS5	New development should seek to follow best practice guidance e.g., the Building with Nature[28] Standards for high quality Green Infrastructure, in order to ensure that open space delivered through new development is multi-functional, climate resilient, future proof, responds to policy (local and national) and is appropriate to the landscape context/ contributes to sense of place.
OS6	The findings of the assessment make recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the study area. This should feed into new/updated strategies for achieving open space improvements.
OS7	The highest priorities for improvement (identified in the resident's survey 2023) include the enhancement of parks and recreation grounds; footpaths, bridleways, and cycle paths; and woodland, wildlife areas and nature reserves.
OS8	Management plans (if not already established) should be developed for the main parks and recreation grounds. These priorities could also be considered in neighbourhood plans and by the local community.

8.4 Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space

In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or upgrading an existing open space e.g., upgrading an amenity green space to a park and recreation ground, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users or use land which is not suitable for another purpose. This needs to be determined at a local level, considering the quality, quantity, and access to facilities at neighbourhood level and in some cases across the study area.

Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities within neighbourhood plans or management plans, the information provided within this study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision or replacement of open space. Some settlements may seek a consolidation of facilities on a single site, such as a new sports hub.

These decisions could include the spatial and investment plans for green space and set the foundations for green space provision (e.g., for the lifetime of a plan period). They should outline where different types of facilities and space - such as children's playgrounds, sports pitches, young people's facilities etc. are to be located. It will also identify if any open space is no longer needed and how its disposal or re use can be used to fund improvements to other spaces.

Spatial and Investment plans should apply the standards and be in accordance with the strategic policies set out in the adopted Castle Point Plan (as informed by this study) and seek

[27] There may also be a demonstrated need to improve the quality of open spaces which were not included within the quality audits or those sites which were assessed as being good quality (e.g., where scoring poor against 1 or more criteria). There may be local aspirations for sites which have not been identified within the quality audits.

[28] https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/how-it-works

to ensure that where significant investment is anticipated for public open spaces that this is prioritised and realised with the help of key stakeholders and communities.

The standards recommended in this study can be used to help determine a minimum level of quality and quantity of green space provision and the maximum distance people should have to travel to access different types of green space.

This study provides information on the existing supply of different types of open space, an analysis of access and identifies local issues related to quality. It will act as a good starting point for feeding into strategies for future decision making in consultation with the local community.

Table 29 below provides an example of applying the supply, accessibility, and quality of open space in the ward of Thundersley North, in order to highlight potential opportunities for re-location or re-designation of open spaces or improvements to open spaces to help reduce existing shortfalls in quantity, accessibility and quality. It also considers those open spaces which may have potential to be considered as surplus to requirement. This is an example that could be used to guide Castle Point Council in applying similar solutions to other wards as required.

These considerations will act as a good starting point for decision making but will require further detailed investigation and community consultation before any decisions can be made. For example, just because an open space may be in sufficient supply with overlaps in access, and it may be of fair or poor quality, local knowledge (or other considerations such as green infrastructure or historic value) may show that it is a highly valued and/or an important facility, and therefore it should not be considered for alternative use/as being surplus to requirement.

Table 29 *Example of opportunities for re-location or redesignation of open space (or quality improvements) to reduce existing shortfalls*

Ward	Current Open Space Provision	Opportunities
Thundersley North	**Quantity:** Sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds and accessible natural green space, shortfalls in supply of allotments, amenity green space and play space (child and youth). **Access:** Good access to accessible natural green space and amenity green space. There are some gaps in access to the east of the ward for allotments, and to parks and recreation grounds in the south. Large gaps in access to play space (child and youth). **Quality:** The quality of open space within the ward is fair to good. However, 9 sites assessed scored poor for at least one criterion.	There is potential for accessible natural green space (e.g., Thundersley Common) to accommodate low impact uses such as a community food growing (to reduce the shortfalls in allotments and gap in access in the east) and natural play (to reduce the shortfalls in children's play space). Also potential for parks and recreation grounds (e.g., Thundersley Common Recreation Ground) to accommodate youth play space. Consideration could also be given to community access at facilities within schools/education land. Due to the shortfalls in supply across all typologies except parks and recreation grounds and accessible natural green space (ANGS), and the potential of ANGS and parks to reduce existing shortfalls, (and the value of

Ward	Current Open Space Provision	Opportunities
		these spaces in terms of green infrastructure and biodiversity), it is recommended that no open spaces are considered as surplus to requirement.

8.5 Identification of areas for new provision

New provision will be required where there is a new development and a planned increase in population, and/or an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists. Section 7 outlines the existing situation with regards to supply and access to open space. This study can be used as the basis for decision making, as follows:

Quantity

Within the study report, for each typology, there is an identified 'sufficient supply' or 'under supply' for each of the wards, as well as the overall study area. If a given geography has an existing under supply of any typology, there may be need for additional provision. This could be delivered through developing a new site (for example as part of a housing development), acquiring land to extend the site, or changing the typology of an existing space (which may be in over supply).

The supply statistics should be used as part of the decision-making process in development management to determine if a new development should provide facilities on-site or enhance existing provision through developer contributions.

The use of the quantity statistics should not be in isolation and considered alongside the access standards.

Access

This study considers how access to different types of open space varies across the various geographies against the proposed standards. The maps in Section 7 (and Appendix 3) show where there are deficiencies and potential over supply of facilities. This information can be used alongside the quantity statistics to determine if new provision or improved accessibility is required in an area. For example, if a new development is proposed, the maps should be consulted to determine if there is an existing gap in provision of a particular typology which could be met by the development.

Therefore, even though the quantity statistics may identify a sufficient supply of a particular typology, there may be gaps in access, and thus a new facility may still be required.

Delivering new provision

There are various opportunities for delivering new open space (and wider GI) through new development – developer contributions (CIL and S106), biodiversity net gain and to a lesser

extent through capital and grant funding. Consideration could also be given to adopting an Urban Greening Factor.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The CIL is a tool for local authorities to help fund the delivery of infrastructure. CIL is a non-negotiable standard charge on new development. It takes the form of a charge per square metre of net additional floorspace and applies to most new development. CIL was introduced in Castle Point on 1 May 2023.

CIL money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure to support 'growth', it does not need to be used for providing infrastructure on the site it is collected from. This is not the case for Section 106 agreements where money collected will be restricted to that infrastructure required to directly mitigate the impact of a proposal. Where a development is unable to provide sufficient on-site provision of open space to mitigate the impact of that development, the council can collect Section 106 contributions that could be put towards off-site provision/enhancement. This is an example of how Section 106 agreements can be used alongside CIL.

Amendments to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations (2010) came into force on 1 September 2019. One of the key changes is the lifting of the 'pooling restriction,' due to the deletion of Regulation 123. This allows CIL and planning obligations (S106) to fund the same piece of infrastructure and accordingly remove what can be a barrier to development. Sheffield Open Space Assessment 2022: Main Report (Part 1 of 2) 99 The new Infrastructure Funding Statements (which replace the regulation 123 lists) required annually from 31 December 2020, provides an appropriate audit trail of all contributions to receiving authorities and how they are spent, whether S106 or CIL. The IFS includes an 'Infrastructure List' that sets out the priorities for spending CIL.

Planning Obligations (S106)

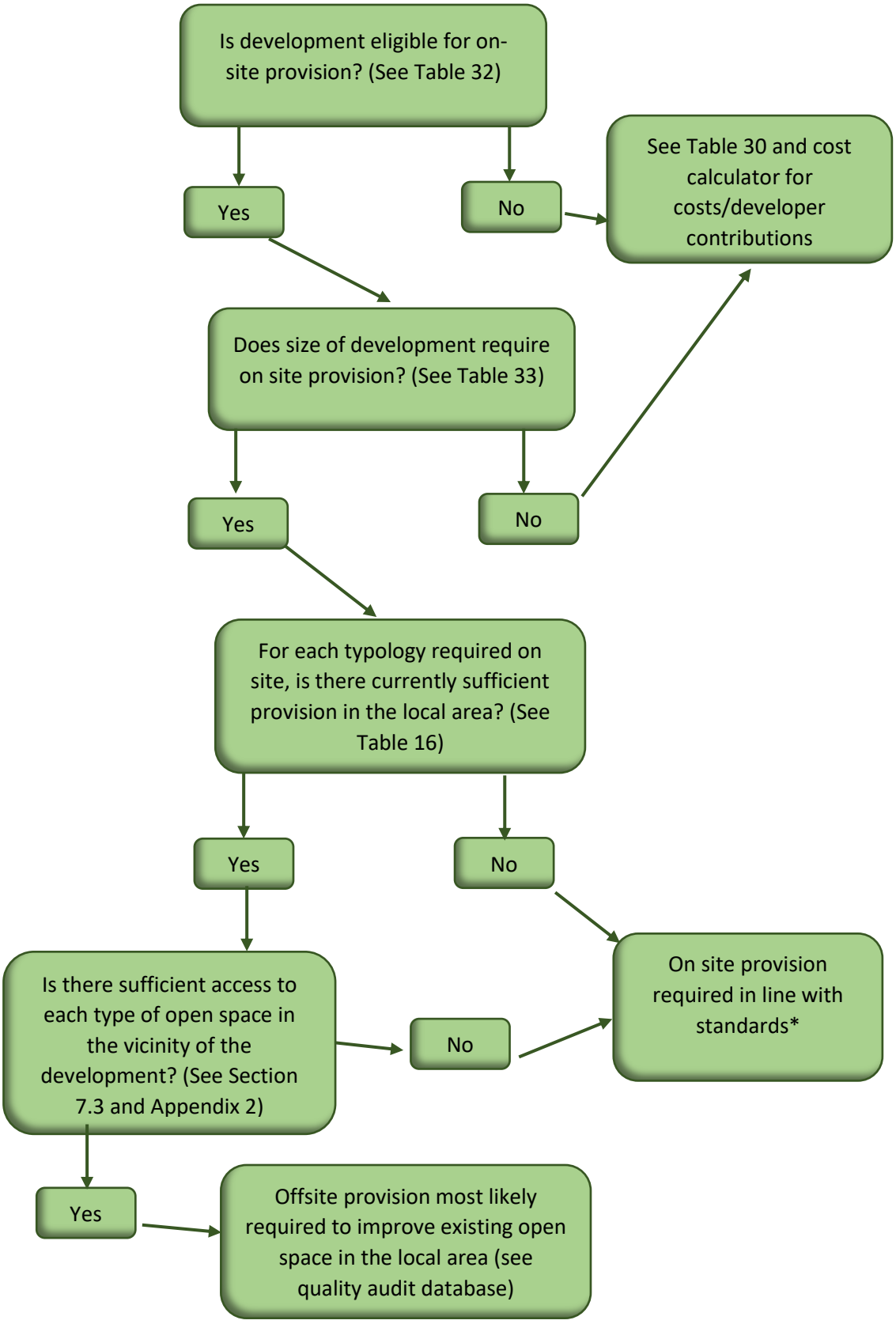
'Section 106' planning obligations may be required for specific on-site mitigation measures and/or contributions towards off-site infrastructure, such as public open space provision. Any adverse impacts on the local environment or local infrastructure, which will arise as a direct result of development, and which can be made acceptable in planning terms, should be mitigated via a planning obligation. Planning obligations must be made in accordance with the three tests of CIL Regulation 122:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and,
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

New development will be required to provide on-site and/or off-site open space in accordance with Castle Point Borough Council policy requirements, as informed by the standards outlined in this study. Whilst not all developments will be of a size that will generate the requirement for on-site open space, when considering future requirements for Castle

Point, there will be many that will. This study should be used to inform local decisions about where and when new on-site provision will be required.

Figure 25 below shows an example flow chart/decision making process to help developers/council officers determine the need for on or off-site provision of open space. **This is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case-by-case basis using the standards and assessment within this study. Where possible, this should be determined through pre-application discussions with the Council.**



*if it is not feasible to deliver open space on site due to exceptional circumstances e.g., viability or land availability, then potential to make off site provision will be considered on a case by case basis.

Figure 25 open space *Decision making process for on-site provision of open space, or off-site contributions to enhance existing*

Biodiversity net gain (BNG)

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected in such a way it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain to compensate for loss of biodiversity through development is set to become a part of planning in early 2024 through requirements within the Environment Act 2021 which was ratified in November 2021. Once enacted, this will require any development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (except Permitted Development and Householder Applications) to evidence a minimum 10% increase in biodiversity value, delivered through habitat creation or enhancement either on-site, off-site or through biodiversity credits, and 30 years management of those habitats. Further to this, BNG is supported within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that planning policies and decisions 'should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'

The BNG potential (for generating off site biodiversity credits) for five of the largest open spaces in Castle Point has been considered in Section 7.6.

Capital and grant funding

Although the availability of capital and grant funding has diminished in recent years, nevertheless funding does become available for providing facilities for open space, sport and recreation. National and governing bodies for individual sports should be consulted where new infrastructure is required, such as changing rooms and sports pitches. Environmental grants and stewardship schemes are available for managing accessible natural green space.

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) provide a summary of current opportunities to access funding for green infrastructure projects across the UK[29].

Urban Greening Factor

Urban greening factor (UGF)[30] is one of the five headline standards within the Natural England GI Standards Framework. It helps to improve the provision of Green Infrastructure and increase greening. UGF works well in higher density urban districts that generally struggle to significantly increase the quantum of green space but can benefit incrementally from the addition of greenery within development.

Scores are calculated by using a set of weighted green infrastructure surface cover types including natural and semi-natural vegetation, street trees, hedgerows, sustainable drainage

[29] Funding sources for green infrastructure - Town and Country Planning Association (tcpa.org.uk)
[30] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/GIStandards.aspx

features, green roofs, and walls. Each of these surface cover types are then multiplied by the weighting and then the sum of these figures divided by the total site area. The UGF figure provides a means to measure and compare the functionality of green infrastructure design proposals.

UGF can be used alongside biodiversity net gain and is especially valuable on sites where the baseline biodiversity is low by ensuring that sites can promote more nature rich environments.

Requirements for open space from new housing

Section 7.2 (Table 16) summarises the variation in supply of different typologies of open space across wards. As identified, every ward has a shortfall in at least two typologies of open space, therefore, the starting point for new housing (of a certain size - see Table 33 for recommended thresholds) is to assume that some form of on-site open space provision would be required.

Open Space Policy Direction (new provision of open space):	
OS9	New provision of open space will be required as part of new development. On-site provision should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards. Where on-site provision is deemed impractical, or not required e.g., for small sites, consideration will be given to opportunities for off-site provision and/or improvements. Improvements to existing open space will be considered first in the ward within which the development is located, then in open spaces in neighbouring wards. Open spaces requiring improvements will be identified using the results from the quality audit and from site management plans and the Councils' own knowledge of their sites. The Council could also consider the use of Urban Greening Factor (UGF) as part of Green Infrastructure Policy (this can work alongside Biodiversity Net Gain, especially on sites with low existing biodiversity value). UGF works well in higher density urban districts that generally struggle to significantly increase the quantum of green space but can benefit incrementally from the addition of greenery within development.

8.6 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

In addition to the strategic options outlined above, consideration should also be given to facilities that are surplus to requirement. There are important issues to resolve in terms of striking the correct balance of open space across the study area before any disposal can be contemplated. Whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in several areas, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that the proposed standards are for *minimum* levels of

provision. Factors to be taken into account before any decision to release open space for alternative uses can be taken include:

- The local value and use of a given open space - as it may be a locally popular resource.
- Whether future local development/population growth might generate additional demands for open space.
- Whether there is a demonstrable need for some other type of open space within the locality that a given space (subject to a change of management regime) would be well placed to meet.
- Other non-recreational reasons that suggest a space should be retained (which might include ecological and visual reasons).

Figure 26 and the associated paragraphs below suggests an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development/alternative use of an open space can be seriously contemplated. This is unlikely to be a consideration in Castle Point, due to the shortfalls in supply of open space across the study area.

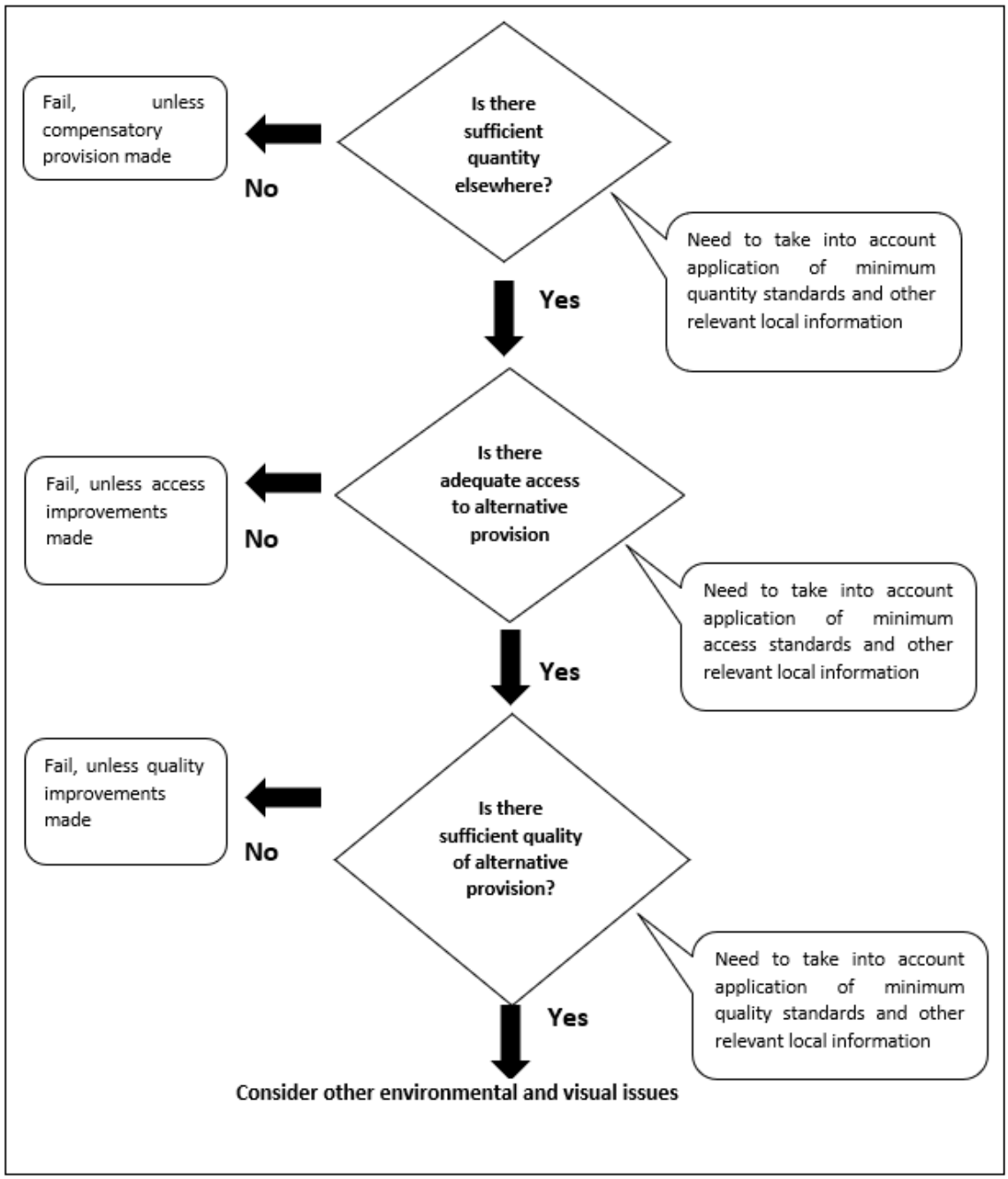


Figure 26 Outline decision making process in relation to sanctioning (re)development of open space

A hypothetical example of how this might be applied follows and relates to an area of amenity open space.

Q. Is there sufficient quantity?

A. If the minimum quantitative standard for amenity green space is exceeded in a defined geographical area, the relative provision of other forms of open space must then be considered (amenity green space can in principle be converted into other forms of open space where the need arises). If a) provision meets the minimum quantitative standard; b) there is no significant local information suggesting a need to retain the site; and, c) there is not a perceived lack of other forms of open space, the next question can be addressed.

Q. Is there adequate access to alternative provision?

A. Within a given geographical area there may be good overall provision of amenity green space relative to the quantity standard, but is it in the right place and can it be easily reached? Applying the accessibility component of the minimum standards will help to answer this question. If other similar open space cannot be easily reached, the site's disposal for other uses may be unacceptable.

Q. Are other accessible and similar opportunities elsewhere of sufficient quality?

A. If it can be demonstrated that alternative opportunities are sufficient both in quantity and accessibility, there may still exist issues with the quality of these alternative provisions. The quality component of the proposed standards may indicate that certain improvements to alternative opportunities must be made which should be funded and secured before development is permitted.

The quality audit provided as part of this study provides a useful framework for identifying and prioritising open spaces that require improvements. Those open spaces which have been assessed as being of poor or average quality should be prioritised for improvement. If existing open spaces in the vicinity of new development are of poor/average quality, then their improvement (e.g., access improvements, signage, improvements to facilities and/or habitats) would need to be secured before any 'surplus' in a particular open space typology could be considered.

Even if these three tests are passed there may be other reasons for the site to remain as open space. For example, it may have value as a natural habitat or be visually important. Such considerations are important, but beyond the scope of this report.

8.7 Developer Contributions

This section draws on the policy recommendations in the previous section and outlines a process for calculating S106 developer contributions for on and off-site provision.

1) Capital cost of providing open space (on and off site).

In order to calculate developer contributions for facilities, a methodology has been recommended which calculates how much it would cost the Local Authority to provide them. These costs have been calculated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's[31]. A summary of the costs is outlined in Table 29 below. These costs are indicative and may be reviewed and updated by the Local Authority with localised information/costings from other sources.

Contributions towards the provision or improvement of open space are calculated using the capital cost of provision. The same charges apply to both provision of new facilities and the upgrading/improvement of existing facilities (where related to new development), which will

[31] Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2021

normally include at least some new provision. Contribution per person is taken to be a reasonable approach to calculating the amount of money required and is an accepted approach used by many local authorities, irrespective of whether new provision or improvement of existing facilities is required. It ensures contributions are "in scale" as required by the CIL Regulations. The calculated costs have drawn on the standards of provision summarised in Section 6.7, Table 15.

Table 30 Costs for providing open space (excludes land costs)

Typology	Standard (m²) per person (see Table 15)	Cost of provision	
		Cost / m²	Contribution per person
Allotments	2.0	£34.20	£68.40
Parks and Recreation grounds (Combined)[32]	11.0	£116.53	£1,281.83
Play Space (Children)	0.7	£149.91	£104.94
Play Space (Youth)	0.7	£163.30	£114.31
Amenity green space	6.0	£16.40	£98.40
Accessible Natural green space	18.0	£6.20	£111.60
Total	**38.4**		**£1,779.48**

This shows that it costs £1,779.48 per person to provide new open space to meet the Castle Point standards for open space if contributions are sought for all typologies. These calculations may be used to calculate developer contributions for on-site provision and where required, for off-site contributions. Costs should be updated at least annually to account for inflation based on the Bank of England inflation rate ("Index Linking").

Viability issues will be taken into account when considering the off-site contributions that would be required, on a case by case basis.

A **cost calculator** has been provided to the council so that the on and off-site requirements for open space can be calculated for different sized developments. This cost calculator is a recommendation by Ethos that might be further developed by the council, taking into account overall development viability. It provides an example of how costs might be calculated, but site circumstances will also need to be taken into account such as topography, or proximity to existing open space.

The cost calculator is based on the following assumptions:

[32] The cost of provision for parks and recreation grounds does not include the cost of providing playing pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis and bowls, which are additional costs which would need to be agreed in addition to the open space costs, where new pitches or contributions to existing pitches are required. Sport England also set out facilities costs: https://www.sportengland.org/media/13346/facility-costs-q2-18.pdf.

- Average household size (2.4 persons/household[33])
- The open space quantity standards (see Table 15)
- The cost of open space per m^2 (see Table 30)
- Thresholds for on-site provision (see Table 33)

Cost calculator: Example

A housing development of 80 dwellings in would generate the following minimum requirements for on-site provision of open space and contributions for off-site improvements:

On-site provision:

- 0.1152 ha (1152 sqm) of amenity green space
- 0.3456 ha (3456 sqm) of accessible natural green space
- 0.0134 ha (134 sqm) of children's play space

Contributions for off-site provision/improvements required[34]:

- £13,133 for allotments
- £246,111 for parks and recreation grounds
- £21,948 for youth play space

A screenshot from the cost calculator is provided below:

Number of dwellings	Enter number	Equivalent people	Open Space requirement	Required msq per person	Cost per msq	Total requirement (msq)	Cost of provision (£)	On site required?	Required quantity on site (msq)	Enter actual provision on site (msq)	Value of provision	Contribution required	Commuted sum required	Annual commuted sum (£)
1 bed		0	*Allotments*	2	34.20	384.00	£13,133	0	None	0.00	0	£13,133	0	0
2 bed		0	*Amenity Green Space*	6	16.40	1,152.00	£18,893	Y	1,152.00	1152.00	18,893	£0	Y	887.04
3 bed		0	*Parks & Recreation Grounds*	11	116.53	2,112.00	£246,111	0	None	0.00	0	£246,111	0	0
4 bed		0	*Play Space (Children)*	0.7	149.91	134.40	£20,148	Y	134.40	134.40	20,148	£0	Y	1792.896
5 bed		0	*Play Space (Youth)*	0.7	163.30	134.40	£21,948	0	None	0.00	0	£21,948	0	0
Elderly 1 bed		0	*Accessible Natural Green Space*	18	6.20	3,456.00	£21,427	Y	3,456.00	3456.00	21,427	£0	Y	2661.12
Elderly 2 bed		0												
TOTAL	80	192		38.40		7,373	£341,660		4,742		60,468	£281,192		5341.056

2) Maintenance contributions (commuted sums) for on-site provision

Where new open space is provided, the developer would be expected to provide the open space and either maintain the open space through a management company or other suitably agreed stewardship arrangement, or if, the site is to be adopted by the Local Authority, then maintenance fees will be included in the Section 106 legal agreement. If the open space is maintained by a Management Company, then the open space should be publicly accessible in perpetuity. It is expected that a management plan for the open space would be submitted

[33] Based on Census 2021.

[34] Viability issues will be taken into account when considering the off-site contributions that would be required, on a case by case basis.

and approved by the council as a planning condition or part of the legal agreement. Details of how the Management Company will be established and managed, and the provisions put in place should the management company fail etc. would also need to be approved by the council.

In the event that the open space would be adopted by the council, they may be willing to accept a commuted sum and make arrangements for management of the open space. The amount payable for the commuted sum may be calculated using the figures in Table 31 below. These figures do not include professional fees, set up costs and admin etc. The figures provide guidance on how much it costs to maintain open space per metre squared. The costs have been provided from maintenance costs estimated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's 2020[35], and include lifecycle replacement costs. An inflation rate based on the Bank of England inflation rate should be applied. As with the capital costs, these costs may be reviewed and updated by the council.

Table 31 Maintenance costs for open space

Typology	Cost/sq. m per annum
Play Space (Children)	£13.34
Play Space (Youth)	£9.21
Parks and Recreation Grounds[36]	£3.47
Amenity Green Space and Natural Green Space	£0.77
Allotments	£0.76

3) Eligible types of development for on-site provision

Table 32 outlines the type of housing that will be considered eligible for making contributions towards open space to meet the needs of future occupants.

Table 32 Eligible types of residential development

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Affordable Housing	Older People's Accommodation	Permanent mobile homes
Play Space (Children and Youth)	✓	✓	×	✓
Parks and Recreation Grounds	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	✓
Amenity Open Space	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	✓

[35] Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2020.

[36] Excludes pitches/sports facilities - Sport England have published information on sports capital and maintenance costs: https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/facility-cost-guidance

Accessible Natural Green Space	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	✓
Allotments	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	✓

4) Thresholds for provision

The required open space should in the first instance be provided on-site, with off-site provision/contributions only to be considered where on-site provision is either not needed (considering the analysis of supply, accessibility) or not possible/practicable.

Where facilities are to be provided on-site, the council will expect the developer to provide the land for the facility and either:

- Design and build the provision to the satisfaction of the council; or
- Make a financial contribution the council so that they may arrange for the construction and development of the required facility.

The decision on whether facility provision is to be on-site, off-site or both depends on the following considerations[37]:

- The scale of the proposed development and site area;
- The suitability of a site reflecting, for example, its topography or flood risk;
- The existing provision of facilities within the ward/neighbourhood;
- Other sites in the ward/neighbourhood where additional provision is proposed; and
- Existing access to facilities within the ward/neighbourhood.

Table 33 provides guidance on how to assess different scales of development sites that could generate a need for facilities in the categories listed to be provided on-site (also see the flow chart at Figure 25, which shows how the quantity, access and quality analysis needs to be taken into account). Where a development is of a size that could generate the need for provision of open space on-site, if there is sufficient provision (quantity and access) of an open space typology within the vicinity, then consideration will be given to improving existing facilities as an alternative to new on-site provision.

Where a development would result in less than 0.1ha of amenity green space, it will be provided as a single space. For developments that result in more than 0.1ha of amenity green space, the minimum size of a single space considered acceptable is 0.1ha. This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function.

While Table 33 acts as a useful guide to the recommended types of provision in relation to the size of a scheme, each proposal will still be considered on a site by site basis, with on-site provision always to be considered as the first solution. The table below will be most applicable

[37] Also see flow chart at Figure 25.

to greenfield sites. For high density brownfield sites, off-site contributions rather than on-site open space provision are considered to be reasonable, due to the limited land available for new development. The enhancement of existing facilities (including improving access to facilities) will be key to meeting unmet demand.

Table 33 Potential open space requirements based on scheme size

Type of Provision	10-19 dwellings	20-49 dwellings	50-199 dwellings	200+ dwellings
Allotments and informal growing space[38]	X	✓	✓	✓
Amenity Green Space	X	✓	✓	✓
Parks and Recreation Grounds	X	X	X	✓
Play Space (children)	X	X	✓	✓
Play Space (Youth)	X	X	X	✓
Accessible natural green space	X	✓	✓	✓

KEY: ✓ on-site provision normally sought
X off-site provision/improvements to existing open space normally required

[38] Is it expected that this would be provide flexibility to meet local needs, e.g. at smaller scheme densities between 20 – 199 dwellings, informal growing space may be provided rather than formal allotment provision.

9.0 CONCLUSION

This study provides a robust analysis of the status of open space within Castle Point as of September 2023. It includes an audit of provision and a local needs assessment (consultation) with findings used to produce new recommended standards for quantity, accessibility and quality of open space. The study also includes a suite of policy recommendations and methodologies for interpreting and informing the needs for the assessed open space typologies over a period up to 2050, as well as a process for calculating developer contributions. It should be read in conjunction with the Castle Point Borough Council Consultation Report (2023).

The role and value of open space in contributing to the delivery of national and local priorities and targets, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and health and wellbeing, is clear from this assessment. It is important that the policies and recommendations included within this assessment are considered for inclusion as statutory planning policy, associated guidance and other council strategies and policy documents.

Council officers and elected members play a pivotal role in adopting and promoting the recommendations within this assessment and ensuring that key stakeholders such as councillors, developers and community groups are suitably informed and engaged in the open space process.