

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

GREEN SPACES FOR MAIDSTONE STRATEGY

PREPARED BY PMP

JANUARY 2005

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Executive Summary

Introduction

- A1. PMP was appointed in June 2003 to produce a Green Spaces Strategy for Maidstone Borough.
- A2. This study has been undertaken in response to the Best Value Review “A Clean and Tidy Borough” in 2002 and provides the Council with a performance and monitoring mechanism upon which to identify priorities and targets for the future.
- A3. PMP has undertaken thorough research and analysis in preparation of the Strategy, including:
- in-depth consultation with Council Officers, Members, the local community, local schools and Maidstone Youth Forum
 - quantitative audit of all accessible green spaces in the Borough and GIS digitisation of all sites
 - detailed qualitative assessment of a selection of key parks, gardens and recreation grounds
 - qualitative audit of all green spaces contained within the Access database which links to GIS files
 - review of potential funding sources
 - examination of ways to inform, consult in line with best practice and recommend changes to increase use of green spaces.

What is a Green Spaces Strategy?

- B1. A Green Spaces Strategy has to fulfil a number of needs. These include:
- ensuring that a more even distribution of open space is achieved in relation to the local population
 - planning for open spaces to become interconnected, to allow for better pedestrian and cycling links between different parts of an area, and in order to reduce the amount of vehicular travel
 - addressing deficiencies in relation to the quality of provision
 - a way in which stakeholders, including users and potential users, can become involved in decisions relating to the management of parks and open spaces
 - meeting current and future needs and demands
 - providing a more sustainable environment, with greater biodiversity, and the conservation of varying habitat types
 - identifying existing and potential sources of funding or other resource, and targeting these resources where the need is greatest

- marketing parks and open spaces, and raising their profile so that they are better used by local residents and visitors from outside the Borough
- identifying actions for the future which are specific and measurable, and which increase the chances of meeting strategic objectives.

The national and local context

- C1. This study has followed guidance from **Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Planning for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation, July 2002 and its Companion Guide (2002)**.
- C2. PPG17 advocates planning policies for open space, including playing fields, to be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local needs.
- C3. It states that “the Government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of need and audits open space, sports and recreational facilities”.
- C4. **Green Spaces, Better Places – DTLR – The Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force (2002)** recognises that parks and green spaces are a popular and precious resource which can make a valuable contribution to the attractiveness of a neighbourhood, to the health and well-being of people, and expand educational opportunities of children and adults alike.
- C5. By commissioning this research to feed into the production of the strategy, the Council is committing to strive to protect and enhance parks and green spaces in the Borough.
- C6. **Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener – ODPM, October 2002** highlights how over the past five years, action across the country has led to many new parks and green spaces. For example, there are now 245 new millennium greens and major new parks that have been created as part of regeneration programmes.
- C7. Total resources available to urban parks and green spaces have increased significantly over the past five years. Central Government revenue funding to local authorities for parks and green space services is provided as part of the ‘environment protection and cultural services block’ (EPCS). In addition to direct central funding, a range of new funding opportunities are complementing local expenditure.
- C8. The Government plans for building sustainable communities, launched through the ‘**Sustainable Futures: Building for the Future**’ document in early February 2003 included funding for parks and open spaces totalling £201 million.
- C9. This is in response to the identified need to create and maintain places in which people want to live with parks and open spaces being a key consideration as they form a focal point of community life.
- C10. Local strategic documents that have a local or regional significance to green spaces in Maidstone have been reviewed, *such as Sport and Play Facilities Strategy, “Play for Today”: Towards a Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Spaces 2004 – 2008, Local Cultural Strategy for Maidstone and Maidstone Matters: Community Strategy for Maidstone” to name but a few*. It is important for the Green Spaces Strategy to complement and form links with other strategic policies.

- C11. **The Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan (2000)** sets out new and amended planning proposals and policies for the whole of the Maidstone Borough Council area for the period to 2006. It was formally adopted on 18th December 2000.
- C12. Key objectives of the local plan relating to open space are to:
- ensure that all development proposals, land use policies, and transport schemes are consistent with the need to ensure a sustainable future
 - recognise the importance of Maidstone's rich and diverse environmental resources; to protect and where possible enhance the variety and distinctiveness of the Borough's urban and rural environment
 - to identify and implement policies to protect areas of countryside and open space having special qualities
 - promote a high standard of environment and formal and informal recreational facilities for the benefit of residents, and to promote tourism.
- C13. Policies ENV22, 23, 24 and 25 shows the Council and the community place a premium on local green spaces and highlights why the Council seeks an active developer involvement in meeting local needs for open space.
- C14. The Council is in the process of publishing its Supplementary Planning Guidance which provides greater clarity and certainty for developers and landowners. The policies within this document should relate directly to the findings of the PPG17 assessment conducted in preparation for the strategy.

Project methodology

- D1. Section 5 of this report outlines the methodology used to undertake the PPG17 compliant assessment. The guidance sets out a five step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of green space:
- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
 - Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
 - Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
 - Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
 - Step 5 – Drafting Implementation and Action Plan.

Identification of Local Needs

- E1. In order to prepare a Green Spaces Strategy and set local policies from it, community consultation is essential to understand local needs. Establishing the views of local communities is also an essential part of the Best Value regime and the Community Planning process.
- E2. PMP conducted the following market research:
- telephone survey with random sample of 400 local residents
 - on-site surveys at 14 green spaces throughout the Borough in which 553 face-to-face interviews were conducted
 - internet survey with pupils based at seven different schools throughout the Borough which yielded responses from 210 young people
 - survey of local groups and organisations
 - workshop with the Maidstone Youth Forum
 - focus groups
 - consultation meetings with Council Officers.
- E3. The research findings clearly show that green spaces are well used by a broad section of the local community. Users comprised of local residents of all ages and a broadly even split of males and females.
- E4. In both the telephone and on-site survey, the most popular reasons given for using green spaces were 'to walk', 'to take exercise', 'for fresh air' and 'to walk the dog'. However, for young people, the reasons did differ, with the results of the schools survey showing that most children and young people visit green spaces to 'meet friends' and 'to get some exercise'.
- E5. 76% of respondents in the on-site survey travel to green spaces on foot. An analysis of the postcodes of respondents to the on-site survey reveal that most visitors to parks and gardens are drawn from within a 2-5 kilometre catchment area, although these sites do draw visitors from much further afield.
- E6. The results indicate that approximately half of the adult respondents consider the current amount of green space in Maidstone to be good or very good and a further 30% - 40% consider it to be fair. Only a small proportion are dissatisfied with the current amount of green space.
- E7. The research findings show that cleanliness and tidiness is the main factor that residents consider to be important in a green space. Other factors considered to be important comprised 'provision for bins', 'dog walking facilities', 'maintenance and management', 'security' and 'toilets'.

MAIDSTONE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

E8. In all of the surveys conducted, the vast majority of respondents stated that they feel safe when using green spaces in Maidstone (84% in the telephone survey, 85% in the on-site survey and 90% in the schools survey). However, in both the telephone and on-site survey, the proportion of female respondents who said that they do not feel safe is far higher than the proportion of males (7% males to 17% females in the on-site survey and 9% males to 18% females in the telephone survey).

Auditing Local Provision

F1. An audit of all accessible green spaces in the Borough was undertaken. This audit provides information about the sizes and characteristics of the green spaces, ie quality and accessibility levels. In accordance with PPG17 the audit was completed according to the following types of green space:

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens	Includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal recreation community events.
Natural and Semi-natural Greenspaces	Includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water and wastelands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wildlife conservation, biodiversity environmental education and awareness.
Green Corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> walking, cycling or horse riding leisure purposes or travel opportunities for wildlife migration.
Amenity Greenspace	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing and village greens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal activities close to home or work enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equipped play areas ball courts outdoor basketball hoop areas skateboard areas teenage shelters and 'hangouts'
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> outdoor sports pitches tennis and bowls golf courses athletics playing fields (including school playing fields) water sports
Allotments and Community Gardens	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> growing vegetables and other root crops <p>N.B. does not include private gardens</p>
Cemeteries & Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quiet contemplation burial of the dead wildlife conservation promotion of biodiversity

Setting Provision Standards

- G1. Local quantity standards have been set and applied for all types of green space apart from natural and semi natural green spaces and green corridors.
- G2. For natural and semi-natural green spaces, the Council has opted for standards to be set using the Accessible Natural Green Space standards (ANGSt) as proposed by English Nature. This work is being undertaken separately by Kent County Council.
- G3. Green corridors are a unique type of green space. PMP has analysed the provision of such linear walkways and routes through the “Access to Maidstone’s Countryside” concept and not from a quantitative perspective. This approach is in line with PPG17 guidance.
- G4. Local quality and accessibility standards have also been set for each type of green space.
- G5. The standards were set by Council Officers and Members at *three* workshops, facilitated by PMP. Standards were informed by the parish and ward consultation questionnaires, the wider community market research findings and a review of existing strategic objectives.
- G6. The first workshop discussed the concept of a hierarchy of green spaces and it was agreed that in broad terms the types could be classified as follows:
- strategic: parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities
 - middle order: cemeteries, allotments
 - neighbourhood: amenity space, children’s play.
- G7. *Quantitative and qualitative standards were discussed and prepared at the second and third workshops, and it was agreed that standards would only be applied at ward level if they related to a neighbourhood green space type ie amenity space or children’s play. Again, green corridors and natural/semi-natural green space were not included.*

Applying Provision Standards

- H1. When applying the provision standards the following key points were extracted:
- there is close to adequate provision of parks and gardens in the urban area (country parks were considered under the natural and semi-natural category)
 - the amount of amenity green space is below the standard overall, except in the northern area
 - the amount of outdoor sports facilities is below the standard in all areas except in the southern area
 - the amount of children’s equipped play areas is close to the minimum standard in rural areas but provision levels above the standard in the urban area.

- the provision of cemeteries and churchyards space is quite varied across the four analysis areas with northern and eastern areas showing provision levels above the standard and southern and urban areas below the standard
 - allotment provision has been calculated to be close to the minimum standard in all analysis areas
 - from the consultation results, overall quality levels for green spaces across the Borough were rated to be mainly average
 - however, the on-site assessments revealed many health and safety and other negative issues which will need to be addressed
 - the quality audit undertaken by PMP's Parks and Green Spaces Consultant has revealed some significant concerns relating to quality such as:
 - entrances and gates
 - access footpaths
 - play equipment
 - lighting
 - information boards and signage
 - standards of cleanliness and maintenance
 - planting
 - toilets.
 - the new quality standards should be applied through further assessments of sites within the audit, focusing on those with poor or very poor ratings and those identified in the quality section of this report
- H2. The analysis revealed on the whole, average ratings of accessibility. Specific sites have been listed where accessibility levels are low and hence usage levels are low. Accessibility standards should be used to undertake locational assessments of the distribution of green spaces across the Borough.
- H3. Accessibility is a key issue for Maidstone's green spaces since the Disability Discrimination Act comes into force in October 2004.
- H4. *A summary of the audit results is outlined below. However, further detailed information* on the results of the assessment of quantity, quality and accessibility can be found in Sections 8 to 17.

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Green Space Type	Summary of Audit Results			
	QUANTITY	QUALITY	ACCESSIBILITY	
			Travel Time	Distance Km
Parks and Gardens	Close to adequate provision of parks and gardens in the urban area.	Urban parks and gardens should be clean and tidy, well maintained and inviting with no litter, dog fouling or graffiti. They should be safe and secure based on an audit of each site with appropriate facilities and infrastructure in good condition. Each site should have a varied range of planting and maintenance in accordance with an adopted management plan.	15 - 20 minute walk	1.6
Natural and semi-natural areas	<i>Provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population, one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home, one accessible 100ha site within 5km and one accessible 500ha site within 10km</i>	Natural and semi-natural green spaces should be clean and tidy with no litter, dog fouling or graffiti, and maintained to an appropriate conservation standard, providing a level of varied vegetation which may include natural features such as ponds, lakes and water where appropriate. The pathways and access routes should be clearly marked with appropriate facilities provided in the least obtrusive manner and maintained to a good standard to enhance the local biodiversity.	3.75 minute walk	300m
Amenity Green Space	Below the minimum standards, except in the northern area.	Amenity green space should be clean and well maintained, free of litter and dog fouling, with clearly defined boundaries, facilities appropriate to their use and appropriate planting.	5 - 10 minute walk	0.8
Provision for Children and Young People (Equipped Play)	Very close to the minimum standard in rural areas but provision levels are above than the minimum standard in the urban area.	Facilities for children and young people should be in safe and secure locations, well maintained, appropriately planted, free of dog fouling and equipped to provide a challenging range of activities to suit varied interests, age groups and levels of agility.	10 - 15 minute walk	1.2
Green Corridors	N/A	Green corridors should be continuous and viable links to the wider countryside incorporating a diversity of habitat types with access agreements and management plans where appropriate. Routes should be safe and use a surface material with sites to be clean and reasonably tidy.	N/A	N/A
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Below the minimum standards in all areas except the southern area.	All outdoor sports facilities should be safe and accessible. They should follow standards set by the national governing bodies. Ancillary accommodation should be maintained to an appropriate standard and be fit for purpose. Sites should be clean and tidy and free of litter, dog fouling and graffiti.	10 - 15 minute walk	1.2
Allotments and Community Gardens	Northern and eastern areas are below the minimum standard, urban area meets minimum standard, southern area above minimum standard.	Allotments should be clean and maintained areas with defined and secure boundaries. Where appropriate, access pathways and signage should be clearly provided and well maintained. Natural features and vegetation should be encouraged to ensure sustainable management of site.	N/A	N/A
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Below the minimum standards in all areas except the northern area.	Cemeteries and churchyards should be clean and litter free with safe and secure access where appropriate. There should be a variety of planting and facilities which reflect the local landscape character and biodiversity of the site.	15 minute drive	N/A

Situational Analysis

- H5. The Situational Analysis defines the background in which the Strategy is written. A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) has been used, followed by PESTEL analysis (political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal).

SWOT Analysis

- H6. The SWOT analysis is based on the internal strengths and weaknesses of green space and countryside provision in Maidstone and significant external opportunities and threats. The SWOT illustration can be found in Table 7.2.

Strengths

- H7. Amenity green space is reasonably well catered for in terms of quantity in Maidstone. However, quantity of provision does not imply that there is a uniform standard of quality.
- H8. The leadership of the Directorate is strong, with a high degree of technical competence in relation to green space and countryside management. Many of the green spaces such as Mote Park are well used and provided to a high standard.
- H9. There has been a real commitment amongst key stakeholders shown during the consultation for a strategic approach to change, particularly in relation to the creation of green corridors.

Weaknesses

- H11. There is a lack of key linkages of green spaces to create linear walkways, green and wildlife corridors.
- H12. The infrastructure is failing through years of neglect and lack of capital expenditure. This includes footpaths, roads, buildings such as pavilions and toilets, fences and railings. There is a shortage of council funding for any improvements – a situation likely to get worse before it gets better. Quality standards are patchy, with many green spaces feeling neglected, and creating an atmosphere which feels threatening to the user.
- H.13 There are many green spaces with limited variety and interest. Finally, there has been little overall planning for the future needs and demands of users, potential users and residents, hence the commissioning of this Strategy.

Opportunities

- H14. There are many external sources of funding which could be pursued, particularly if the Council is prepared to match the costs involved and manage the process.
- H15. Governmental interest in parks provision is increasing considerably, with the creation of an Urban Parks Forum and CABE Space. There is also the possibility of increased funding for capital projects which increase the heritage value of an area. A central plank of this Strategy is also that it offers the opportunity to rectify shortfalls in quantity and quality of provision.
- H16. The aims and objectives contained in Maidstone's other strategies such as the Community Plan and the Local Plan will be developed by through this Strategy.

- H17. Social benefits include the emotional and physical improvements to health, and the mixing of different cultures and communities which occur as a result of access to green spaces and countryside areas.
- H18. Economic benefits include the prospect of higher property values when combined with quality green space provision, and the growth of commerce as the Borough is perceived to be a better place to live and work.
- H19. Finally, environmental benefits include more sustainable land management, control of pollution through additional planting, and a greater diversity of habitats and species.

Threats

- H20. Threats to the implementation of the Strategy include a likely continued shortage of public sector revenue funding. This is exacerbated by an increasing number of claims for injury resulting from the use of green space and countryside areas which pose a potential threat, e.g. poorly maintained playground equipment or walking surfaces.
- H21. In addition, the public generally expects higher standards across all services, and is increasingly capable of using complaint systems to demand action. Finally, raising of expectations to a level which may be hard to achieve in the short term could be an inadvertent threat to the Strategy.

SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reasonable provision of all types of green space • good technical skills at officer level in Maidstone • some excellent parks • large tracts of attractive countryside • commitment of stakeholders to improve provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failing infrastructure • shortage of council funding • patchy quality standards in green spaces and countryside provision • overall planning of needs/ demands • limited landscape variety.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external sources of funding • CPA and Best Value process • “Access to Maidstone’s Countryside” • public interest in “green” issues • governmental interest in parks provision • chance to meet inequalities in terms of levels of provision • developing public “ownership” through stakeholders • development of Borough wide aims and objectives • social benefits of Strategy • economic/environmental benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued shortage of public service funding • “suing” culture • public demand for better levels of provision • inability to meet raised expectations.

Resourcing the Strategy

- I1. A range of possible funding sources have been outlined within Section 18.
- I2. The section reviews each possible funding source or budgeting method in order to provide the Council with a guide for resourcing future developments as listed in the action plan. The most viable funding methods are:
 - private and voluntary sector investment
 - use of redundant buildings
 - business/funding sponsorship
 - partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector
 - Section 06 planning agreements
 - lottery funding and small grants scheme
 - review of pricing
 - the “People’s Places scheme”
 - local heritage initiatives
 - priority based budgeting.

Marketing plan

- J1. Current marketing and tourism activities are not fully co-ordinated at present and much can be done to improve this.
- J2. **Publicity material** needs to be attractive and readily available to both local Borough residents and tourists.
- J3. The **local media** should be used at every opportunity to provide information about new initiatives or projects. This should include newspaper coverage as well as local radio stations.
- J4. An extensive **events and activities programme** will achieve two aims: it will attract people to green spaces in order to be entertained in a pleasant environment, and it will encourage people to return to the same green spaces for further visits unconnected to the event or activity that they visited earlier.
- J5. In order to market green spaces effectively, they must in themselves be **welcoming and inviting**. In developing detailed proposals for the Green Spaces Strategy, and in the creation of Management plans, the following steps must be incorporated:
 - entrances need to be obvious and well-maintained – this may involve attractive floral displays visible on approach, and an absence of litter
 - signage should be evident – it should include a map of the park, key points of interest, and Council contacts.

Action Plan

- K1. A detailed action plan has been derived from the research and links into the main strategy documents. The plan has also been reviewed and approved by Council Officers and Members.
- K2. Actions specifically relating to the following have been presented:
- overall strategic issues
 - quality
 - accessibility
 - biodiversity
 - provision levels for each type
 - awareness
- K3. *The costs of the phase 1 action plan have been estimated for years 1 and 2, with key issues having been identified in the action plan beyond that. These will be added to by the Green Spaces Strategy Officer and adopted by the Council, to provide the key actions for future years.*

A “Green Spaces for Maidstone” Strategy



Introduction

Green spaces are recognised for contributing to the emotional and physical well-being of nearby communities. They provide a number of benefits including:

- Encouraging participation in healthy outdoor recreational activities
- Providing play opportunities for children
- Providing peace and tranquility
- Providing a haven for wildlife
- Encouraging people of all backgrounds to mix freely together
- Reducing pollution, noise and dust
- Making places better to live and work in.

The consultation which we have carried out for the Strategy has reinforced the message which the people of Maidstone had already given us, which is that a large proportion regularly use the Borough's green spaces, and that their retention and improvement are very important to people's quality of life.

The Council is proud of its green spaces, and the Strategy will help to build on the work that has already been carried out to improve the quality of our environment.

Council Aims and Objectives

There is a wide range of issues which the Council has to balance for all of its services. These are met in a number of ways, including:

- The Local Plan
- Council aims and objectives
- "Maidstone Matters," the community strategy for the town
- Sport and Play Facilities Strategy
- "Play for Today," play strategy
- Service objectives.

The Green Spaces Strategy must meet all of these wider demands by co-ordinating them with specific improvements in the towns parks and open spaces, recreation grounds and countryside areas.

What is the Green Spaces Strategy?

The Maidstone Green Spaces Strategy is a planned method for improving parks and green spaces through to 2009 onwards. It supports the Council's aims and objectives for the Borough's green spaces, including:

- Improving the quality of parks and green spaces
- Improving the awareness and use of parks and green spaces and the facilities therein
- Maximise external funding opportunities
- Encourage community involvement in planning and management of green spaces
- Conserve and enhance the natural environment and ecological balance.

In order to meet these aims, the Green Spaces Strategy will achieve the following objectives:

- understand the needs and demands of local communities and individuals within them
- undertake a robust assessment of these needs and demands in order to guide future planning and development
- use auditing and benchmarking techniques to gain an understanding of service and quality issues
- obtain the views of stakeholders to improve service delivery and quality
- raise the profile of green spaces
- stimulate debate about green space issues and encourage greater participation in planning and decision making
- feed in related strategies and Best Value reviews
- make a case for increased external resourcing
- resolve conflicts between different uses in the Borough's green spaces
- provide findings that will form the basis of detailed work for future green space planning.

Types of Green Space

The Green Spaces Strategy has used definitions contained in the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17). These are as follows:

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens	Includes urban parks and formal gardens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal recreation community events.
Natural and Semi-natural Greenspaces	Includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water and wastelands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wildlife conservation, biodiversity environmental education and awareness.
Green Corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> walking, cycling or horse riding leisure purposes or travel opportunities for wildlife migration.
Amenity Greenspace	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing and village greens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal activities close to home or work enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equipped play areas ball courts outdoor basketball hoop areas skateboard areas teenage shelters and 'hangouts'
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> outdoor sports pitches tennis and bowls golf courses athletics playing fields (including school playing fields) water sports
Allotments and Community Gardens	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> growing vegetables and other root crops <p>N.B. does not include private gardens</p>
Cemeteries & Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quiet contemplation burial of the dead wildlife conservation promotion of biodiversity

Consultation

Best Value and CPA

Best Value and Continuous Professional Assessment (CPA) are the two Government initiatives that have ensured the management of the UK's parks and green spaces is driven by the need to demonstrate value for money. One of the key aspects of this process (one of the 4"Cs" in the case of Best Value, along with compare, challenge and compete) is to consult. This has driven the process of obtaining views on Maidstone's Green Spaces Strategy.

Strategic Planning

The Strategy is a way of ensuring that the many conflicting needs and demands of the service can be properly planned and implemented in future.

It makes sense to target resources where they are most needed. The Strategy will allow the Council to identify how current and future needs can be prioritised and met as cost-effectively as possible. Not everything can be provided all at once but the Strategy and phased Action Plan allows decisions to be made which will ensure that the most important things are dealt with first, even if other demands take a little longer.

The process will be supported by producing detailed Management Plans for key green spaces in the Borough.

Partnership Working

The Strategy has already involved a high degree of working with other partners through the consultation process. It will continue this work by involving local people and their representatives in the decisions which have to be taken in future about the planning and management of our green spaces.

Consultation methods

Consultation has been a crucial aspect in the production of the Green Spaces Strategy. Local needs have been identified by applying the following methods:

- Telephone survey using a random sample of 400 local residents
- On-site survey at a range of green space sites throughout the Borough in which over 550 face-to-face interviews were conducted
- Postal survey of local interest groups and organisations
- Internet survey with pupils based at seven different schools throughout the Borough which yielded responses from 200 young people
- Workshop with Maidstone Youth Forum
- Focus groups
- Consultation meetings and workshops with Council Officers and Members.

SMART Action Plan

In response to the results of this detailed consultation work, the Strategy Action Plan will implement Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-measured (SMART) actions for the following important areas:

1. Strategic
2. Quality
3. Accessibility
4. Biodiversity
5. Provision levels of each type
6. Awareness

The action plan on the following pages is a summary of the detailed action plan contained in the full Green Spaces Strategy document.

Strategic

Aim

- To apply resources effectively and work strategically to improve green spaces in Maidstone.

Actions

Staffing:

- To ensure adequate staff resources are available to undertake the defined tasks within the specific timescale. A new Green Spaces Officer will be appointed in May 2005.

Funding:

- To secure external funding sources that contribute to the delivery of the whole action plan. A review of grants available and those applied for will be carried out on a quarterly basis.
- To identify areas from the local plan and quantify likely Section 106 funding for open space and quantify needs within a relevant distance from proposed developments.

Partnership working:

- Led by the All Party Strategic Advisory Committee, policy implementation will be steered towards delivering improvements to green spaces in Maidstone
- This work will involve hosting community workshops to involve local people in operational management and development planning.

Quality

Aim

- To promote and advocate quality of green spaces in the Borough adding value to the quality of life of local people

Actions

Best Practice

- To identify areas of best practice inside and outside the Borough
- Identify benchmark landscapes and blueprints for future Strategy implementation

Management Plans

- Devise Management Plans for countryside recreation areas and key green spaces in the Borough
- Monitor the progress of improving green spaces through updating and developing management plans in the future
- Focus resources on improving the quality of those green spaces identified through the consultation as poor or very poor
- Seek greater external funding for improvements

Accessibility

Aim

- To improve accessibility to green spaces in the Borough

Actions

- Implementation of “Access to Maidstone’s Countryside” concept which will improve route ways leading people from urban Maidstone into the rural areas and wider Kent Countryside
- Undertake further assessments of the Borough where locational deficiencies exist for each type of green space using catchment area mapping work
- Empower local communities to help reduce antisocial behaviour in green spaces and introduce additional Parks Watch schemes
- Reduce the fear of crime in green spaces through improved partnership working with local police
- Produce a design guide for landscaping to “design out” crime from green spaces
- Improve signage and awareness of green spaces throughout the Borough

Biodiversity

Aim

- To conserve and improve the natural environment in the Borough's green spaces and increase the range of habitats and species.

Actions

- Create a multi-disciplinary Biodiversity team to lead development of Biodiversity through the creation of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Create a blueprint for a series of green wedges ("Access to Maidstone's Countryside") where biodiversity will be specifically promoted
- Increase the creation of wild flower zones and other natural landscapes in the Borough's green spaces
- Draft plans for the laying out of wildlife corridors through the town and into the countryside
- Include sustainable management proposals in green space Management Plans
- Endeavour to achieve an annual programme of tree planting in the Borough.

Provision Levels

Aim

- To carry out a range of improvements to enhance the quantity, quality and accessibility levels of each type of green space

Actions

Parks and gardens:

- Improve quality of sites identified as poor or very poor within the audit through reviewing cleansing specification and implementing other recommendations as per the Parks and Gardens Management Plans
- Complete an accessibility, safety and security audit, building on data collected through the audit work
- Further examine the location / distribution of parks and gardens in the Borough
- Establish Friends of Parks interest groups.

Natural and Semi-natural green spaces:

- Implementation of ecologist survey to identify opportunities to enhance biodiversity at key sites throughout the Borough
- Identification and designation of further spaces as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)
- Undertake a further quantity and accessibility assessment of natural and semi-natural green spaces through an English Nature ANGSt Assessment and the application of the new quality standards

Green Corridors:

- Implementation of the Access to Maidstone's Countryside concept to enhance the quality and accessibility of these corridors to improve overall access to the Borough's rural countryside
- Improved partnership working with British Waterways to improve quality and increase usage of rivers and appropriate towpaths for recreational and sports activities
- Improve awareness of all green corridors for recreational walking, in particular Public Rights of Ways (PROWs)

Provision Levels

Amenity Greenspaces:

- Carry out a full accessibility assessment to identify locationally deficient areas within each neighbourhood where additional amenity green spaces are required
- Address quality issues of existing amenity green spaces as identified within the audit, focusing on those sites identified as poor or very poor first, ensuring they are clean, well maintained, safe and secure and appropriate to their use.

Facilities for Children and Young People:

- Seek developer contributions to improve the quality and accessibility levels of existing facilities
- Carry out a full accessibility assessment to identify locational deficiencies using catchment area mapping
- Undertake further consultation to assess the suitability of facilities within local play areas for a wide range of age groups

Outdoor sports facilities:

- Facilitate the provision of outdoor sports facilities according to the results of the study
- Carry out a full accessibility assessment to identify locations in the Borough with the greatest needs for outdoor sports facilities
- Undertake development work to set up more formal community use agreements with local primary and secondary schools, especially for sports pitches

Allotments and community gardens:

- Establish in more detail demand levels and future needs for allotments where no provision currently exists
- Carry out individual quality and access audits at sites
- Produce assessment criteria in relation to any potential disposal of unused allotment sites for another green space type

Cemeteries and churchyards:

- Examine in more detail the future need for cemetery space in terms of land space requirements
- Improve quality of those sites identified within the audit as poor or very poor and apply the new quality standards
- Identify and prioritise essential improvement works and addressing health and safety issues in particular.

Awareness

Aim

- To encourage greater community use of green space and improved involvement in the planning and management of green spaces.

Actions

- Implementation of the marketing plan within the strategy
- Create strategy webpage for promotional use / conveying of information and canvassing of views
- Inform local communities of significant developments by direct contact, meetings with representatives and use of the media
- Encourage the development of “friends” and similar groups.

How to Contact Us

Green Spaces Contacts

For further information or to discuss the Green Spaces Strategy further, please contact the Parks and Open Spaces Officer on 01622 602753

or write to the following address:

Parks and Open Spaces Unit
Environmental Services
Maidstone Borough Council
London House
5 - 11 London Road
Maidstone

E-mail: parks@maidstone.gov.uk

Website

Why not have a look at the Council's website?

The website address is <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/>

What You Can Do

You can become more involved by:

- Telling us your ideas
- Joining in voluntary activities
- Setting up or joining a "Parks Watch" scheme
- Setting up or joining a "Friends" group
- Supporting local environmental groups and organisations
- Taking part in public consultations
- Reporting incidents or antisocial behaviour in green spaces.

Introduction and background

Scope and methodology

- 1.1 In June 2003 Maidstone Borough Council (the Council) appointed PMP to produce a Green Spaces Strategy for the Borough.
- 1.2 The scope of the study was to:
 - carry out full consultation with officers, key Members, community groups and other key stakeholders with a view to identifying needs and demands, and possible improvements to the service, through:
 - meetings with Council Officers
 - telephone survey with a random sample of residents in the Borough
 - on-site survey conducted with visitors to selected parks and green spaces in the Borough
 - internet schools survey
 - postal survey to a selected list of local organisations
 - focus groups
 - undertake a quantitative assessment to:
 - examine the distribution of parks and green spaces and their accessibility in the Borough
 - set and apply local quantity standards to the analysis to understand current provision levels
 - undertake a qualitative assessment to:
 - examine current standards for managing parks and open spaces and evaluate the effectiveness of maintenance regimes
 - set and apply local quality standards
 - examine present levels of safety and security in parks and green spaces, and identify methods of achieving increased safety and security
 - examine funding of parks and open spaces, in order to make more effective use of facilities and to even up levels of provision where possible within available resources, and examine potential sources of further funding
 - examine ways to inform, consult in line with best practice and recommend changes that enable greater participation/involvement of the community and other partners in the delivery of the service
 - examine options for increasing community and commercial use of parks and open spaces.

SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.3 Assessing open spaces both in terms of quantity and quality allows local authorities to identify the potential for increased use of existing open space through better design, management and maintenance.
- 1.4 Quality audits are a key component of future development plan strategies and policies, as they enable local authorities to identify specific needs as well as qualitative and quantitative deficiencies and emphasis of provision. This is in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Planning For Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002).
- 1.5 This report contains the following:
- **the current national picture** – a review of current national developments in parks and open space use and management
 - **the current local picture** – a review of the relevant sections of the current Local Plan, Cultural Strategy and other relevant policies and strategies
 - **market research and consultation** – a presentation of key findings from the detailed market research and consultation carried out
 - **comprehensive audit** – of all the green spaces in the Borough analysing quantity, accessibility, quality and usage factors for each type, and overall in the Borough
 - **local quantity, quality and accessibility standards** – for future monitoring of provision levels
 - **setting and analysing distance thresholds** – helpful in understanding how far people are prepared to travel to reach green space
 - **planning for green spaces** - based on development of the main issues arising from the qualitative and supply and demand analyses and consideration of other key factors such as current Service Aims and Objectives for the management of parks and open spaces
 - **resourcing the Strategy** – highlighting actual and potential sources of funding for the development of strategic improvements in the Borough
 - **marketing plan** – detailing the results of the consultative process, and suggestions for marketing and publicity for the Strategy and the parks and open spaces service
 - **five year action plan** detailing what should be achieved **by whom, by when** and with what resource implications.
- 1.6 This strategy recommends that:
- people are put first
 - parks and open spaces are promoted
 - there is recognition that parks and open spaces contribute to the environment and quality of life
 - a long-term and broad view is taken.

Background information on the Borough

- 1.7 As Kent's county town, Maidstone is steeped in heritage and history, and has a fine legacy of parks and green spaces. The town goes back many hundreds of years, although in more recent times its development has been in the form of outward expansion along the radial routes. This has created a star shaped pattern of development, with many areas of green space between the "fingers," stretching right into the centre of the town.
- 1.8 There are many open spaces and walkways along the line of the river Medway, which bisects Maidstone. In addition, the town has been left with a legacy of green spaces such as Mote Park, Cobtree Manor Park, Brenchley Gardens and the grounds of Archbishop's Palace.
- 1.9 Recent additions to these fine parks are Whatman Park, Millennium River Park and Vinters Valley Park.
- 1.10 There are many smaller parks and open spaces in the Borough. These include:
- sports and recreation grounds
 - areas of woodland and countryside
 - neighbourhood parks
 - play areas
 - village greens.
- 1.11 Maidstone thus consists of a tapestry of parks and open spaces of varying types and sizes distributed in a fairly random manner throughout the Borough.

Why a Green Spaces Strategy?

- 1.12 Parks, open spaces, playgrounds and the countryside are managed areas of the green environment which provide opportunities for a range of formal and informal leisure, passive and active sport, recreation and play.
- 1.13 The significance of parks, open space and countryside provision is clear:
- in 1988 the Audit Commission estimated that local authorities in England and Wales maintained approximately 120,000 hectares of parks and open spaces - an area approximately the size of Berkshire
 - in 2000, the Heritage Lottery Fund estimated that there were approximately 30,000 urban green spaces in the UK, of which 5,000 are urban parks
 - in 1992 the Audit Commission suggested that there were 34,533 parks and open spaces in the UK
 - Local Government Finance Statistics indicate that over a 12 month period in the 1990's, £538 million was spent on parks and green spaces
 - recent national MORI research indicates that 60% of people believe that the provision of open spaces is key to an ideal community.

SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.14 It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality ‘public realm’ facilities such as parks and open spaces can assist in making an area an attractive place to live and work, and can result in a number of benefits in terms of economic development and regeneration.

1.15 The benefits of safe and accessible parks and open spaces can be summarised as follows:

Environmental

- providing habitats for wildlife as an aid to local biodiversity
- helping to stabilise urban temperatures and humidity
- absorbing pollutants in the air and ground water
- providing opportunities for the recycling of organic materials
- providing opportunities to reduce transport use through the provision of local facilities, and by providing walking and cycling routes from urban and suburban areas into the surrounding countryside.

Economic

- adding value to surrounding property, both commercial and residential, thus increasing local tax revenues for public services
- contributing to attracting visitors, including using the parks as venues for major events
- encouraging tourism into the area
- encouraging employment and inward investment
- helping to create an attractive local image
- complementing new development with a landscape that enhances its value
- helping to reduce social exclusion and its associated costs to society.

Social

- providing safe outdoor areas that are available to all Members of the local population
- providing opportunities for community events, voluntary activities and charitable fund raising
- providing easily accessible recreation as an alternative to other more chargeable leisure pursuits
- providing opportunities to improve health and take part in a wide range of outdoor sports and activities
- providing an educational resource or outdoor classroom.

Local assessment of green space

- 1.16 The main reasons for undertaking a local assessment of green space are:
- to plan positively, creatively and effectively in identifying priority areas for improvement and to target appropriate types of green space required
 - ensure an adequate provision of high quality, accessible green space to meet the needs of the community
 - to ensure any accessible funding is invested in the right places where there is the most required need.

Desirable outcomes of a local assessment

- 1.17 A local assessment of green space will enable the Council to plan effectively and achieve some desirable key outcomes required by PPG17. These are:
- provision of networks of accessible, high quality green space for sport and recreation that meet the needs of residents and visitors
 - provision of green spaces that are ‘fit for purpose’ – the right type in the right place and of the right size
 - provision of green spaces that are economically and environmentally sustainable
 - to provide an appropriate balance between new provision and enhancement of existing provision
 - setting locally derived provision standards
 - provision of clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and land owners.
- 1.18 This study goes some way to achieving these desirable outcomes, in terms of providing an analysis of existing provision in order to plan strategically and effectively the provision of green space to meet the required needs and enhance existing green spaces where required.

Local Development Plan

- 1.19 Green space has a direct impact on any review of the Local Plan for the Borough. Any policy approach to green space within this plan will need to take into account the planning guidance for green space (PPG17). This study had been undertaken in accordance with this policy guidance and its Companion Guide.
- 1.20 The planning system should be able to ensure there is enough green space in the right places but also ensure that green spaces are:
- high quality
 - attractive to users
 - well managed and maintained.

- 1.21 However it should also be recognised that the provision of good quality and effective green spaces relies heavily on creative design, landscape management and maintenance.

The issues which affect Maidstone's parks and green spaces provision

- 1.22 There are a number of issues which affect the provision of parks and green spaces in the Borough. These include:

- varying levels of quality in relation to the management of open space
- differing levels of provision in relation to local populations
- the limited amount of funding available to meet current and future needs and demands
- conflicting views in relation to the type, quantity and quality of provision
- concerns about the level of crime and antisocial behaviour in parks, whether real or perceived
- the level of risk relating to the health and safety of users from the failing infrastructure in many of the Borough's parks and open spaces.

Needs and demands over the next five years

- 1.23 There has been an allusion in the introduction to the necessity of meeting needs and demands over the next five years. A prediction based on evidence elsewhere in the country, and on experience and research of the users of Maidstone's parks and open spaces, is that the following are likely to be relevant:

- fear of crime and antisocial behaviour
- the need for imaginative and safe play facilities
- greater accessibility achieved by ensuring that, wherever possible, parks are interconnected, and join built up areas with the surrounding countryside
- safe and welcoming parks which attract far greater numbers of visitors
- interesting and varied landscapes which make Maidstone a better place to live and work in
- the need to plan for a more sustainable green environment, with a range of habitats and greater plant and animal diversity
- targeting of scarce resources to areas of greatest need
- a review of facilities to ensure that they fulfil a useful purpose.

Summary

- 1.24 Green space has a direct impact on the quality of people's lives and this has been recognised with it being one of the main categories of the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment procedure for councils and previously with the voluntary assessment system using Quality of Life Indicators.
- 1.25 This study of assessing green spaces within the whole of the Borough has been undertaken in response to the Best Value Review "A Clean and Tidy Borough" in 2002 and provides the Council with a performance and monitoring mechanism upon which to identify priorities and targets in the future.
- 1.26 The findings of this study will provide the research and statistical evidence upon which the Green Spaces for Maidstone Strategy is based. The strategy will provide an overall framework to guide the management of green spaces in the Borough, as well as setting targets for improvement and future use.

Scope of the study

- 2.1 The Green Spaces Strategy needs to fulfil a number of key aims in order to provide an overall framework to guide the future management of green spaces in the Borough. These are as follows:
- improve the quality of green spaces in the Borough
 - improve accessibility to green spaces and to the wider countryside
 - improve awareness and use of green spaces
 - encourage community involvement in the planning and management of green spaces
 - conserve and enhance the natural environment and increase biodiversity
 - maximise external funding opportunities.
- 2.2 In order to meet these aims, the Green Spaces Strategy has addressed the following objectives:
- understand the needs and demands of local communities and individuals within them
 - undertake a robust assessment of these needs and demands in order to guide future planning and development
 - use auditing and benchmarking techniques to gain an understanding of service and quality issues
 - obtain the views of stakeholders to improve service delivery and quality
 - raise the profile of green spaces
 - stimulate debate about green space issues and encourage greater participation in planning and decision making
 - feed in related strategies and Best Value reviews
 - make a case for increased external resourcing
 - resolve conflicts between different uses in the Borough's green spaces
 - provide findings that will form the basis of detailed work for future green space planning.

The national context

- 3.1 There is a range of national strategic documents that contain policies, which have a direct or possibly indirect influence and/or impact upon the provision of green space within Maidstone Borough.
- 3.2 In this section, PMP has presented each strategic policy document and outlined how the policies impact upon the existing and future provision of green spaces in Maidstone.
- 3.3 Within the legislative framework of various National Government Planning Acts there are a number of policy guidance notes (PPGs) which help achieve wider Government policy aims and objectives, particularly where the land use planning system may play a key part.
- 3.4 PPG17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation provides the most recent and up to date guidance on the consideration of open space, sport and recreation matters in relation to the land use planning system. The previous version of the guidance issued in 1991 placed great emphasis upon the quality of provision and relating the provision to a nationally agreed standard, “the six acre standard” (ie six acres per 1000 population). The replacement of this guidance places increased emphasis now on quality as well as quantity of open spaces.

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

- 3.5 This study has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).
- 3.6 PPG17 advocates planning policies for open space, including playing fields, to be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local need.
- 3.7 A major change in the policy guidance is the requirement for local authority decisions regarding open space to be informed by local needs assessments and an audit of existing provision. Such audits should incorporate qualitative, quantitative and accessibility considerations as well as the overall non-monetary value of the land including the level of use.
- 3.8 Other subsequent changes in this planning policy document are:
- definition of open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals and lakes which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation
 - greater emphasis on qualitative considerations – particularly important as they will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and/or maintenance
 - encourages the setting of local standards appropriate to the local area rather than assessment by national standards although these can be used as benchmarks
 - provides further guidance on the constituent elements of open space typologies.

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.9 The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:
- assessing needs and opportunities – undertaking audits of open space, sport and recreational facilities
 - setting local standards
 - maintaining an adequate supply of open space
 - planning for new open space.
- 3.10 It goes on to state that “*the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space, sports and recreational facilities*”.
- 3.11 The companion guide sets out the process for undertaking local assessments of need and audits of provision. It also:
- indicates how councils can establish the needs of local communities and apply provision standards
 - promotes a consistent an approach as possible across varying types of open space.
- 3.12 PMP has followed the recommendations in PPG17 throughout the study. Following this methodology maximises the potential the strategy has to make a real difference to the quality, accessibility and quantity of green spaces in Maidstone.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

- 3.13 The introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was announced by the Government in 2001 in the Local Government White Paper ‘Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services’.
- 3.14 CPA is not a service inspection but a corporate assessment of a Council to deliver improvement using a universal cross-cutting theme such as public open space.
- 3.15 The Audit Commission’s approach to CPA for Councils combines the best of existing performance assessment regimes with new information gathered through two cross cutting inspections designed to reflect local peoples experience rather than processes and structures. These are:
- balancing housing markets
 - public space – clean, green and safe.
- 3.16 Using public space, which includes green space as defined within this study as a key assessment indicator, demonstrates the importance of undertaking this study defining what is existing, what the public needs and what the key issues are. CPA will assess what the council has, or has not achieved, in terms of improvements in the area of public open space specifically against targets set by the Council. In order for the Council to set these targets, this study will assist in recommending the areas of priority and providing an audit of existing green spaces.

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.17 The key assessment indicators of public open space within the CPA are:
- (i) Management of the Physical Environment
 - effectiveness of design and maintenance of open spaces
 - accessibility of open spaces
 - contribution of planning policy to the quality environment
 - (ii) Keeping the Locality Clean
 - success of reducing vandalism, litter, dog fouling
 - effective partnership working with local providers
 - (iii) Improve Community Safety
 - realistic setting of plans for the future
 - strengthening community cohesion
 - addressing anti-social behaviour
 - (iv) Promoting an Active Life
 - effectiveness of partnerships to provide a range of recreational activities for young people
 - meeting needs of different groups in terms of pricing and accessibility
 - supporting activities within the local community
 - (v) Assessing Partnerships
 - working with the County Council
 - working with the voluntary sector and private sector in providing open space and promoting its usage to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle.

Green Spaces, Better Places – DTLR – The Final Report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (2002)

- 3.18 The report recognises that parks and green spaces are a popular and precious resource which can make a valuable contribution to the attractiveness of a neighbourhood, to the health and well-being of people, and expand educational opportunities of children and adults alike.
- 3.19 The final report has four parts :
- (i) Parks and Green Spaces and Urban Life
 - emphasises the benefits urban parks and green spaces bring to people, neighbourhoods and cities; and
 - contribution to wide, long-term social, economic and environmental progress.
 - (ii) Challenges and Responses
 - considers some of the problems affecting urban parks and green spaces and how they can be overcome through investment, partnerships, information systems and marginalized groups.
 - (iii) Creating Green Space Networks
 - makes recommendations for good practice in providing a strategic policy framework within which all decision makers can operate
 - calls for a more co-ordinated approach at the national level to guide local strategies

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- (iv) Making It Happen
- demonstrates how the report recommendations can help deliver the wider vision of ‘liveable, sustainable, modern towns and cities’
 - states that strong civic and local pride are necessary to achieve the vision reinforced by a successful green spaces strategy
 - sets out roles and responsibilities of varying organisations that can be involved within the provision of open space.
- 3.20 By commissioning this research to feed into the production of the strategy, the Council is committing to strive to protect and enhance parks and green spaces in the Borough.

Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener – ODPM, October 2002

- 3.21 Over the past five years, action across the country has led to many new parks and green spaces. For example, there are now 245 new millennium greens and major new parks that have been created as part of regeneration programmes.
- 3.22 Many parks and green spaces have been given a new lease of life by networks of ‘friends’ and local groups and by local businesses, working together on projects to improve them. For example, more than 500 green spaces have been supported by the New Opportunities Fund’s Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities Programme, and Groundwork, through the Barclays Site Savers scheme has transformed more than 600 derelict or underused sites into community spaces and play areas. The Heritage Lottery Funds Urban Parks Programme has provided new investment to more than 200 historic parks and gardens.
- 3.23 The Government agrees that parks and green spaces need more visible champions and clearer structures for co-ordinating policy and action better, and at all levels. These changes could significantly raise their profile and achieve better outcomes, which would also be promoted by the added focus that a national body could bring.
- 3.24 The Government also believes that strong local leadership is essential for improving parks and green spaces. There is a growing belief that because parks are not mandatory they are often at a disadvantage compared with other council services. This has led to concerns that parks services have been taken for granted, and have lost local support and priority, skills and investment. Improving the parity of parks and green spaces with other local authority services will require a shared vision, integrated approaches and strategic planning at the local level.
- 3.25 Green spaces are predominantly owned, managed and maintained by local authorities. However, local people, businesses and the voluntary sector are increasingly taking action to improve the quality of the spaces and places where they live. Effective partnership working and engagement of local people have been proven to achieve results that better meet users’ needs, and increase the sense of local ownership. Partnership also makes more effective use of resources, facilitates the sharing of expertise and skills and can help to meet a range of community priorities.
- 3.26 Total resources available to urban parks and green spaces have increased significantly over the past five years. Central Government revenue funding to local authorities for parks and green space services is provided as part of the ‘environment protection and cultural services block’ (EPCS). In addition to direct central funding, a range of new funding opportunities are complementing local expenditure.

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.27 Central government provides significant funding through regeneration and renewal programmes. At a regional level, the Regional Development Agencies support improvements to urban green spaces through their target to deliver urban renaissance and excellence in design. A big contribution is also being made to improve the quality of urban parks and green spaces by Lottery programmes, in particular the Heritage Lottery Fund and the New Opportunities Fund.
- 3.28 Kent County Council, Kent Police and the Chief Constable of Kent have set up an innovative Rural Partnership aimed at building community confidence and reassurance by reducing crime and fear of crime, deterring anti-social behaviour, improving residents' access to local authority services and fostering social inclusion.
- 3.29 Twelve pilot areas each have a rural community warden who works alongside a rural police constable. The role of the warden is to support the local rural community with a conspicuous uniformed presence based in the locality. The partnership is promoting community solidarity and is preventing and reducing crime and fear of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The Use of Public Parks in England, Sport England 2003

- 3.30 The report presents the findings of a national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage. The aims of the survey were to establish:
- how many adults in England use parks
 - what activities people take part in when visiting parks
 - the reasons people visit particular parks
 - the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
 - why non-users do not use parks.
- 3.31 The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks and recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land.

Key findings

- just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months
- there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups, with almost three quarters of adults from the higher social group visiting a park compared with only half of those from the lower social group
- people from black and ethnic minority communities also have relatively low participation as well as those adults with a disability
- over 8 in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring/ summer with almost two thirds visiting a park at least once a week, and women tended to visit parks more often than men

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits to parks during the spring and summer months and 600 million visits during the autumn and winter months – a total of 1.8 billion visits a year
- the most popular type of park visited was an urban/ city park.

Improving urban parks, play areas and green spaces – DTLR, 2002

- 3.32 The vital importance of parks and other urban green spaces in enhancing the urban environment and the quality of city life has been recognised in both the Urban Taskforce report and the Urban White Paper. The research was commissioned by the DTLR in April 2001, and was conducted by the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield.
- 3.33 Urban Green Space is defined as land that consists predominantly of unsealed, permeable, soft surfaces such as soil, grass, shrubs and trees. It is the umbrella term for all such areas whether or not they are publicly accessible or publicly managed.

Key findings

- research confirms the importance of urban green spaces - it is estimated that, in England, over 33 million people make over 2.5 billion visits to urban green spaces each year
- the five main barriers deterring people from using urban green spaces are:
 - lack of, or poor condition of, facilities (including play facilities for children)
 - other users (including anti-social behaviour)
 - concerns about dogs and mess
 - safety and other psychological issues (eg feelings of vulnerability and inertia)
 - environmental quality issues such as litter, graffiti and vandalism
- in addition, access issues are of concern to the elderly and particularly to people with disabilities
- most of the barriers are resource issues which relate to the location, accessibility or environmental quality of urban green spaces and could therefore be overcome if planners, designers and managers of these spaces could address them satisfactorily
- the most frequently mentioned characteristics of the ideal urban green space were vegetation, play opportunities, comforts, good access, sport and events
- there is no clear link between levels of spending and the extent of good or innovative practice

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- there were large differences in the amount of external funding that had been gained by local authorities
- lack of resources for capital spending was identified as a major problem by all local authorities in the research
- Heritage Lottery Funding and Section 106 Agreements were seen as the most valuable external sources for capital development and in most cases private sponsorship is not significant
- urban green spaces can act as a catalyst for wider community initiatives
- that parks are open every day with free entry and offer neutral ground with non-discriminatory access makes them completely different from many building based activities.

The benefits

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

- contribute significantly to social inclusion because they are free and accessible to all
- can become a centre of community spirit
- contribute to child development through scope for outdoor, energetic and imaginative play
- offer numerous educational opportunities.

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

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

A role in urban renewal

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

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

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

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- unforeseen spin-offs from grassroots green space initiatives
- parks as flagships in neighbourhood renewal
- strategic, multi-agency area based regeneration, linking environment and economy.

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

- 3.39 The Audit Commission consulted on a set of voluntary Quality of Life indicators for local authorities during autumn 2000. The exercise was prompted by the new powers given to local authorities in the Local Government Act 2000 to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area.
- 3.40 32 indicators were identified for the voluntary exercise. All the proposed indicators are designed to paint a picture of the quality of life in the local area and to challenge all partners locally to address the issues within their community strategies.
- 3.41 Open spaces provide a major factor in the quality of people's lives and this was demonstrated with five of the 32 Quality of Life Factors having a direct link with the provision of open spaces. These factors were:
- area of parks and green spaces per 1,000 head of population (includes urban parks and open spaces plus other 'public open areas')
 - percentage of rivers and canals rated as good or fair quality
 - area of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population (ha) - Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are for both people and wildlife and give people opportunities to study, learn and enjoy nature
 - the area of land designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - provide wonderful opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife and landscape
 - kilometres of dedicated cycle routes per 100km of principal and other local authority roads.
- 3.42 PMP has taken these five quality factors into account as part of the quality assessment which is detailed in Section 16.

Sustainable Futures: Building for the Future – A Funding Opportunity

- 3.43 The Government plans for building sustainable communities, launched through the 'Sustainable Futures: Building for the Future' document in early February 2003 included funding for parks and open spaces totalling £201 million.
- 3.44 This is in response to the identified need to create and maintain places in which people want to live with parks and open spaces being a key consideration as they form a focal point of community life.
- 3.45 The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has set up CABE Space to promote the role of parks and open spaces in the UK. A number of reports have been commissioned, and the unit provides advice on strategic issues in relation to parks management, as well as improving the public profile of the service.

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- 3.46 It is hoped that there will be funding for over 5,000 projects with a large proportion of the money being available for environmental regeneration schemes. In fact £89 million has been allocated for a 'liveability' fund supporting Local Authorities to improve public spaces across the country.
- 3.47 Further funding is in addition to other existing major funding opportunities such as NOF Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities Programme (£96 million committed by the end of 2002) and Heritage Lottery Fund Urban Parks Programme (£255 million committed by the end of 2002).
- 3.48 This local assessment of green spaces in Maidstone will help to strategically identify priorities, in terms of areas and specific sites where funding may assist in enhancing existing green spaces.

External agencies

- 3.49 A number of external agencies that impact on green space have been reviewed, in terms of current developments, and possible impact on green space within Maidstone.

British Waterways – Strategy and Plans

- 3.50 British Waterways has the vision of a sustainable and integrated network of waterways throughout Britain, to provide maximum benefit to society both now and in the future.
- 3.51 British Waterways also recognises the wider role of the waterways and believes that waterways can deliver economic, social and environment/ heritage benefits.
- 3.52 The key targets of the British Waterways are:
- earning the income to sustain the long term future of waterways
 - ensure maximum value from the money spent to conserve and enhance waterways
 - elimination of the backlog of safety related maintenance by 2004
 - elimination of arrears of statutory maintenance by 2012
 - meet planned waterway standards and customer service standards.
- 3.53 Inland waterways are also controlled by the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities (AINA) whose aim is:
- “to facilitate the management, maintenance and development of the inland waterways for navigation as an economic, environmental, recreational and social resource”.

The Waterways Trust

- 3.54 The waterways trust was established in March 1999 and is a central force in the regeneration of waterways. It has a vision of a network that is “revitalized, valued, supported and enjoyed by all sections of the community”.

3.55 Aims and objectives of the trust include:

- heighten awareness and enjoyment of the waterways
- facilitate sustainable regeneration
- promote broader understanding of the value of the waterways
- become a major fundraiser and grant body.

3.56 The strategic priorities and policies of these two water agencies, will be taken into account when examining the provision of river based green corridors in Maidstone.

Environment Agency

The Civic Trust

3.57 The Civic Trust aims to promote improvements in the quality of urban life. It is a charity devoted to **“enhancing the quality of life in Britain’s cities, towns and villages: the places where people live, work, shop and relax”**. It aims to promote ‘urban renaissance’ one of the major aims of PPG17 and open spaces will play a key part in this.

3.58 The Civic Trust responded to the new PPG17 and its approach with the following comments:

- concern that although the document is intended to cover open space, there is a strong emphasis on sport
- sport is mentioned several times, as is Sport England, but there are no mentions of English Heritage or Heritage Lottery Fund
- there is a strong emphasis on sports provision and equal emphasis is not given to cultural and social dimensions of open space and the concept of landscape
- reference is needed referring to the harm done to existing facilities over the past 20 years as a result of restrictions on local government finance and manpower which led to a decline in maintenance
- there is insufficient reference to urban ecology and the heritage aspects of landscape and these issues are not given the same consideration as sport
- though section 68 refers to SSSIs, SPAs and SACs, the great majority of sites do not have this status but are essential to the survival of the overall ecosystem and the maintenance of biodiversity
- there should also be discussion of how contaminated land may be brought back into recreational or amenity use, and of the educational value of open land managed for its wildlife or landscape interest.

3.59 The Civic Trust is in favour of encouraging local disadvantaged groups to engage in the running of their green spaces, recognizing that this would require large numbers of outreach workers.

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.60 The Trust supports the Green Flag scheme and illustrates the motivational effect that this is having as local authorities aim to improve their green spaces to enable them to obtain the award.
- 3.61 It is also considered positive that the task force is looking at establishing criteria for best practice in green spaces.
- 3.62 The Civic Trust, on behalf of a large steering group, carries out management of the Green Flag Awards. The Trust also has a dedicated regeneration unit, which focuses on pioneering, promoting and delivering regeneration initiatives.

English Nature

- 3.63 English Nature is a government agency concerned with wildlife and geology and is a key partner of the countryside agency, which aims to achieve improved understanding of the relationship between access and nature conservation. English Nature is responsible for selecting and designating SSSI's.
- 3.64 English Nature attempts to :
- facilitate and encourage access to National Nature Reserves
 - support initiatives aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of open co-habitats
 - monitor the affects of access on wildlife sites across the country
 - stress the value of local sites and recommend that local authorities develop partnerships for the provision of local sites and SSSI's.
- 3.65 Key position statements of English Nature include:
- access to the countryside and urban greenspace – there is a need for access close to where people live
 - respect for nature – access needs to be carefully arranged so that no problems for nature conservation are posed
 - access should be considered in light of policies of sustainable development and biodiversity
 - local sites are important for quality of life both in rural and urban areas.
- 3.66 The concept of standards for the provision of accessible natural greenspace in towns and cities arose from a body of work in the early 1990s that sought to recognise the importance of nature in the urban context. English Nature subsequently adopted the idea, publishing Research Report No 153 'Accessible natural green space in towns and cities – a review of appropriate size and distance criteria' in 1995.
- 3.67 In the context of a new interest in the value of green space, English Nature was concerned to find that its accessible natural green space standards seemed to be little used. In 2001 a project was therefore commenced to look again at the standards model in order to determine whether its validity could still be supported.

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.68 The review found that recent work broadly endorsed the scientific basis of the Research Report No 153, though many aspects of the work that green space plays in an urban context are thinly covered. However, the value of green space in supporting biodiversity and human recreation was found to be well supported and the structure of the standard itself withstood this scrutiny.
- 3.69 The key recommendations of the review include:
- that **English Nature** should provide additional support to the model by providing practical guidance, implementing an outreach strategy to raise the profile of the model
 - that **local authorities** should develop green space strategies as a means of ensuring balanced green space planning, and should set locally appropriated green space standards
 - that **central government** should work towards the development of a single framework for integrated green space planning.
- 3.70 The English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) requires:
- that no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size
 - provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population
 - that there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home
 - that there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km
 - that there should be one 500ha site within 20 km.
- 3.71 The standards were justified in the following ways:
- everyday contact with nature is important for well-being and quality of life
 - everyone should be able to enjoy this contact, in safety, without having to make any special effort or journey to do so
 - natural greenspace in towns and cities can play an important role in helping safeguard our national treasure of wildlife and geological features
 - accessible natural greenspaces give everyone an excellent chance to learn about nature and help to protect it in practical ways
 - adequate provision of vegetated areas helps to ensure that urban areas continue to function ecologically.

Forestry Commission

3.72 The Forestry Commission is the Government Department responsible for forestry throughout Britain. The mission of the department is to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment with key aims including:

- developing opportunities for woodland recreation
- increase public understanding and community participation in forestry.

3.73 Forest Enterprise is an executive agency of the Forestry Commission responsible for the management of the forests, with one of its main aims being to increase opportunities for public recreation.

Wildlife Trust

3.74 The Wildlife Trust is the leading conservation charity dedicated exclusively to wildlife. The Kent Wildlife Trust, which covers the area of Maidstone is one of the 47 local wildlife trusts and owns and manages a large number of SSSI's and woods within the area.

3.75 It aims to play a key role in helping people to understand and appreciate their local wildlife. It advises local authorities, community groups and landowners on nature conservation issues and has a major input into decision making on planning matters and other issues.

3.76 The Kent Trust focuses on:

- protecting wildlife for the future
- managing areas for wildlife and people
- wetland wildlife
- farming for all futures
- education.

NPFA / Sport England

3.77 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) has entered into a contract with Sport England to provide a number of advisory services relating to long term land protection measures for applicants, which sets out options for long term land protection and outlines details of the procedures involved.

3.78 There are a number of significant ways of protecting playing fields and other recreational land. First and foremost of these is the need for quality provision, well designed and located where it will be of most use to the community, landscaped in an appropriate fashion, and well maintained. If this applies, recreational land has the best chance of being valued and used by sporting and non-sporting participants alike.

SECTION THREE – THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

3.79 Additionally, the planning system has much to offer in order to protect playing fields. These include:

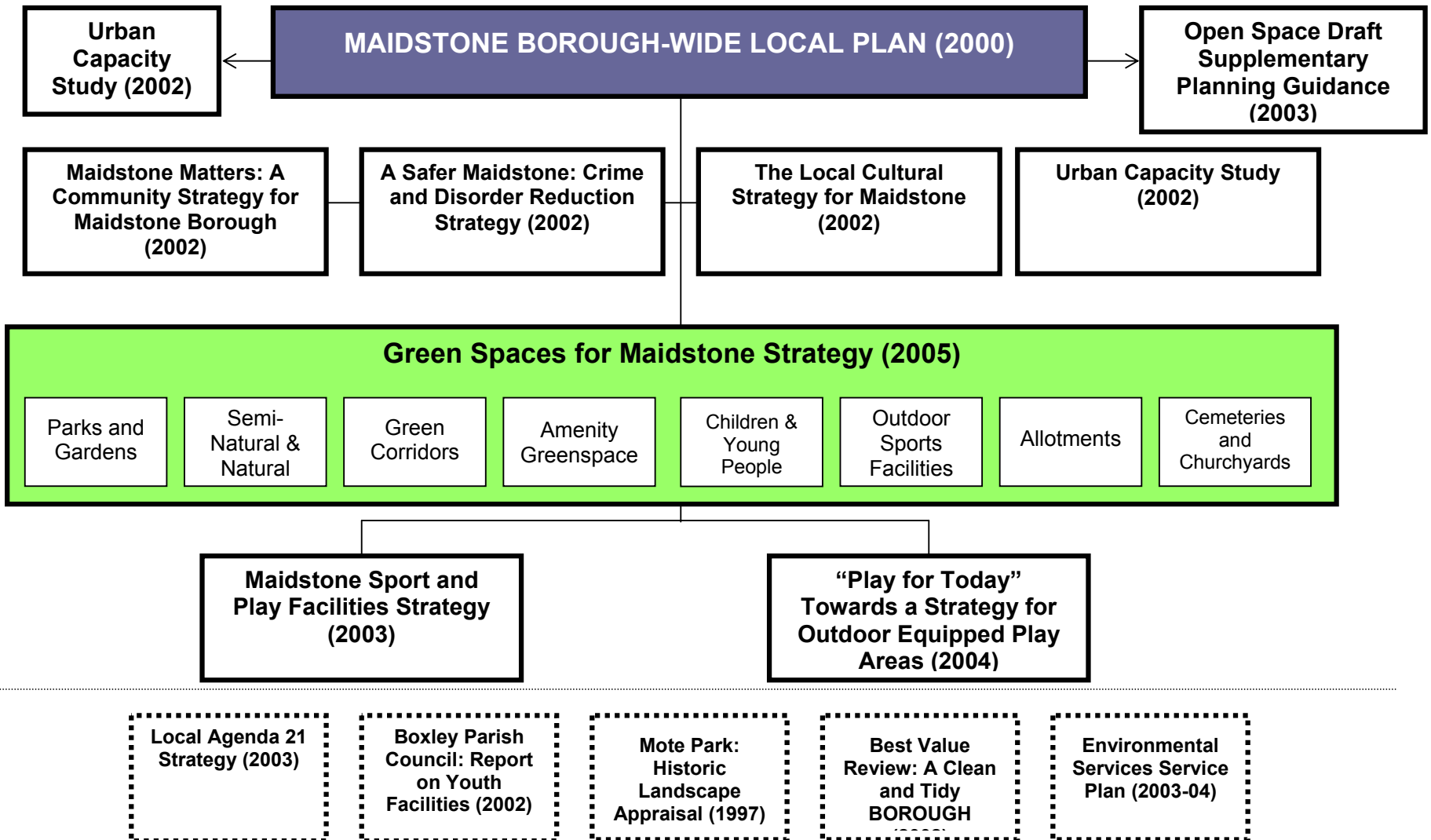
- PPG17
- the broad policy context of Structure Plans and Part I of UDPs
- the more detailed policy context of Local Plans and Part II of UDPs
- the identification of appropriate land on Development Plan location plans and inclusion of those sites in policies
- the role of Sport England as a statutory consultee on the loss of playing fields.

The local context

- 4.1 This section contains a review of strategic documents which have a local or regional significance to Maidstone. It is important for the Green Spaces Strategy to complement and form links with other strategic policies.
- 4.2 It is especially important that the Green Spaces Strategy makes strategic links with the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy, “Play for Today”: Towards a Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Spaces, and the Local Plan. Figure 4.1 overleaf illustrates the close linkages of these strategic documents which are reviewed in detail in the following section.

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Figure 4.1 Strategic links in the Borough



Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan (Adopted December 2000)

- 4.3 The Local Plan sets out new and amended planning proposals and policies for the whole of the Maidstone Borough Council area for the period to 2006. It was formally adopted on 18th December 2000.
- 4.4 Whilst the sensitivity of the environment around Maidstone is recognised in the County Structure Plan, the Borough is also asked to sustain levels of development. The Local Plan is the vehicle for providing the necessary development allocations.
- 4.5 Some key strategic objectives of the local plan are to:
- ensure that all development proposals, land use policies, and transport schemes are consistent with the need to ensure a sustainable future
 - recognise the importance of Maidstone's rich and diverse environmental resources; to protect and where possible enhance the variety and distinctiveness of the Borough's urban and rural environment
 - protect the countryside for its own sake and to restrict the development of green field sites to the minimum necessary to conform with Structure Plan development requirements; to identify and implement policies to protect areas of countryside and open space having special qualities
 - protect the individual character of villages and rural settlements in the Borough to avoid the coalescence of such settlements to the detriment of their individual identities or countryside setting
 - promote a high standard of environment and formal and informal recreational facilities for the benefit of residents, and to promote tourism.
- 4.6 River-based tourism is an opportunity that has yet to be fully explored in the Borough. The River Medway is the principle river and is navigable for all its length through the Borough. There are other rivers which may also have potential (the Teise, the Beult and the Len) although the potential may lie in activities alongside the river (such as the Len Valley Walk) rather than on the river in these cases.
- 4.7 PPG17 states that in areas of outstanding natural beauty, conservation of natural beauty should be given significant weight in planning policies. This is applicable to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 4.8 When older residential areas close to the town centre were constructed, little attention was given to the provision of open space. Such areas include Lower and Upper Fant. This is difficult to rectify due to the built up nature of these locations and the absence of sites available for conversion to provide open space. Opportunities do arise through dedication of surplus institutional land such as school playing fields, or by their joint use by the public.
- 4.9 The plan also recognises that in terms of allotment provision, there is adequate supply of spaces to meet demand. The Council indicates that it will review this level of provision, and Section 14 will outline the level of surplus or deficiency, using local standards.

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- 4.10 In relation to open space and recreation in particular, the Plan makes the following references:
- that it needs to make adequate land available for organised sport, informal recreation and children's play space
 - there is a need to consider the distribution of open space relative to areas of population
 - there are open space deficiencies in older residential areas including Lower and Upper Fant, and also in rural areas.
- 4.11 The plan contains the following important policies relating to green spaces:
- protecting open spaces in urban areas and surrounding village settlements from inappropriate development that may affect the visual contribution it makes to the area (Policy ENV22)
 - preventing new development which would result in the loss of open space, sport and recreation facilities unless there is no deficiency of open space or recreation facilities in the locality and alternative provision of an equivalent community benefit can be provided to replace the loss (Policy ENV23)
 - allocating land for open space at 13 designated locations which will either be implemented by the Council or by the private sector (Policy ENV24)
 - protecting allotments from development for other uses unless alternative provision is made nearby (Policy ENV25).
- 4.12 These policies show that the Council and the community place a premium on local green spaces and highlights why the Council seeks an active developer involvement in meeting local needs for open space.
- 4.13 Policy H37 outlines the Council's policy on developer contributions. The policy outlines the following:
- new residential developments in excess of 0.4ha requires the provision of open playing space at the level of 60m² per dwelling
 - where it is considered impractical or inappropriate to provide open playing space within or adjacent to the development site, the Council will consider alternative means of provision by the developer.
- 4.14 The Council has since provided draft Supplementary Planning Guidance setting out circumstances where full open playing space provision will be applied, and where a reduced provision will be accepted.
- Open Space Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (September 2003)***
- 4.15 A key aim of this guidance is to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and landowners. Rather than each planning application being decided on its merits with protracted negotiations and discussions about what is needed for each site, the guidance aims to give direction about how much open space is needed in each area and how it should be provided.

4.16 The guidelines recommended in this statement are:

- Guideline 1 - All new residential development on sites of more than 0.4ha (1 acre) will be expected to make contributions towards open space
- Guideline 2 - Open space will be required at a rate of 60m² per dwelling
- the Local Plan further breaks down this ratio as follows
 - outdoor playing space 45m² per dwelling
 - children's play area 15m² per dwelling
- Guideline 3 – Sites which accommodate more than 50 dwellings, will be expected to make on-site provision for open space
 - the on-site open space would normally comprise a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) of 400m² surrounded by a buffer zone and providing a small games area and some five types of play equipment for young children
- Guideline 4 - Cash contributions will be required for developments of less than 50 dwellings, or if circumstances are such that on-site provision is inappropriate
 - the contributions will be used to improve existing open spaces (as per Green Spaces Strategy and Sport and Play Facilities Strategy) as well as to provide additional open space
- Guideline 5 – The cash contribution per dwelling is £1,575 and will be required in full or in part depending on whether on-site provision has been made, and whether nearby open spaces are in need of improvement
- Guideline 6 – A Section 106 Agreement between the developer and the Council will be required for either on-site open space or a cash contribution.

Draft Sport and Play Facilities Strategy (February 2003)

4.17 In October 2002, the Council appointed PMP to provide an independent assessment of the adequacy of the Borough's sport and play facilities. High priority recommendations in the action plan related to outdoor open space provision included the need to:

- develop firm policies in the Local Plan to ensure that public open space is secured and prevents further loss of grass pitches
- facilitate the development of community-use agreements for sports pitches at school sites
- seek Developer Contributions for additional pitch provision
- new 400-metre synthetic athletics track to be developed in Borough
- improvement in the maintenance of Council-owned bowling greens
- additional children's playgrounds should be provided in a number of wards

- the provision of additional OBI (Outdoor Basketball Initiative)
- additional Multi-use Games Areas should be provided.

“Play for Today” Towards a Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas (2004-2008)

4.18 The strategy has four key aims:

- to ensure the Council in partnership with others provides an appropriate number, quality and diversity of play areas throughout the Borough
- to provide play facilities which meet the identified needs of young people
- to maximise the potential support for the development and refurbishment of play areas through external funding
- to understand and respond to community concerns about play areas.

4.19 Children’s play areas are one type of green space and therefore this report will outline findings related to quantity, quality and usage of children’s play areas. This report will also present key findings from market research conducted with children and young people, through a schools internet survey, and through the Maidstone Youth Forum, which will be very useful in helping the Council achieve the above aims.

4.20 The strategy acknowledges national standards for the provision of children’s play spaces set out by the National Playing Fields Association. However, the current Council policy does not seek to meet the recommendations of the NPFA, instead the Council are recommending that a more realistic set of local standards should be drawn up, bearing in mind current circumstances and the Council’s ability to raise the necessary funding to maintain, refurbish and add to the current stock of facilities.

4.21 Section 12 of this report outlines the existing quantity of children’s play space in the Borough and also sets local standards for provision to understand the levels of supply which meet demand at a local level. The strategy and rolling five year action plan will be based upon these local standards.

Maidstone Matters: Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough (adopted April 2003)

4.22 The Community Strategy highlights policies and actions under the following themes:

- community safety
- access to services and inclusion
- leisure, culture, sports and entertainment
- environment.

4.23 In terms of community safety, according to the strategy, Kent is one of the lowest crime areas in the country, and Maidstone in particular has a fine record.

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- 4.24 Two priorities in the strategy of relevance to green spaces in Maidstone are:
- support the Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) whose priorities are: anti-social behaviour, young people as victims and offenders, substance abuse, domestic violence and hate crime
 - ‘design out’ crime in new developments.
- 4.25 The linkages between parks and green spaces and anti-social behaviour are common throughout the UK. The recent actions by the Council to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase the perception of safety has been successful according to the results of the market research (a summary of the results can be found in Section Six and full detailed findings in Appendix A).
- 4.26 The strategy will build upon this good work to ensure that the future design, layout of green spaces, and improvements to existing ones, are designed to maximise safety and the perception of being safe in these areas.
- 4.27 In terms of sports and leisure facilities, the community strategy highlights the following priorities:
- encouraging greater use of parks and open spaces through improving access and facilities
 - ensuring that facilities are accessible to people who are disadvantaged, particularly those on low incomes
 - ensuring that back-up services, such as policing, licensing and cleaning are in place.
- 4.28 A section of the community strategy specifically relates to the environment. The priorities are:
- addressing litter, graffiti and vandalism
 - safeguarding natural resources for future generations
 - committing to achieving targets set out in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan
 - maintaining and developing our commitment to sustainable development.
- 4.29 The market research and PPG17 assessment will identify areas in Maidstone where parks and open spaces are inaccessible or are low in terms of quality. Any areas which suffer in particular from litter, graffiti, vandalism or crime and disorder will be highlighted.

Best Value Review: A Clean and Tidy Borough (November 2002)

- 4.30 This review was carried out between March and October 2002, covering the cleanliness and appearance of the Borough by examining Street Cleansing, Public Conveniences and Parks and Open Spaces.
- 4.31 The review concluded that although current performance was good and improving, further improvements were required to deliver upper quartile performance. Some key findings were as follows:
- performance indicators show that satisfaction with cleanliness is 63% and needs to be increased to 72%
 - the standard of street cleaning itself was generally good, it is the maintenance and cleanliness of other aspects of the ‘Street Scene’ that was affecting the overall appearance – caused in part by the fragmented service delivery with cleansing, housing, highways and grounds maintenance all involved
 - public parks and open spaces were seen as an important resource and there is increasing public awareness and appreciation of good quality parks, play areas and other open spaces, and the part they can play in improving the health and well-being of local people and providing educational opportunities for children and communities
 - it was considered that much could be done to increase accessibility to all sections of the community, increase use and reduce the fear of crime by dealing with the incidence of anti-social behaviour
 - despite a 7% increase in area of parks and open spaces requiring maintenance over the past five years, expenditure on this area has reduced by 28%
 - the Council faces a growing problem of fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles, graffiti, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour
 - these problems now have a significant impact on the cleanliness and appearance of the Borough, and the service has had some notable successes in dealing with these and continues to examine further opportunities.
- 4.32 The action plan outlined in this document has been examined in detail and will help to inform the rolling five-year action plan produced to support the strategy.

The Local Cultural Strategy for Maidstone, (September 2002)

- 4.33 The strategy outlines key green spaces which contribute significantly to Maidstone’s cultures including:
- Leeds Castle and its medieval buildings set on islands in a lake, and the extensive 500-acre park that surrounds it
 - 450-acre Mote Park which was recently listed by English Heritage as a “park or garden of historic importance” and provides the Mote Park Sports Centre, the Mote Cricket Club, and other sports pitches
 - the 230-acre Cobtree Park and Golf Course

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- Maidstone Millennium River Park (Whatman Park) which accommodates a riverstage and amphitheatre
 - two ornamental gardens at Brenchley Gardens and the Archbishops Palace.
- 4.34 The strategy notes that a significant part of Maidstone's public open space provision is in two large areas, as highlighted above, in Mote Park and Cobtree. There is therefore a need to be alert to opportunities to provide additional public spaces in those areas where provision is not accessible, including the inner parts of Maidstone town and a number of villages.

'A Safer Maidstone': Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy (2002-2005)

- 4.35 The Safer Maidstone Partnership (SMP) developed the strategy in close liaison with the community and their representatives, and targets the issues most relevant to most people. The target which is most relevant to the Green Spaces Strategy is the first target:
- to decrease incidents of anti-social behaviour by improving the social and physical environment.
- 4.36 The Strategy will be delivered through an annual action plan, with quarterly reports of progress to meetings of the SMP. The market research and analysis of existing provision completed for this project will highlight any problems with anti-social behaviour and recommendations for physical improvements associated with these problems will be made in the action plan.

Urban Capacity Study (April 2002)

- 4.37 The Urban Capacity Study was drawn up in line with the guidance given in PPG 3. The Study focuses on the urban area of Maidstone and the villages of Coxheath, Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst.
- 4.38 The appraisal of the Maidstone urban area identified 103 character areas of which the majority (85%) are deemed to be either 'general townscape' or 'positive/strong positive' character. This suggests that the character of these areas should be retained or enhanced and any new residential development should be well designed and sympathetic to the area.
- 4.39 The Kent County Council Structure Plan 1996 – 2001 sets out the planning aspirations for the County. The requirements for Maidstone are for 2,800 dwellings between 2001-2006. The document will be rolled forward to 2011 and is due for adoption in 2004. Overall there is sufficient land to meet the Structure Plan requirements.

Mote Park: Historic Landscape Appraisal – Elizabeth Banks Associates (March 1997)

- 4.40 The report considers the impact of siting a National Carriage Museum on the historic landscape of Mote Park.
- 4.41 Mote Park covers 450 acres near the centre of Maidstone. Part of the site has been emparked since before the 14th century, and its current extent is marginally less than when the park was in its prime in the mid-19th century.

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4.42 The report strongly emphasised the importance of Mote Park as an invaluable resource for the people of Maidstone, even though its potential is not fully realised at present. According to the report, the current extent of the park and its generally open and unspoilt character should be rigorously protected.

Boxley Parish Council: Report on Youth Facilities within the Boxley Parish (July 2002)

4.43 This report presents the following information important to note for the strategy:

- Boxley Parish is the largest parish within Maidstone with an electorate of 5,255, however it lacks formal open spaces, particularly in the Walderslade/ Lordswood area
- it has been long recognised that facilities within the parish for children (1-9 years) and youth (10-17) are often inadequate and there has been concern about the impact this is having on the local communities and the young people themselves
- the two main areas experiencing problems with youths are Grove Green/ Vinters Park and Walderslade/ Lordswood
- young people in Grove Green/ Vinters Park have no formal facilities at all
- the lack of facilities and open space in Walderslade and the lack of facilities for youths in Grove Green/ Vinters Park may be a cause for the anti-social and criminal damage experienced by communities.

4.44 The Parish Council would like to see the following:

- a proactive stance from the Borough and County Council to identify land and provide facilities for children and youths in Walderslade/ Lordswood
- the provision of youth facilities at Grove Green/ Vinters Park (area D, Shepherds Gate has already been identified as a potential site)
- the regular maintenance of the small area identified at Sandling - a small triangle of land in the village might be suitable for some facilities or just be maintained as an open space (the land is presently owned by the Highway department)
- consultation with young people to see exactly what they want.

County documents

Mapping out the Future: Kent and Medway Structure Plan (March 2002)

- 4.45 One of the key factors influencing the new Structure Plan is the increasing importance people place on the natural environment, together with greater recognition of its fragility. The Structure Plan attempts to achieve a balance between improved economic opportunity, social progress and protection of the environment, backed by the premise that quality should be the defining principle.
- 4.46 In order to achieve this, the new plan is based upon a clear set of principles that includes:
- protecting the countryside and minimising greenfield development
 - supporting the regeneration and renaissance of the larger urban areas
 - encouraging safe and convenient ways of living, requiring well planned services, improvements to the built environment and effective crime reduction and community safety initiatives
 - giving guidance for Local Plans
 - safeguarding natural resources such as minerals and water.
- 4.47 The new Plan needs to respond to the changing statutory framework and the issues that challenge the quality of the environment. Possible principles for future planning policy include:
- the need to maintain or enhance countryside character both generally and in designated areas
 - Special Landscape Areas previously designated by the Structure Plan should be retained alongside policies on countryside character
 - to safeguard areas of nature conservation importance, both direct and indirect impacts of development should be taken into account and effective mitigation and compensation provided where the case for development is overriding
 - a stronger policy is needed for the protection and enhancement of important habitats and species particularly where identified as priorities in Biodiversity Action Plans
 - a new policy providing for open space and landscape management at the fringe of where large new developments are proposed.

Kent Environment Strategy (March 2003)

- 4.48 The goals of the Strategy are to:
- meet present needs for clean air, water, open space, education, health and balance environmental, social and economic needs
 - achieve this without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs ie:

- protecting and enhancing natural habitats, wildlife and landscape
- minimising waste and pollution
- promoting sustainable development solutions.

4.49 Key challenges which the strategy outlines include:

- climate change
- changing rural economy
- global markets
- transport and traffic
- development pressures
- environmental pollution.

Community Strategies and Kent's Natural Environment (October 2003)

4.50 The aim of this leaflet is to emphasise the importance of the natural environment and its fundamental role. It is also meant to act as a guide and information source for everybody working to develop and inform Community Strategies.

4.51 It emphasises the importance of the natural environment in Kent in terms of:

- the water, air and local climate on which we depend
- the natural and agricultural landscapes which surround and inspire us
- the soils and rocks beneath our feet
- the variety and abundance of plant life and animal life (biodiversity) which is found in our countryside and towns.

4.52 The leaflet outlines important actions for Maidstone:

- enhance and manage the River Medway and its habitats
- help and maintain the unique landscape of the Low Weald by promoting the biodiversity value and appropriate management of meadows, hedges and ponds
- promote the creation of new habitats along the River Beult to help alleviate flood risk and benefit wildlife
- enhance, restore and recreate acid grassland and heathland to help meet biodiversity targets and provide public open space
- support community-led environmental projects, such as the Heathland Countryside Corridor Initiative and work in the Loose Valley.

Single Sport Facility Deficiencies in Kent: Governing Bodies of Sport's Perceptions on their Sports' Major Facility Needs (August 2003)

- 4.53 The report is produced by Kent County Council's Sport Development Unit. It states the major facility needs for specialist centres as identified by certain Kent National Governing Bodies of sport. The 2002 version was used in the production of the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy in early 2003 (reviewed earlier in this section).
- 4.54 This report has been reviewed in the context of this strategy and outdoor sports provision as one type of green space. Table 4.1 below highlights the important deficiencies and requirements to note.

Table 4.1 Outdoor sport deficiencies related to Maidstone in 2003

Sport	Present situation	Stated requirements
Archery	Archery is carried out throughout the year and it needs to be carried out in a 'safe' environment and consequently satisfactory sites are difficult to find. Archery is not a rich sport, it is not able to use many satisfactory sites due to restrictive hiring charges.	Field archery generally takes place on undulating wooded areas. Kent requires an area of ten acres or more to enable adequate safety and variation on type of shot. Currently some Field Archery takes place at Penshurst Off Road Club, but lack of satisfactory toilets, showers and changing rooms limits its use. There is a need for Centres of Performance in west, mid and east Kent. A potential Centre of Excellence is Swadelands School in Lenham.
Athletics	There are four synthetic tracks in Kent, at Canterbury, Deangate, Dartford and Ashford. There is also a 400 metre track at Tonbridge School, and there are full tracks in four of the Kent London Boroughs.	The highest priority is for a track at Maidstone. Plans for a six-lane track at Oldborough Manor School in Maidstone have been confirmed and a lottery bid is in the process of being submitted. A competition track has been confirmed by UK Athletics as being needed as soon as possible in this part of Kent.
Bowls	Within the county governing bodies' administrative boundaries there are 184 outdoor clubs with 10,500 members. Ownership of facilities is split approximately 60% private and 40% public. None of the governing bodies own facilities.	A Development Plan for outdoor bowls in Kent is still being produced which will specify the need for a centre of excellence and a number of centres of performance. It is expected that the outdoor bowls governing bodies will wish to establish one centre of excellence sited reasonably centrally within the county and with good accessibility, and four centres of performance, ideally one within each of the administrative divisions of the county. The centre of excellence would need to include a minimum of two greens

Table 4.1 Outdoor sport deficiencies related to Maidstone in 2003

Sport	Present situation	Stated requirements
Canoeing	Almost any waters may be used for canoeing.	Wild water facilities need to be developed at identified sites on inland waters. Access and egress points on the River Medway need to be made 'canoe friendly'.
Tennis	There are tennis facilities throughout Kent on private, public and local authority sites. Some of the facilities are under cover in the winter but most are outdoor.	The Kent County Lawn Tennis Association (KCLTA) wishes to establish two Centres of Excellence, to cover East and West Kent with clay and acrylic courts a priority.
Netball	Netball has traditionally been played outdoors. There is currently serious concern about the closure of the YMCA venue used by the Maidstone league.	The outdoor courts are available for use only until the end of the 2002/03 season, and once closed there will be nowhere in the Maidstone area which could accommodate the playing of outdoor league netball unless the Sports Lottery bid by the league for a new facility in Aylesford is successful.
Orienteering	The South East Orienteering Association (SEOA) covers orienteering in Kent. Orienteering is entirely dependent on the availability of terrain over which the sport can take place. Kent does not offer terrain that is ideally suited to the sport and it is therefore a case of 'making do' with what is available.	The provision of Permanent Orienteering Courses at local authority owned woodlands/ parks to provide access to orienteering opportunities for all sections of the community, and planning controls to ensure that current open spaces are not lost to development.

4.55 To summarise, there are the following opportunities and recommendations to improve provision in Maidstone for some outdoor sports:

- a potential Centre of Excellence for archery in Swadelands School in Lenham
- six lane synthetic athletics track at Oldborough Manor School
- one centre of excellence for bowls sited centrally within the country and four centres of performance
- access and egress points on the River Medway need to be made 'canoe friendly'
- a centre of tennis excellence
- provision of more appropriate orienteering courses.

Analysis of common themes

- 4.56 An examination of the national and local strategic documents has revealed the following common themes:
- lack of investment and available funds for green spaces resulting in a need to identify and prioritise future resources
 - this analysis of green spaces supports wider governmental objectives of:
 - ensuring that all land development proposals, land-use policies and transport schemes are consistent with the need to ensure a sustainable future for local communities
 - social and community cohesion
 - promotion of a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle
 - reduction of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour
 - promotion of biodiversity and conservation of the natural environment
 - increase access to and participation in leisure, culture, sports and entertainment services
 - improve quality of urban and rural environment, reducing graffiti, vandalism and littering
 - ensuring that facilities are accessible to people who are disadvantaged eg those with a disability and those on low incomes.
- 4.57 In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the importance of maintaining and improving open space sites within the Borough and this strategy will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.

Developing the Strategy

PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

- 5.1 The strategy has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).
- 5.2 A major change in the policy guidance is the requirement for local authority decisions regarding green space to be informed by local needs assessments.
- 5.3 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of green space. This process was followed to develop this strategy. We have also used our own appropriate mechanisms to meet the requirements of the Council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of green space within the Borough. The five step process is as follows:
- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
 - Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
 - Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
 - Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
 - Step 5 – Drafting Implementation and Action Plan.
- 5.4 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each Local Authority will need to be incorporated as each area has different structures and characteristics.
- 5.5 The guiding principles in developing the strategy through a local assessment study include:
- local needs will vary even within Local Authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
 - the provision of good quality and effective green space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
 - delivering high quality and sustainable green spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing green space rather than adding new provision
 - the value of green space depends primarily on meeting identified local needs but also the wider benefits they generate for people, wildlife and the environment.

Scope – Types of Green Space

- 5.6 The overall definition of green space within the government planning guidance (PPG17) is:

“all green space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”.

- 5.7 In accordance with PPG17 the strategy accounts for eight types of green space. These types of green space are outlined in table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1 Green Space Types

Green Space Type	Definition
Parks and gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events
Natural and semi-natural greenspaces, including urban woodland	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness
Green corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration
Outdoor sports facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as the pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports
Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, skateboard areas and teenage shelters
Allotments and Community Gardens	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead. Often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity

- 5.8 In order to ensure that definitions were clear throughout the study there are types of land use that are defined as not being openly accessible green space. These included areas such as farmland and small insignificant areas of grassland or trees such as those that line main highways.
- 5.9 Many green spaces are multi-functional. For example, a grass pitch is probably used for children’s play, exercising dogs or jogging as well as formal sports. Hence there is a requirement to classify each green space by its ‘primary purpose’ as recommended in PPG17.
- 5.10 This should be taken into account when analysing the results of the audit for each type of green space (Sections 8 -15). For example - in areas of deficiency of amenity greenspace, outdoor sports facilities such as playing pitches may exist that provide the function of amenity greenspace but its primary purpose is as an outdoor sports facility.

- 5.11 The full detailed list of green space definitions and their associated primary purpose is in Appendix B.

Methodology

- 5.12 This strategy has been developed in association with as many partners as possible. This has been undertaken through detailed research, consultation, site auditing and the standard-setting process. Appendix C contains templates and data used to set the local standards for quantity, quality and accessibility of green spaces throughout the Borough.

Research

- 5.13 Desk based research has been undertaken to review many related documents and strategies that may have an impact on this strategy and upon which this strategy should be co-ordinated. A review of strategic context is provided within Sections Three and Four of this report.

Consultations

- 5.14 In the development of this strategy consultations have been undertaken with many organisations and individuals. Methods have included one-to-one meetings, telephone calls, questionnaires and email. Organisations include:

- Maidstone Borough Council (internal departments)
- Green Spaces Strategy Member Sub-Committee
- Parish Councils
- Ward Councillors
- local residents of the Borough
- external agencies and providers of green space eg Wildlife Trust.

Audit

- 5.15 The analysis within the strategy is based upon a thorough audit of green space within Maidstone. This has been developed through questionnaires and maps to Parish Councils, cross-checking with the local plan, liaison with officers at Maidstone Borough Council and extensive site visits.
- 5.16 A detailed analysis of the methodology undertaken is provided in Appendix D. This includes specific detail on applying the PPG17 Companion Guide process.

Assessment of Green Space Sites

- 5.17 Within the audit and in accordance with PPG17 each green space site identified was rated, where possible, within the following categories:
- (i) Quantity
 - (ii) Quality
 - (iii) Accessibility
 - (iv) Level of Use

(i) Quantity

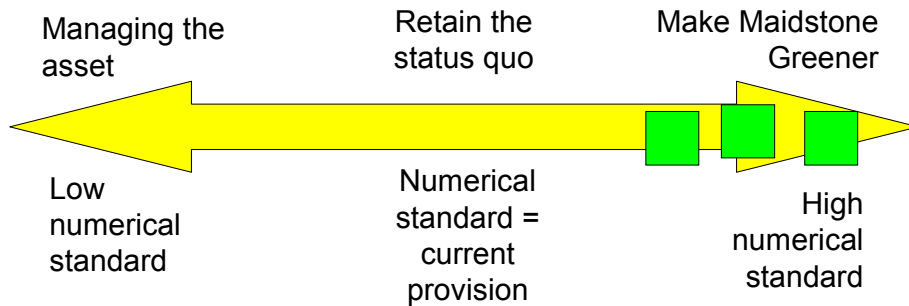
- 5.18 PPG17 advocates that planning policies for green space, including playing fields, should be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local need.
- 5.19 The quantity of provision provided by the audit of green space has assisted in the setting of such local provision standards for the Borough. These are included for each type of green space in Sections 8-15 of this strategy and as recommended by PPG17 is undertaken by population to calculate the quantity of provision in hectares (ha) per 1000 people.
- 5.20 The quantity analysis has also taken into account any key issues raised from the consultations with the public, internally within the Borough council and externally with national, regional and local agencies. The analysis also referred to existing policies in the local plan and community plan, and to a 'green spaces vision'. This then provides a more objective view rather than relying solely on statistical calculations.
- 5.21 Quantity standards were set and agreed by members and officers at a workshop facilitated by PMP.

Quantity standards workshop

- 5.22 It was agreed not to set a standard for green corridors as per guidance in the PPG17 Companion Guide. Work with Kent County Council on the adoption of a derivative of ANGSt was underway for providing a standard for natural and semi-natural green spaces, so a standard was not set for these either.
- 5.23 The workshop discussed the concept of a hierarchy of green spaces and it was agreed that in broad terms the types could be classified as follows:
- strategic: parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities
 - middle order: cemeteries, allotments
 - neighbourhood: amenity space, children's play.
- 5.24 Standards would only be applied at ward level if they related to a neighbourhood green space type ie amenity space or children's play. Again, green corridors and natural/semi-natural green space were not included.

Developing the vision for green space

5.25 Members and officers spent some time considering a vision for the future of green spaces. Having considered the key strategic objectives in the local plan, and the objectives in the community plan, members showed their “vision” for Maidstone’s green space by placing a marker on the continuum diagram shown below. It was resolved to make Maidstone greener by adopting challenging numerical standards.



Standards setting exercise

5.26 Local standards were derived as follows:

- members worked in three groups, with each group considering standards for two types of green space
- headline descriptive statistics were derived for each analysis area which showed the number of hectares (ha) per thousand population (ha/1000 population)
- these were grouped according to whether we were seeking to derive borough wide standards, or separate urban and rural standards
- benchmarking with other authorities was undertaken to see how these descriptive statistics compared
- members then considered the feedback from the consultation to understand the views of local people in terms of not enough/about right/too much green space of different categories
- members also considered how they would deliver the vision to “make Maidstone greener”
- standards were then applied to different areas (wards, analysis areas, whole borough) using a spreadsheet, to test the effects of different numerical values of standard
- within their groups, members discussed the implications of different standards and came to an agreement on numerical values for each type
- the results were discussed with the rest of the group to ensure overall agreement

- a briefing note was issued following the workshop, so that members and officers were able to reflect on what they discussed and agreed.
- 5.27 PMP has also ensured that the results of the market research were used to help set the local standards.

(ii) Quality

- 5.28 Quality and value of green space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. An example of this could be:
- a high quality green space is provided but is completely inaccessible; its usage is therefore restricted and its value to the public limited; or
 - a low quality green space may be used every day by the public or have some significant wider benefit such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a relatively high value to the public.
- 5.29 The overall aim of the quality assessment is to identify deficiencies in quality within:
- the geographical areas of the Borough
 - specific types of green space
 - specific quality factors that ensure a high quality green space.

Quality standards workshop

- 5.30 Quantity standards have been set through holding a workshop with Council Officers and Members. This workshop identified quality scores for each type of green space. More details about the standards workshop can be found in Appendix C. The following criteria were used:
- Cleanliness & maintenance
 - Safety and security
 - Vegetation
 - Ancillary accommodation
 - Accessibility.

- 5.31 Applying these standards when monitoring green space quality in the future will enable resources to be concentrated on areas that are most in need of improvement.

(iii) Accessibility

Catchment thresholds

- 5.32 Distance thresholds (ie the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport) are a useful planning tool especially when used in conjunction with GIS.

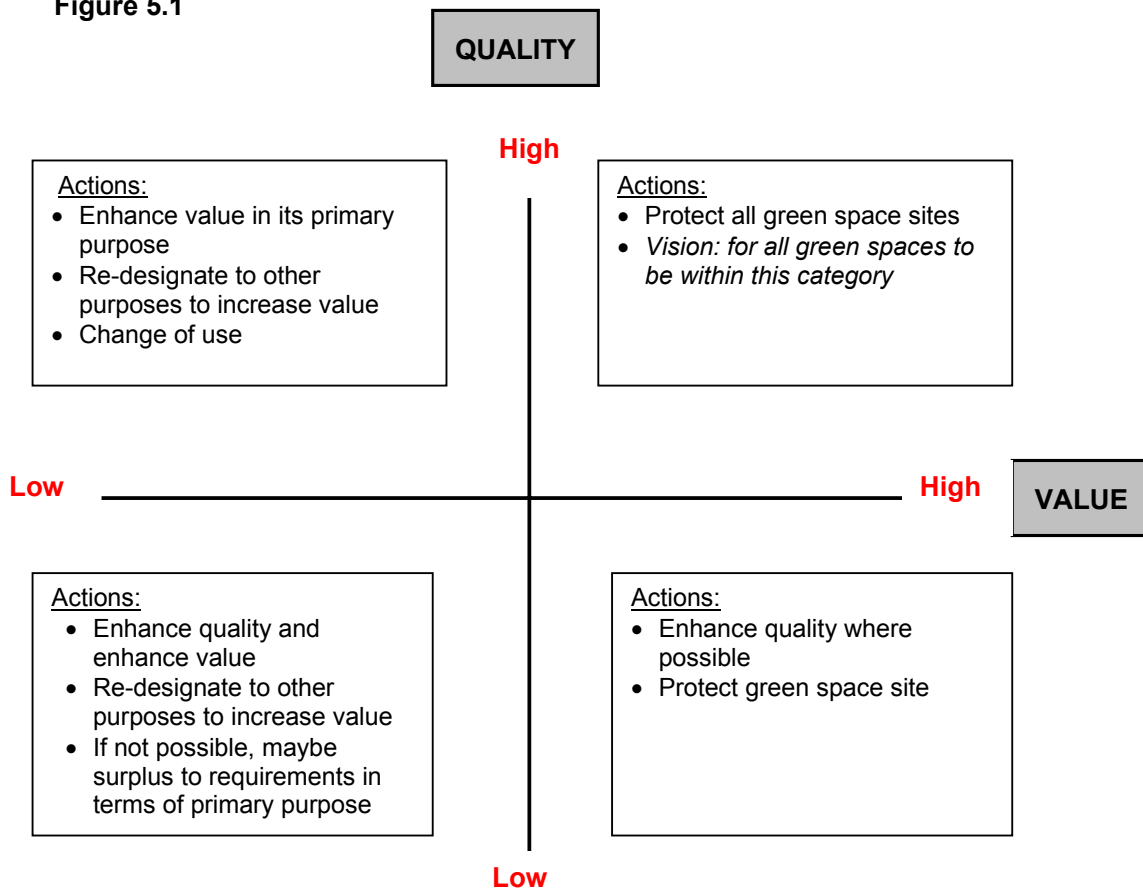
SECTION 5 – DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

- 5.33 PPG17 encourages local authorities to ensure that any new green spaces (or enhancement of existing sites) should be accessible by environmentally-friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and by public transport. There is a desire in local and national policy to move away from reliability on the car alone. Distance thresholds that are set should be realistic as well as encouraging a comprehensive provision of accessible open space across the Borough.
- 5.34 According to PPG17 the most appropriate means of defining a local accessibility standard for each type of green space is to estimate how far 75% of residents are prepared to travel. The results for the catchment area analysis are illustrated in Table 8.2 overleaf.
- 5.35 Residents were asked how long they were prepared to travel to each type of green space and what their preferred mode of transport is. We have applied the 75% rule to calculate accessibility thresholds based on the most popular mode of transport. Details of these assumptions can be found in Appendix C.
- 5.36 From this analysis, accessibility thresholds have been set for each type of green space.
- 5.37 Within the audit, each of the sites (where information was available) was rated according to its accessibility from 'very poor' to 'very good' and the rating stored within the audit database. The definitions used for this rating is held within Appendix D.
- 5.38 Accessibility is a key factor in determining the public's use and experience of a green space. Setting accessibility standards for green space should be derived from an analysis of the accessibility issues raised within the audit and in light of community responses. In undertaking various consultations we have been able to attain the aspirations of people in terms of travel time and also in terms of issues regarding access to sites. The outcome of this analysis is detailed in each section for each type of open space. We can use this analysis to determine suitable and appropriate accessibility standards.
- 5.39 The aims of the accessibility assessment was principally to identify:
- how accessible sites are
 - how far are people willing to travel to reach open space
 - areas of the Borough which are deficient in provision
 - areas of the Borough suffering in accessibility and therefore of priority importance
 - key accessibility factors that need to be improved.
- 5.40 The Council has quality checked the database and marked certain sites as "not accessible". Revisions to the data have been carried out and whilst these sites remain within the database they have not been used when calculating provision levels.

(iv) Level of usage and value

- 5.41 The value of an green space site is entirely different to quality and relates mainly to key factors as described in PPG17 companion guide:
- context – a site that is inaccessible is irrelevant to potential users and therefore is of little value irrespective of its quality
 - also in areas where there are large amounts of high quality green space or more than is actually required, some of it may be of little value
 - in contrast to this, a site of low quality but in an area of low provision maybe of extremely high value to the public
 - level and type of use – poorly used green space sites may be of little value while highly used sites may be of high value
 - wider benefits – there are many wider benefits of green space sites that should be taken into account when analysing the results of particular sites eg visual impact, benefits for biodiversity, educational, cultural, economic etc.
 - these benefits are difficult to assess in a systematic way and would require detailed site visits.
- 5.42 Evaluating value therefore involves assessing these factors, in particular relating the context of the green space site (quality and accessibility) against the level of use of each site.
- 5.43 From the assessment of the value of sites we can determine policy options to feed into a specific action plan. This is fundamental to effective planning.
- 5.44 Figure 5.1 below provides a simple means of determining the most appropriate policy approach to each existing green space site.

Figure 5.1



Analysis areas

5.45 The analysis of each type of green space as been undertaken by groups of wards known as “analysis areas” in order to extract more detail within the Borough. This will enable resources to be concentrated in the right areas, on types of green space that are in most need, and on specifically named sites. These analysis areas have been allocated in line with those used in the Maidstone Playing Pitch Strategy and are illustrated in Table 5.2 below and overleaf Figure 5.2

Table 5.2 Analysis areas

Analysis Area 1 Northern	Analysis Area 2 Southern	Analysis Area 3 Eastern	Analysis Area 4 Urban	
Detling and Thurnham North Downs	Marden and Yalding Coxheath and Hunton Staplehurst Sutton Valence and Langley Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Harrietsham and Lenham Headcorn Leeds	Shepway North Boxley Bearsted East North High Street Fant South	Allington Shepway South Bridge Heath Park Wood Downswood and Otham Barming Loose

Figure 5.2 – Analysis-Areas of Maidstone

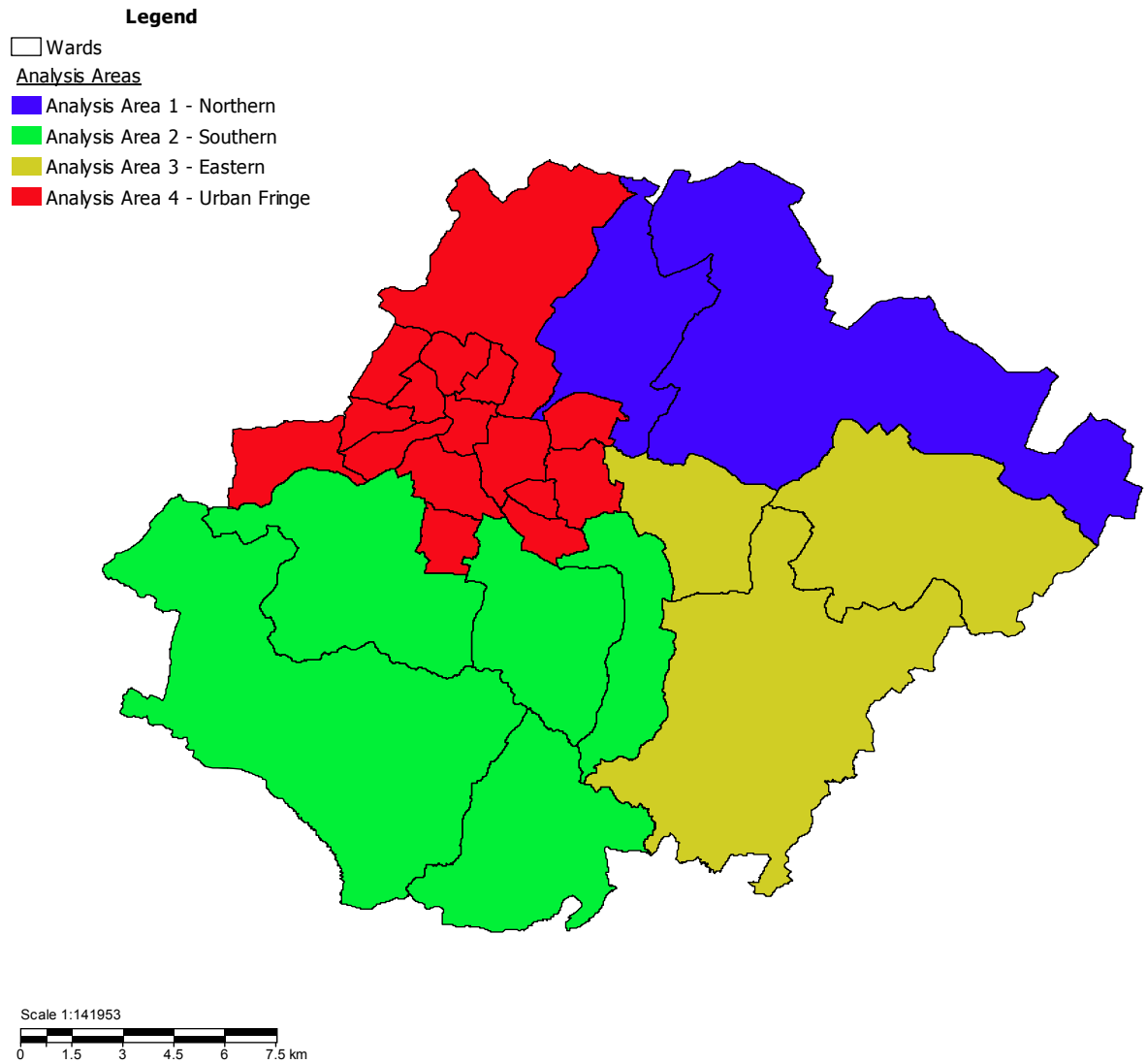


Figure 5.3 – Analysis-Areas 1 and 2

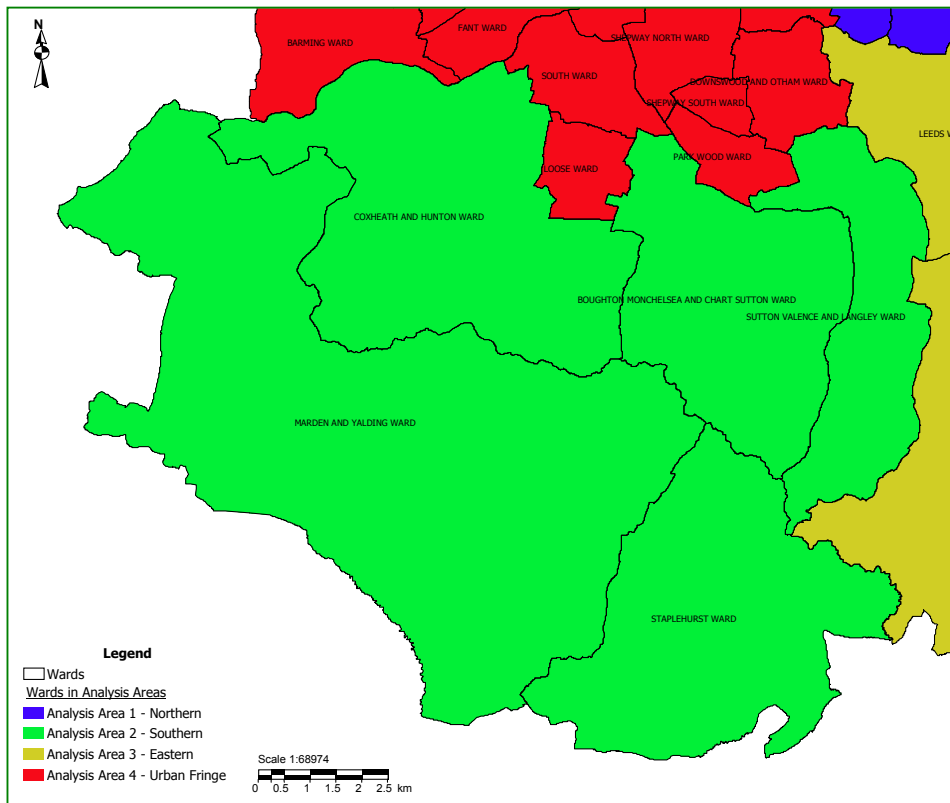
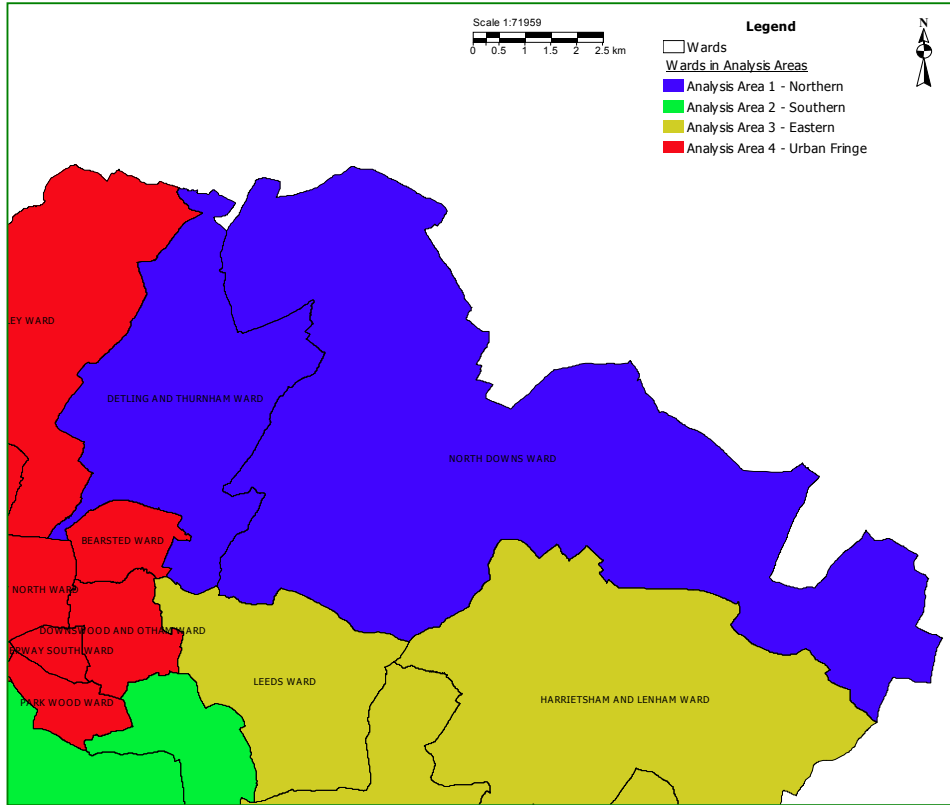
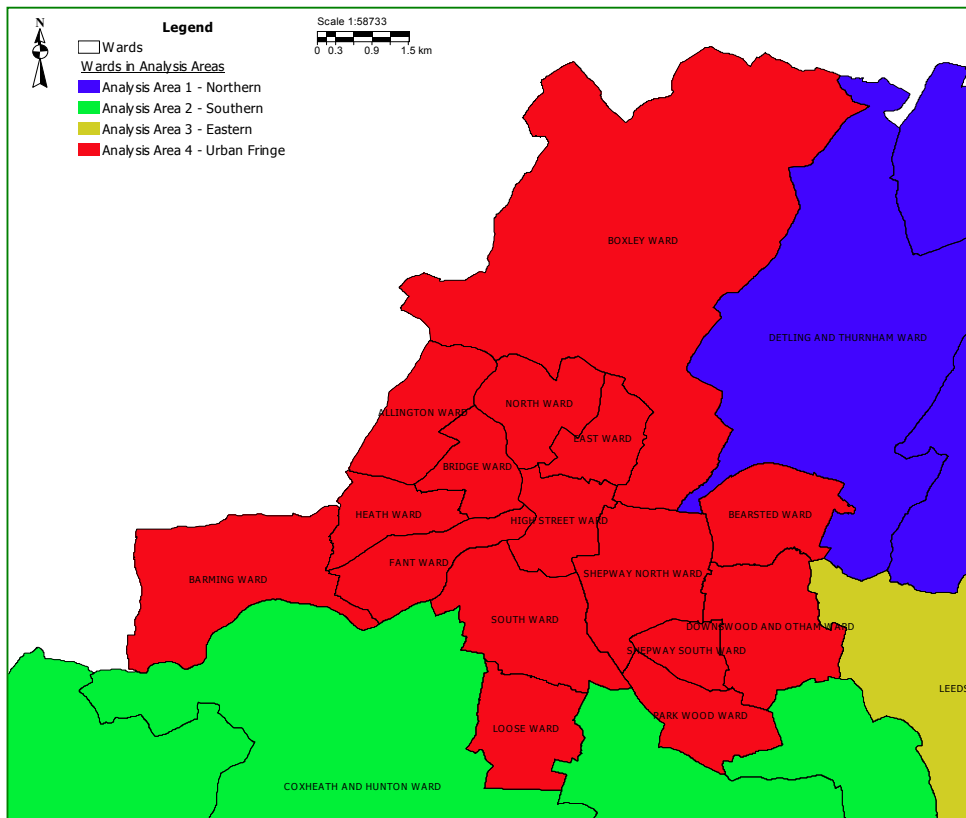
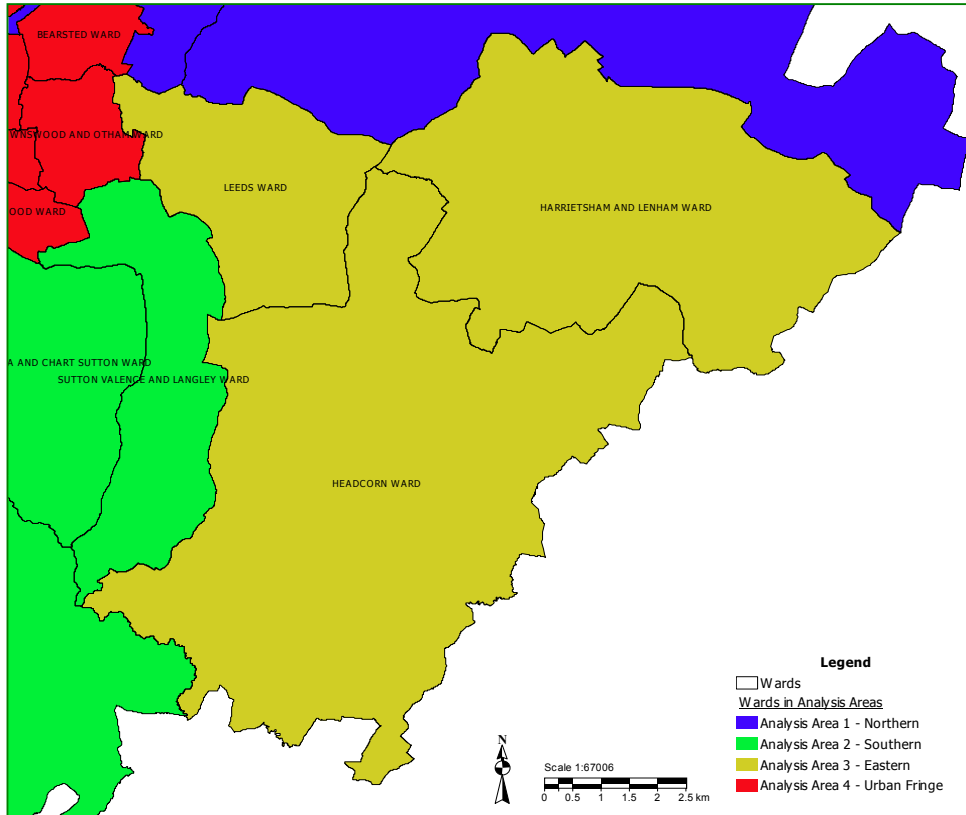


Figure 5.3 Analysis Areas 3 and 4



- 5.46 It is recognised that rural areas will not have the same access and range of green spaces as urban areas. Also, some spaces will be found exclusively in rural areas and some exclusively in urban areas.

Digitisation and Database Development

- 5.47 Each site has been digitised on GIS and its associated characteristics input into an Access database. This will enable further updates of green spaces and varying forms of analysis to be undertaken. This creates a dynamic reporting and assessment mechanism and will enable regular updates of this strategy.

Implementation and Action Plan

- 5.48 Finally a policy implementation and action plan has been developed for each specific type of green space and for other general green space issues. This is provided within Section 20 and at the end of each type of green space (Sections 8-15).

Identifying local needs

- 6.1 In order to produce a Green Spaces Strategy and set local policies from it, community consultation is essential to understand local needs. Establishing the views of local communities is also an essential part of the Best Value regime and the Community Planning process.
- 6.2 Community consultation was undertaken to identify:
- local people’s attitudes to existing provision
 - local people’s views to what levels of provision were adequate for each type of green space within their individual neighbourhoods
 - local expectations and needs which are currently “invisible” because there is no current provision
 - a qualitative “vision” for the type of green space which communities want to see in their area.
- 6.3 In order to identify needs for green spaces in Maidstone, the following methods have been applied:
- telephone survey with random sample of 400 local residents
 - on-site surveys at 14 green spaces throughout the Borough in which 553 face-to-face interviews were conducted
 - internet survey with pupils based at seven different schools throughout the Borough which yielded responses from 210 young people
 - survey of local groups and organisations
 - workshop with the Maidstone Youth Forum
 - focus groups
 - consultation meetings with Council Officers.

Market research – summary of key findings

Background and methodology

- 6.4 This section highlights the key findings of these surveys. A more detailed report of findings is set out in Appendix A.
- 6.5 The market research programme was designed to explore user and non user attitudes to the range of green spaces available and in particular, has set out to establish the:
- value residents attach to green spaces
 - attitudes to the range of green spaces available
 - attitudes to existing play equipment provided

SECTION SIX – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

- distances travelled to green spaces
- main modes of transport
- views of residents on the accessibility of green spaces
- barriers to access
- factors influencing use
- local needs and expectations.

Reasons for use

- 6.6 The research findings clearly show that green spaces are well used by a broad section of the local community. Users comprised of local residents of all ages and a broadly even split of males and females.
- 6.7 In the telephone survey, 94% said that they had visited a green space in the previous 12 months and most respondents visit at least once a week. In the schools survey the proportion was even higher at 98% and in the organisations survey, 69% of groups indicated that they had used a green space in the last 12 months, with most doing so on a regular basis.
- 6.8 In both the telephone and on-site survey, the most popular reasons given for using green spaces were 'to walk', 'to take exercise', 'for fresh air' and 'to walk the dog'. However, for young people, the reasons did differ, with the results of the schools survey showing that most children / young people visit green spaces to 'meet friends' and 'to get some exercise'.
- 6.9 Clearly, having green spaces in close proximity to people's home and places of work/school is very important, with 63% of respondents to the on-site survey stating that they had chosen to use a specific green space as it was closest to their home. A further 11% stated that they had chosen to use the green space as it was the nearest to their work or school.

Mode of transport

- 6.10 Of the adults that were surveyed, a large proportion travel to green spaces on foot, with:
- 76% of respondents to the on-site survey travelling to green space on foot
 - 73% of respondents to the organisation survey travelling to green spaces on foot.
- 6.11 However, the proportion was lower (56%) among respondents to the telephone survey, where 37% said that they usually travel to green spaces by car. The results of the schools survey also revealed that the proportion of children/young people who walk to green spaces (41%) is significantly lower than for the adults. 42% of respondents to the school survey travel to green spaces by car.

- 6.12 Analysis of the postcodes of respondents for the on-site survey reveals that:
- most visitors to parks and gardens are drawn from within a 2–5 kilometre catchment area, although these sites do draw visitors from much further afield
 - most visitors to natural and semi-natural green spaces are drawn from within a 2–3 kilometre catchment area
 - most visitors to green corridors are drawn from within a 1–3 kilometre catchment area
 - most visitors to outdoor sports facilities are drawn from within a 1–2 kilometre catchment area
 - most visitors to amenity green space are drawn from within a 0.5–1 kilometre catchment area
 - most users to sites provided for children and young people are drawn from within a 1–4 kilometre catchment area.

Opinions on the amount of green space in Maidstone

- 6.13 The results indicate that approximately half of the adult respondents consider the current amount of green space in Maidstone to be good or very good and a further 30% - 40% consider it to be fair. Only a small proportion are dissatisfied with the current amount of green space.
- 6.14 Among the children and young people who responded to the schools survey, the proportion who consider the amount of green space to be good or very good was even higher at 84%, with only 6% considering it to be poor.

Opinions on the quality of green space in Maidstone

- 6.15 The surveys showed that most people consider the overall quality of green spaces in Maidstone to be at least fair – illustrated by the fact that:
- in the telephone survey, 57% consider green spaces to be good or very good and 29% consider them to be fair
 - in the schools survey, 69% consider green spaces to be good or very good and 24% consider them to be fair
 - in the organisations survey, 44% consider green spaces to be good or very good and 44% consider them to be fair.
- 6.16 In the on-site survey, respondents were asked to rate the green space they were being interviewed in, on a wide range of aspects, on a scale of very good to very poor.

SECTION SIX – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

- 6.17 While respondents generally rated aspects such as noise, smell, grassed areas, maintenance and management highly, aspects such as information boards and signage, shelter and lighting, were less well regarded (see Table 6.1 below).

Table 6.1 – Satisfaction with aspects in green spaces

Aspect	Very good/good	Fair	Poor/very poor
Cleanliness and tidiness	56%	24%	20%
Provision of bins for litter	44%	23%	28%
Dog walking facilities	39%	18%	24%
Noise	73%	19%	7%
Smell	86%	10%	3%
Maintenance and management	59%	23%	17%
Planted areas	50%	16%	11%
Grass areas	69%	18%	9%
Lighting	15%	14%	30%
Equipment	33%	17%	12%
Boundaries	52%	23%	15%
Security and safety	39%	25%	28%
Toilets	13%	11%	19%
Parking	30%	13%	27%
Pathways	51%	17%	12%
Information boards and signage	16%	22%	36%
Children's play areas	33%	18%	11%
Seating	41%	20%	26%
Shelter	7%	8%	32%
Conservation area/nature trail	15%	6%	15%
Café/snack shop	6%	4%	8%
Picnic area/eating area	18%	9%	7%
Events	10%	6%	5%
Arts	7%	6%	8%
Bandstand	12%	6%	6%

NB where rows do not sum to 100%, the remaining proportion of respondents stated 'don't know' or 'not applicable'.

SECTION SIX – IDENTIFYING LOCAL NEEDS

- 6.18 In the schools survey, children and young people indicated what they liked most about the facilities in Maidstone. The most popular responses were:
- the size of the space
 - the play facilities
 - the sports facilities.
- 6.19 When children and young people were asked what they like least about green spaces in Maidstone, the following responses were given (in order of priority):
- intimidating people
 - litter
 - poor quality grass (eg lots of mud and pot holes)
 - poor play equipment (eg broken/poorly maintained equipment, too young for age group)
 - dirty, noisy, smelly
 - toilets.
- 6.20 In the on-site survey, the aspects which respondents considered the highest priority for improvement were:
- cleanliness/tidiness
 - lighting
 - toilets
 - seating
 - security.

Important factors in a green space

- 6.21 The research findings show that cleanliness and tidiness is the one main factor that residents consider to be important in a green space. Other factors considered to be important comprised 'provision for bins', 'dog walking facilities', 'maintenance and management', 'security' and 'toilets'.
- 6.22 In the organisation survey the most important factors were: clean and litter free, accessibility, litter bins and well kept grass.

Opinions on the accessibility of green space in Maidstone

- 6.23 Most respondents consider access to green space on foot and by car to be fair, good or very good. However, respondents were far less satisfied with the level of access provided by public transport:
- in the telephone survey, 22% of respondents considered access to green spaces to be poor or very poor
 - in the organisations survey, 54% considered it poor or very poor

- in the on-site survey, 17% considered it poor or very poor.

Safety

- 6.24 In all of the surveys conducted, the vast majority of respondents stated that they feel safe when using green spaces in Maidstone (84% in the telephone survey, 85% in the on-site survey and 90% in the schools survey). However, in both the telephone and on-site surveys, the proportion of female respondents who said that they do not feel safe is far higher than the proportion of males (7% males to 17% females in the on-site survey and 9% males to 18% females in the telephone survey).
- 6.25 Factors mentioned most frequently for making respondents feel unsafe, were:
- a general fear of crime in society
 - groups of teenagers
 - not feeling safe when alone
 - inadequate lighting.
- 6.26 In the telephone survey, respondents were asked to indicate what would make them feel safer in green spaces. The most common responses were:
- security/CCTV
 - staff on site
 - daylight
 - adequate lighting.

Importance of different types

- 6.27 The results show that most respondents consider all eight green space types to be important, with most considering parks and gardens and semi-natural green spaces to be particularly important:
- in the telephone survey, 90% of respondents rated parks and gardens and semi-natural green spaces as important or very important
 - in the on-site survey, 85% of respondents rated parks and gardens and 96% rated semi-natural green spaces as important or very important.
- 6.28 By comparison, allotments were considered to be not important by a much higher proportion of respondents to all surveys.

Barriers to use

- 6.29 The results have shown that green spaces tend to have widespread appeal. However, among the few respondents to the telephone survey who had not used a green space during the previous 12 months, the results show that there is a higher proportion of people aged 50-59 years (39%) and people without children aged under 16.
- 6.30 The main factors that discourage them from visiting green spaces are:
- a lack of time
 - a lack of interest
 - a lack of safety.
- 6.31 Access issues appear to present a real barrier to local groups and organisations, with 44% of respondents to the organisations survey considering the lack of public transport to sites to be a barrier. Other issues of concern were the inconvenient times of public transport and car access/parking (31%).

Children's play

- 6.32 To determine the views of local people on the level of use and satisfaction with play areas in Maidstone, we asked respondents to indicate if they, or a member of their family, use children's play equipment in the area. The results show that:
- 30% of respondents to the telephone survey use/have family that use children's play equipment
 - 31% of respondents to the on-site survey use/have family that use children's play equipment
 - 69% of respondents to the school survey said that they use children's play equipment.
- 6.33 The views of these respondents are summarised below.

Frequency of use

- 6.34 Children's play equipment is used on a regular basis. In the telephone survey, two-thirds of the respondents said that they visit at least once a week and in the on-site survey, 70% do so. Respondents to the telephone survey mentioned that they use a wide variety of play areas. The most frequently mentioned areas were:
- Mote Park
 - Penenden Heath
 - Watringbury Park.
- 6.35 In the schools survey, the most frequently mentioned areas were:
- Mote Park
 - Vinters Park

- Gatland Park.

6.36 Other named areas include Abingdon Road Park, Fitzwilliam Park, Penenden Heath, Peveler Park and South Street.

6.37 51% of the respondents from the schools survey use children's play areas once a week or more often, while 29% said that they do so less than once a month.

Distance travelled from home

6.38 Among adult respondents, journey time to play areas is generally very short, with the majority of respondents to the on-site survey taking five minutes or less to walk to the play area from where they live and most taking between five and 10 minutes in the telephone survey.

6.39 The results of the school survey show that journey times among the children and young people to children's play areas is extremely varied, with 48% taking five minutes or less, and 34% taking over 15 minutes. This is possibly because children are willing to travel further to meet up with friends at a preferred location.

Accessibility

6.40 For the majority of respondents, access to the play areas was considered to be fair, good or very good on foot, by bike, pushchair or wheelchair. However, it should be noted that only one-third consider access to play areas by public transport to be good or very good.

6.41 In the telephone survey, although most consider the entrances to play areas to be easily seen, only one-third consider the signage to be good or very good. It is an aspect that most respondents consider needs improving.

Quality

6.42 In both the telephone and on-site surveys, circa half of respondents said that some or all of the play equipment currently provided requires attention.

6.43 Similarly, in the schools survey, 39% of respondents considered that current play equipment is well maintained; 48% stated that they believe some play equipment is well maintained but others not; and 13% stated that they do not consider any play equipment to be well maintained.

Safety

6.44 In both the telephone survey and the schools survey, 89% of respondents said that they feel safe in play areas. For those that did not feel safe, the main factors in making respondents feel unsafe were:

- 'groups of youths hanging around/drinking'
- 'litter and broken glass'
- strangers.

Target users

- 6.45 The findings of both the telephone and on-site survey reveal that although the majority of respondents consider that existing play equipment is suitable for 0-4 and 5-8 year olds, there is a general consensus that the older age groups are less well catered for. 50% of respondents consider that the play equipment to be unsuitable for 9-12 year olds and circa 75% of respondents considering it to be unsuitable for children aged 13 and over.
- 6.46 The views among the respondents of the schools survey differed:
- only 42% thought that the play facilities they use are best suited for 0–4 year olds
 - 77% consider that it is best for 5–8 year olds
 - 85% consider it best for 9–12 year olds
 - only 35% think that it is best for children aged 13 and over.
- 6.47 This could mean that adults are wrongly assessing play areas as unsuitable for 9–12 year olds, or alternatively, that children know which sites best suit their age group.

Need for additional equipment

- 6.48 In the telephone survey, 60% of respondents said that additional play equipment was required. The main suggestions for improvement were for:
- equipment for older children
 - basketball courts or skate board parks
 - more climbing frames
 - more swings.
- 6.49 In the on-site survey, the sites that were most frequently mentioned by respondents as needing additional play equipment were The Cockpits, Shepway Green, James Street and South Park.
- 6.50 The views of the children and young people who responded to the schools survey were similar, with respondents indicating that they would like to see the following improvements made to play areas:
- more general equipment (swings, slides, climbing frames)
 - a change of equipment (modernisation, changing colour)
 - more sports facilities (football posts, cricket nets, skateboard parks)
 - a biking area.

Maidstone youth forum

- 6.51 PMP attended the Maidstone Youth Forum on 3rd November 2003, held between 9am and 12.30pm. 45 children aged between 12 and 17 years of age attended.
- 6.52 The youth forum provided an opportunity to ensure that the views of older children and teenagers were obtained in light of the reluctance from all but two of the secondary schools in the Borough to take part in the Schools Internet Survey which was mostly completed by primary school pupils.
- 6.53 The aims of the session was to consult with teenagers to understand their views, needs and expectations of green spaces in Maidstone. Specifically, the session was designed to cover the following questions:
- **free time:** what do they like doing, where do they go and with whom?
 - **use of green spaces:** who uses them, who do they go with, what do they do and how long does it take to get there?
 - this discussion was followed by a “good and bad words” exercise where the children were asked to think of the green space they used the most and to provide good and bad words about that place
 - the children were also asked why they use particular green spaces
 - **access:** how far are they willing to travel to green spaces?
 - **safety:** do they feel safe in green spaces they use, if not why?
 - **quality:** is play and other equipment provided at the sites in good condition? What is their view of the overall quality of green spaces in Maidstone?
 - **quantity:** do they think there are enough green spaces in Maidstone?
 - **ideal green spaces:** the children were shown picture boards of a range of play and recreation equipment for children and young people and were asked to choose and prioritise
 - using a “hot air balloon” technique, children were asked to provide reasons some green spaces are good and bad.
- 6.54 The group was split into three and separate sessions covering the topics above were held with each. The key themes which arose from the discussions is summarised in this section.

Free time

6.55 Both sporting activities and non-sporting activities were mentioned, the following most frequently:

Table 6.2 Free time activities

Sporting	Non-sporting
Netball	Going out with friends
Swimming	Cinema
Football	Shopping
Golf	Part-time work

6.56 For sporting activities, a variety of green spaces were mentioned, many of them linked to schools and also where they live.

6.57 The most frequently mentioned green spaces where the children spent their free time for non-sporting activities were Mote Park, Whatman Park, Vinters Valley and Clare Park.

Use of green spaces

6.58 Almost every child in the three groups indicated that they do use green spaces in Maidstone. The children mostly use the spaces with their friends, sometimes with their families at weekends.

6.59 Most children either generally hang around the spaces with their friends and talk, or they participate in more organised sporting activities such as football.

6.60 The form of transport to the green spaces was almost always on foot, although some children would use buses to travel from rural areas into Maidstone. Time taken to travel to these areas by the children was not longer than 20 minutes.

6.61 The “good and bad words” exercise was used to find out the general views about the green spaces used. The results of this exercise is shown below in Table 6.3 overleaf.

Table 6.3 Good and bad words exercise

Good	Bad
Large size	Unsafe at night
Uncrowded	Graffiti
Café	Drugs being smoked
Toilets	Broken glass
Meeting people	Lake – smelly and full of rubbish
Being free	Too dark

6.62 This exercise was then extended to discussion and the following comments were made:

Good:

- “the areas don’t cost money”
- “they are good places to meet new people and socialise with friends outside school – nicer than sitting around town”
- “many local areas are popular because they are easy to get to”
- “quite clean”
- “spacious, uncrowded and open most of the time and easy to get to”
- “nice scenery with lots of grass and trees”
- “spaces have variety of play equipment and sports pitches where we can have fun”
- “feel safe during the daytime”

Bad:

- “litter, dog poo, graffiti and broken glass everywhere”
- “weird people sometimes and drugs are used in them”
- “not safe at night”
- “once you have been going there a while, it gets boring”
- “not enough seats and sheltered areas”
- “no shops nearby”.

Access and safety

- 6.63 The children's choice of green space to visit is mostly influenced by the close proximity to where they live. Walking is the most frequently used form of transport, although buses are sometimes used to go to areas to meet friends. The children generally felt that there were not enough buses to enable them to travel to any green space their friends were at and also to stay as long as they wished.
- 6.64 The general consensus from the group was they do not feel safe in green spaces throughout the Borough. Many children again referred specifically to the list of negative words used to describe the spaces they used most often highlighted above in Table 6.3.

Quality

- 6.65 The view from the children regarding the condition of play equipment in the Borough was unsatisfactory. Poor maintenance was viewed as the main reason for this. Specific examples mentioned were:
- swings broken by older children
 - vandalism in Clare Park
 - seats covered in chewing gum.
- 6.66 Many children commented that the provision of the play equipment was targeted too much on younger, smaller children. In some areas however, the provision of youth clubs was viewed as very positive, but on the whole, the children believed there is not enough equipment specifically targeted to their needs.

Quantity

- 6.67 The views on quantity of green spaces and play areas are listed below:
- not enough green spaces
 - need more play areas for older children
 - more football pitches needed
 - not enough green space in Tovil area
 - Sandling needs more play areas and green space and a particular area was mentioned which is available for the development of a play and recreation area.

Ideal green space

- 6.68 The groups were each shown a collection of picture boards illustrating a variety of different types of play equipment including facilities such as skateboard parks, group shelters, aerial skyways and multi-use games areas.
- 6.69 The ideal play equipment the children generally chose were the multi-use games areas with artificial grass that contained a 5-a-side football pitch, basketball court and posts, slides and adventure areas and also shelters.

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- 6.70 Group shelters where teenagers could sit and hang out safely were also mentioned frequently. The Gazebo on the green in Kingshill was mentioned as a good example.
- 6.71 Lastly, aerial skyways were a popular choice from all groups.
- 6.72 An interesting finding from the discussion was that skateboard parks were not prioritised along with the more traditional play equipment with climbing frames and monkey bars.

Focus groups

- 6.73 Respondents to all the surveys carried out were invited to attend focus groups to allow people to provide more detailed information about their views on the provision of green spaces in Maidstone. Three focus groups were held:
- 16-50 year olds
 - over 50s
 - parents.
- 6.74 The attendees were asked to talk about the green spaces they used at present and provide details about:
- what they do there
 - how they travel to the sites
 - their views on quality and accessibility
 - facilities available
 - barriers to usage
 - factors increasing usage.
- 6.75 All groups were asked the following questions using facilitation techniques:
- best and worst aspects to green spaces
 - what extra facilities are required
 - desired improvements to green spaces – and which are their priorities?

Key findings

- 6.76 These groups indicated that they visit all types of green spaces, weekly for family based activities and daily for walking their dogs. Parks and facilities for children and young people were prioritised as the most important.
- 6.77 Popular parks used by attendees were Clare Park, Brenchley Gardens, Mote Park and Cornwallis. The frequency of use tended to be between two and three times a week.

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- 6.78 The groups also indicated a variety of travel times and distances dependent on the type of green space they were visiting. For example, attendees would be prepared to travel up to five minutes to visit a children’s play area but to visit a park they would travel up to 10 minutes. Other popular activities included taking exercise, cycling, gardening and taking children to play.
- 6.79 In particular, the groups believed there is a major problem with space for car parking at green spaces within the Borough. Many attendees commented that the provision of public transport servicing the sites was not good enough.
- 6.80 Access appears to be a real issue for those aged over 50 and those with a disability. There was a view that the car parks serving green spaces should be free.
- 6.81 In general, the groups believed the quality of green spaces to be good, although there is a problem with fly tipping and more bins are required near river pathways and other footpaths. Good quality parks included Clare Park and Brenchley Gardens, while at others quality can vary due to the levels of litter and noise. Specifically, the quality of the toilets serving green spaces is generally poor.
- 6.82 The group’s view on safety was that the Borough’s spaces are generally quite safe, although there is a problem with vehicle safety in car parks. Brenchley Gardens was noted as a site which still suffers from “undesirables” and it is thought that there is not enough police active in these areas.
- 6.83 Mote Park and Teston Picnic site were mentioned as two green spaces with a good range of facilities available. Play areas in general were mentioned as requiring more seating for adults who are visiting with their young children and wish to supervise close by.
- 6.84 There was a view that the facilities available in children’s playgrounds are poor and lack imagination and variety.
- 6.85 The groups believed that there was enough green space in Maidstone, however the area to the west of the town centre would benefit from more amenity green spaces. Attendees believed the green spaces available should be promoted further in order to increase their use.
- 6.86 Barriers to usage included:
- limited knowledge about green spaces available
 - lack of signage
 - stiles along river pathways and footpaths in general are difficult to climb over, especially for those walking their dogs
 - double gates are especially frustrating for those on bicycles.

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6.87 The groups indicated a number of factors which would increase their use of green spaces:

- linking up of green space sites – circular walks
- promotional leaflets about local walks
- more clearly linked cycle network
- public transport serving green spaces better
- litter removal
- more festivals
- use of river areas to attract more visitors.

6.88 Some specific comments about certain green spaces included:

“a country park at Hale Place would be good”

“Whatman Park is very good, but it is a dead end – there is nowhere else to go once there”

“there should be more done to improve the river areas, especially the area between St Peters Street and the river near to Courts”

“we would like the plans to privately develop the area behind Roseholm Recreation area into a nature reserve to go ahead”.

6.89 Table 6.4 below illustrates the best and worst aspects of green spaces in Maidstone:

Table 6.4 Best and worst things about green spaces

Best	Worst
Seating	Litter
Variety and amount of green space available	Lack of bins
Good for recreation for all the family	Fly-tipping
Wildlife	Poor maintenance
Scenery	Accessibility
Vegetation	Lack of shelter
Peacefulness	Dog fouling
Openness of space	Vandalism
Ease of access through urban area	Poor signage
Lots of green spaces available to escape from town centre	Poor surfaces
Formal planted areas are nice	Play areas – variety of equipment provided

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6.90 High priorities for improvement included:

- improved signage and better information about the green spaces
- litter awareness
- cycle friendly paths
- publicised walks
- more dog and litter bins
- signage
- more facilities for the elderly and teenagers
- improved access for the elderly and disabled.

6.91 Attendees were asked about what extra facilities they would like at green spaces in Maidstone. The results were as follows:

- more secure car parking
- more junior playing pitches
- new walking routes without barriers caused by infrastructure
- improved disabled access.

Stakeholder consultation

Introduction

6.92 As part of this study we have undertaken consultations with internal departments of the Council, key external agencies and the local community. The consultation with Parish Councils and Members for the quantitative audit is detailed in Section 8.

6.93 Meetings were held with a range of departmental representatives, recommended for interview by officers from Environmental Services. These included:

- Simon King and Malcolm Wells, Environmental Services
- Philip Thomas, Nigel Dewitt, Michael Thornton and Sally Peters, Planning Officers
- Trevor Gasson, Director of Community Services
- Richard Powell, Assistant Director for Economic and Social Wellbeing
- Brian Latimer, Leisure Policy and Projects Officer
- David Tibbett, Property, Procurement and Projects Manager
- Clive Cheeseman, Transport Planning Manager
- David Terry, Strategic Funding Officer

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- David Hewetson, Community Safety Officer
 - Ian Park, Social Inclusion Manager
 - Jim Boot, Community Planning Officer
 - Deborah Evans, Tourism and Marketing Manager
 - Annika Grady, Marketing Co-ordinator, Environmental Services
 - John Benent, Chief Executive, Kent Wildlife Trust.
- 6.94 PMP has also attended and presented ongoing findings to the Green Spaces Strategy Sub-Committee meetings and also one Officer Steering Group meeting.
- 6.95 PMP attended the inaugural Environment Forum, and its representative participated in working group discussions in order to formulate strategic ideas for the improvement of the green landscape in Maidstone. In particular, environmental improvements were proposed in relation to dealing with the future effects of climate change in the Borough and the possibility of summer drought and the winter flooding. The Green Spaces for Maidstone Strategy was perceived as likely to have a significant impact on the landscape of Maidstone over the next five years.
- 6.96 The following section outlines the views across these internal departments with regards to the provision of green spaces currently and how this can be improved for the future.
- 6.97 PMP has collated these views into key themes and provided analysis and interpretation of these views using its experience and expertise.

Key themes

Quantity – too many, too small

- 6.98 The following key themes have been raised by internal departments with regards to quantity of green spaces throughout Maidstone Borough:
- Maidstone is very fortunate in its quantity of green space
 - Maidstone has tried in the past to connect its green spaces together to form a series of inter-connected footpaths to allow for walking as a leisure pursuit and to encourage people to use the surrounding countryside
 - the Strategy offers the opportunity to create a series of footpaths and cycleways from the town centre and out into rural Kent
 - there is sufficient green space per head of population, but because much of it is in large chunks this means that some areas have a relative deficit - provision is adequate in urban areas but inadequate in suburban areas
 - also, there is a common misconception in the Borough that rural areas have an abundance of green space, however the reality is that little of it has public access – more information on this is required

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- there are too many green spaces which are too small to provide any significant and functional usage - fewer, more significant spaces would be more beneficial and easier to maintain
- small sites tend to be missed by potential users, increase customer dissatisfaction, cause confusion over ownership, require more boundary checks with regards to maintenance and are insignificant for a lot of usage types
- traditionally in Maidstone, there has been a view that parks and green spaces should be all things to all people
- a recent policy shift from providing smaller spaces to one that favours the provision of larger and more specialist green spaces should be assessed for its value as a future policy and to do this there is a need for parameters to assess the quantity of green space available
- provision is inadequate for young people, especially those aged between 12 and 19 years
- provision of cycleways is inadequate and although some work has been completed to identify potential new routes, many are impractical.

New housing developments and planning guidance

6.99 The following key issues have been raised by internal departments with regards to development pressures within the Borough and potential impact on green space provision:

- future housing development pressures in the South East of England will increase the opportunity to sell some green space land in return for investment to increase the “quality” of other green spaces and provide much larger multi-functional open spaces.

6.100 Section 106 agreements were discussed and the Council’s possible new strategic policy on these was highlighted as:

- a shift away from onsite cash contributions to offsite cash contributions for open spaces – on-site cash contributions has in the past been applied spasmodically and quite unsuccessfully
- a move to enhance existing provision of open spaces rather than new provision
- stricter guidelines on what policies apply to certain development schemes should be produced
- this discussion links to “Open Space – Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance – September 2003” which was reviewed in Section 4
- publicly accessible green spaces should be an integral part of the design of new residential areas and not simply represent space left over after development

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- design considerations for safety such as the use of lighting, no places to hide such as many trees and bushes and the provision of an open view to the open space can also help reduce the incidence of crime.

6.101 When dealing with commuted sums and developer deals, the following considerations need to be taken account:

- the potential for off-site land provision within deals with developers has advantages (improved potential for providing the right green space in the right area) and disadvantages (more green land available to be built upon)
- how much the land is worth to the public (non-monetary value)
- how much it is worth in monetary value to the council compared to costs of releasing the land (ie costs associated to legal, planning, sales and publicising in the press)
- site maintenance unit cost to be spent over the coming years against maintenance
- planning time elsewhere on other sites what will happen to the land if it is not adopted as green space.

Quality and maintenance

6.102 The following key issues have been raised by internal departments with regards to quality and usage of green spaces within the Borough:

- maintenance service standards have been compromised by inadequate capital and revenue funding which has led to a history of low investment into the maintenance of green spaces in the Borough
- need to enhance existing provision rather than invest in totally new green spaces
- there is a need for facilities in green spaces to be tailored for the right usage eg adequate sheltered areas for youths to hang out/equipped play areas for younger children and not just open grassland areas in close proximity to housing estates which can cause annoyance with nearby residents
- there is a need to assess the quality of green spaces in Maidstone to understand where should be the focus of investment
- for play areas in particular, resources would be better focused on improving the quality of areas rather than providing more sites
- there also exists an opportunity to increase the value of open spaces in supporting biodiversity, through creation of wildlife habitats, and in providing visual/environmental benefits through tree planting.

Accessibility and location

6.103 Accessibility issues were frequently discussed in the consultation meetings. The following key themes emerged:

- many problems with regards to accessibility of green spaces within the Borough appear to stem from “rural accessibility problems” which leads to the question – should there be more accessible green space provision in every parish?
- there was an identified need to create cycleways and footpaths through the Borough and into the surrounding countryside
- with many parishes communities being so small, the required amount of green space will be small and provision therefore leads to the “too many, too small” problems as identified above
- a suggested solution would be in small parish areas to provide multi-functional green spaces linking in with facilities provided at local schools and playgrounds
- historically, there has been a major issue with the design of parks and green spaces being inappropriate for those with a disability, in particular those in a wheelchair
- problems with lack of car parking, narrow entry and exit points and inappropriate gravel surfaces have significantly restricted use of some parks and green spaces, even new ones provided in the past three years, by those persons in a wheelchair
- other parks which are accessible by public transport or by car have issues with the services within them being inaccessible to some visitors
- throughout all the consultation, and market research, it is clear that public transport in Maidstone is inadequate to serve the needs of the community in accessing green spaces
- evenings and weekends are peak times for usage of green spaces and yet it is these times when public transport routes are less frequent or cease completely
- the poor public transport routes disproportionately affects children and young adults because they cannot drive
- residents from outside the town centre will rarely travel into Maidstone to use the parks because the transport is so poor – the only exception is Mote Park and Whatman Park where there is a skate park
- large, new parks such as the Whatman Park are linked to public transport routes but there are limited additional opportunities to similarly link other significant green spaces with public transport routes
- the opportunities to link green spaces through green corridors could help improve access considerably and one suggestion is to link Cobtree Estate, Whatman Park and the town centre museum

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- however, if some green spaces are more openly accessible, this can sometimes be of detriment to the open space eg increasing the likelihood of abandoned and burnt out cars
- restricting access and having opening hours also restricts casual usage.

Level of use

6.104 In terms of level of use of green spaces within the Borough, the following themes arose from the consultation:

- how to increase participation and levels of social inclusion rather than to simply increase the quality of green space within the Borough
- scope for widening use – recent events at Whatman Park in particular have been very well attended and future schemes to increase visitor numbers through these events should be developed at other sites
- there is a view that attendance at these types of events almost certainly have to be free to be successful, and charged events in the past have not worked well
- the most appropriate usage of green spaces now may not be the most appropriate in three to five years time, therefore there needs to be a dynamic approach to green space management as uses change according to demographics, employment, tenure, culture and/or social mix.

Good practice

6.105 Internal departments were asked to provide examples of good practice on which positive experiences can be built upon. The following examples were highlighted:

- community spirit is high in relation to neighbourhood parks
- Mote Park and other areas of Maidstone are rich in heritage, combining history with sport and conservation
- to increase usage levels of the parks and green spaces, there has been a good level of success in promoting events in Mote Park and the Whatman Park – concerts, open-air cinema, comedy, folk nights and most recently a multi-cultural carnival have been very successful in attracting high visitor numbers
- recent organised walks around the town centre and rural areas have been successful and external footways are good eg Medway Walk, North Downs Way and Greensand Walk
- the rivers are being used more frequently than they have been in the past, with a good degree of success which now needs to be built upon and promoted for encouraging further use – planning policies should now be focused on improving the services provided.

Bad practice

- infrastructure of parks in general is not particularly good
- cycleways need to be extended but with limited funding available for sustainable transport policy these developments are unlikely
- general awareness of green spaces throughout the Borough is low and there is great potential for more marketing activity specific to green spaces
- design of green spaces in the past has been inadequate to reflect the needs of all those living in Maidstone, especially those with a disability
- design of green spaces in the past to decrease crime has resulted in parks with a “green desert” nature
- different sources of external funding for parks and green spaces remain untapped and resources available for maintenance through revenue funding is poor
- community links are underdeveloped with no “Friends” groups
- play areas lack imagination in many cases and in addition, the equipment and more particularly the safety surfaces beneath are in poor state of repair and likely to lead to accidents
- the potential to use the internet to promote the use of green spaces in the Borough is untapped
- lack of information and adequate signage at green spaces.

Future vision

6.106 Each departmental representative indicated what their overall long-term view is for green spaces. These are the key themes which emerged:

- accessible green spaces
- high quality green spaces
- interconnected green spaces to provide a sustainable network and reduce the need to travel by car
- more links between green spaces and tourism opportunities to help contribute to economic development in the Borough
- broaden liaison and links with County Council and community groups
- devise a more aggressive funding policy and take advantage of opportunities to access grant funding for deprived areas
- more joined-up thinking and cohesive planning across the Council departments and linking strategy with other projects
- concentration of improvements on major parks and green spaces in order to make a significant impact

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- use of planning measures, such as s106 agreements, more effectively to plan green spaces.

Other

6.107 Other significant themes included:

- need to relocate Maidstone Sailing Club from Mote Park
- Brenchley Gardens – the only green space in the heart of town that suffers from high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.
 - a number of initiatives and ideas have been discussed including a study looking into a Heritage Lottery Fund bid and also to specialise part of the park into a wildlife garden
- the strategy must link to Agenda 21 issues and sustainability
- need to provide more interesting and varied landscapes
- need to increase biodiversity by creating “natural” landscapes such as flower zones and wildlife corridors
- parks and open spaces need to be more welcoming, with attractive and inviting entrances and clear informative information boards
- play areas must be made safer and should be renovated to provide a more interesting and safe environment
- the opportunity needs to be taken to review the use of buildings in parks and open spaces eg the lodges and stable block at Mote Park to ensure that they fulfil a useful purpose
- if the buildings cannot be used for the generation of income for parks funding, they should be used for an alternative recreational purpose, or disposed of
- in order to fund the implementation of the Green Spaces Strategy, a review of parks and green spaces should be conducted with a view to disposing of those areas of green space which are redundant (eg allotment land which has laid idle for many years) and the proceeds used to fund green spaces improvements.

Existing provision: green space within Maidstone – a summary

7.1 This section provides a summary of key themes which came out of the analysis of existing green spaces in Maidstone, in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility factors. The detailed sections covering each type of green space and separate sections on quality and accessibility can be found in Sections 8 to 17.

Quantity

7.2 From the analysis of all the data, auditing and assessment of sites and consultations, specific provision standards using PPG17 methodology and a workshop with Council Officers and Members, have been determined for urban and rural areas for six of the eight types of green space. As indicated in Section 5, it was agreed that quantity standards would not be set for green corridors (based on guidance in the Companion Guide) and natural and semi-natural green spaces (as Kent County Council is leading on this task through a separate exercise).

7.3 The minimum local provision standards are detailed in Table 7.1 below. The methodology for setting these standards is detailed within each green space type (in the following sections) and in Appendix D.

Table 7.1 – Recommended Local Provision Standards

Green Space Type	Hectare (per 1,000 population) <i>Note : existing provision levels above and below the standards are detailed within each section. A summary tables of figures are provided in Appendix C</i>	
	URBAN	RURAL
Parks and Gardens	2.30	N/A*
Natural and semi-natural areas	N/A	N/A
Amenity Greenspace	0.7	0.8
Provision for Children and Young People (Equipped Play)	0.12	0.09
Green Corridors	N/A	N/A
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1.4	2.7
Allotments and Community Gardens	0.21	0.18
Cemeteries and Churchyards	0.66	0.59

* No parks and gardens were identified in the rural area. Country parks and similar rural green spaces were included in the natural and semi-natural category.

7.4 Caution should be exercised when comparing with other national or local standards which may not use same definitions of each green space type.

SECTION 7 – EXISTING PROVISION: GREEN SPACE WITHIN MAIDSTONE- A SUMMARY

- 7.5 The derivation of these standards has involved analysis of quantitative data collected throughout the study. A summary table of this data can be found in Appendix C.
- 7.6 When applying the provision standards the following key points were extracted:
- in most types of green space, many areas have provision levels below the minimum standards
 - there is close to adequate provision of parks and gardens in the urban area
 - the provision of amenity green space is below the minimum standards, except in the northern area
 - the provision of outdoor sports facilities below the minimum standards in all areas except the southern area
 - the provision of equipped play areas for children is very close to the minimum standard in rural areas but provision levels are above than the minimum standard in the urban area.

Quality

- 7.7 Quality standards have been agreed for each type of green space. These are included in Appendix C.
- 7.8 Where possible, each green space site within the audit has been given a quality rating. The following sections provide detailed analysis of the quality levels in each type of green space, highlighting sites where there are issues and providing recommendations for improvements in quality where appropriate.
- 7.9 Overall, quality levels for green spaces across the Borough are mainly average but this descriptions masks a wide variation in the quality of individual sites. The quality audit undertaken by PMP's Parks and Green Spaces Consultant has revealed some concerns relating to quality such as:
- entrances and gates
 - access footpaths
 - play equipment
 - lighting
 - information boards and signage
 - standards of cleanliness and maintenance
 - planting
 - toilets.

SECTION 7 – EXISTING PROVISION: GREEN SPACE WITHIN MAIDSTONE- A SUMMARY

Accessibility

7.10 The following accessibility thresholds have been set for green spaces in Maidstone:

Table 7.2 – Recommended Accessibility Standards

Type of green space	Recommended travel time	Estimated equivalent distance (km)
Parks and gardens	15 – 20 minute walk	1.6
Natural and semi-natural green space	10 – 15 minute walk	1.2
Green corridors	N/A*	N/A
Amenity green space	5 – 10 minute walk	0.8
Children’s play areas	10 – 15 minute walk	1.2
Outdoor sports facilities	10 – 15 minute walk	1.2
Allotments and community gardens	N/A*	N/A
Cemeteries and churchyards	15 minute drive	N/A**

* no accessibility standards were set

** we have not converted driving time into distance because of the variations in road and traffic speeds

7.11 Where possible, each green space site within the audit has been given an accessibility rating. The following sections provide detailed analysis of the accessibility levels to each type of green space, highlighting sites with particular issues where necessary.

7.12 The analysis revealed on the whole, average ratings of accessibility. Specific sites have been listed where accessibility levels are low and hence usage levels are consequently low.

7.13 Accessibility is a key issue for Maidstone’s green spaces, especially now that the full requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act have come into force.

Value

7.14 Most sites that have a high level of use will have good or very good quality and accessibility ratings. Most sites with a low level of use have average or poor quality and accessibility ratings. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.

7.15 However there are a number of deviations from this, which suggests that these sites need further analysis and attention in terms of determining priority actions and whether the primary purpose of this green space was of most benefit to the community.

SECTION 7 – EXISTING PROVISION: GREEN SPACE WITHIN MAIDSTONE- A SUMMARY

7.16 Each type of green space has been assessed separately and specific sites detailed within the appropriate sections. Given that over 500 sites have been audited within the borough there are very few sites that are questioned as to whether the primary purposes is the most beneficial.

The use of Section 106 agreements

7.17 Section 106 agreements are a vital planning tool in helping to ensure the right amount of green space for the local community.

7.18 Both internal and external consultation in developing this strategy emphasised the need and opportunities that these agreements can provide in enhancing existing and providing new green spaces in areas of need.

7.19 It is vital to the enhancement of existing green spaces and the provision of any new quality green spaces that the new PPG17 guidance is adopted and followed and, on a more local level, actions identified within this study are taken into account.

PESTEL Analysis

7.20 The PESTEL – Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal – analysis tackles those key external issues which will impact positively or negatively on the implementation of the Strategy.

7.21 The **political** situation is one where Government policy is increasingly sympathetic to the provision of public green space. For the last decade, funding for green spaces has lagged behind other forms of leisure provision including indoor sports, arts and entertainment, even though it measures favourably in terms of cost per visit.

7.22 Recently, more funding has been directed at green spaces, such as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s ‘Liveability Fund’ and Heritage Lottery Funding grants for heritage schemes rather than for revenue works.

7.23 The **economic** benefits of green space and countryside have been alluded to in the SWOT analysis. In addition, there are clearly opportunities to draw in external funding from a number of sources for management. These include employment grants, sponsorship, lottery funding, stewardship grants, etc.

7.24 The Strategy will have a number of **social** benefits. Not least is the improvement to accessibility which can result from increased marketing and physical improvements in the form of an interconnected series of parks and green spaces, and cycling and footpath links.

7.25 **Technological** benefits include increased public access to media such as the internet. This can be used to publicise the Strategy and access to green spaces and countryside areas through the use of a website, directed emails, etc.

7.26 A consideration for all providers of public green space is the potential competition from home-based entertainment such as the rise in the use of personal computers, computer games, etc. It is the job of green space managers to sell the benefits of outdoor recreation, particularly to younger generations.

7.27 The Strategy has **environmental** implications which include the chance to provide a wide range of interesting and varied landscapes, and greater biodiversity in terms of habitats and species. Specific habitats can be created or managed, and wildlife corridors created.

SECTION 7 – EXISTING PROVISION: GREEN SPACE WITHIN MAIDSTONE- A SUMMARY

- 7.28 Greater pedestrian access to outdoor recreation areas will considerably reduce the need for leisure traffic, particularly at weekends and during holiday periods, thus reducing the consumption of fossil fuels and air pollution.
- 7.29 **Legal:** western society is becoming increasingly litigious in relation to injury or damage. The Strategy will increase the health and safety of green spaces, reduce the levels of claims, and the cost to society of unnecessary injuries, eg those caused by faulty playground equipment or surfaces.
- 7.30 A summary of the PESTEL analysis can be found in Table. 7.3 below.

Table 7.3 PESTEL analysis

Political	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new interest in green space provision • continued cutbacks in public spending likely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better provision increases property values • Maidstone perceived as better place to live and work • chance to obtain external funding • continued cutbacks in public spending.
Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical and emotional health of residents improved • diversity policies advanced by encouraging greater usage by community at large • greater accessibility will encourage less able-bodied users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible competition from home-based entertainment • improved communications offer possibility of better publicity.
Environmental	Legal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opportunity to create more interesting and varied landscapes • greater diversity of habitats and species could be achieved • wildlife corridors could be created • use of green space will reduce car usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threat of legal action for injuries from decaying infrastructure • health and safety of parks and countryside should improve.

Parks and Gardens

Definition

- 8.1 This type of green space includes urban parks and formal gardens.
- 8.2 This section presents the results of the quantity, quality and accessibility analysis for parks and gardens in the Borough. To further analyse these factors, an assessment has also been made of the value of parks and gardens by looking at the relative balances of usage, quality and accessibility levels.
- 8.3 At the end of this section is a list of key actions which link directly into the Green Spaces Strategy Detailed Action Plan in Section 20.

Quantity

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 8.4 A local standard has been set using the methodology outlined in Section 5. Using the parish and ward consultation questionnaires, the wider community market research findings and a workshop with Council Officers and Members, **the agreed minimum standard for the provision of parks and gardens in the urban area is 2.3 ha per 1000 population**. No parks and gardens were identified in the rural analysis areas, so no rural standard has been set.
- 8.5 The methodology relating to the setting of minimum standards can be found in Appendix D. The thematic map in Figure 8.1 overleaf illustrates the provision levels above or below the standard. Table 8.1 underneath summarises the results.

Figure 8.1 Provision of Parks and Gardens according to minimum standard

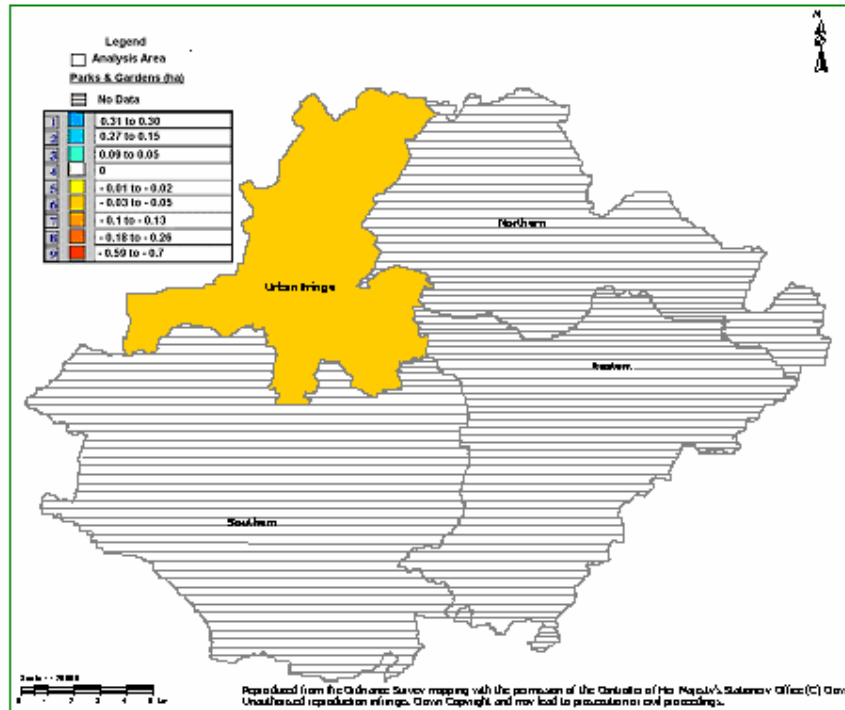


Table 8.1 Quantity figures for parks and gardens

Parks and Gardens	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)	Local minimum standard (ha per 1000 population)	Balance (above or below the minimum standard) (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	0	N/A	0
Analysis Area 2 - Southern	0	N/A	0
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	0	N/A	0
Analysis Area 4 - Urban	2.27	2.3	-0.03

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 8.6 When applying the minimum standard to the existing level of provision, **the urban area in Maidstone falls just below the minimum standard at –0.03 ha per 1000 population.**
- 8.7 The urban area contains some of the largest parks and gardens in the Borough. There is one major formal park in Maidstone (Mote Park), which is the largest park in the Borough measuring 179.79 ha. This is ideally situated very close to the town centre and is accessible by foot from the High Street.

- 8.8 Other large parks in the urban area include Cobtree Manor Park in Boxley Ward (21.6 ha). The total area of parks and gardens in the urban area is 218.26 ha, which equates to 2.27 ha per 1000 population.

Rural analysis areas

- 8.9 There were no parks and gardens (using PPG17 definition) identified in the rural analysis areas.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 8.10 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for parks and gardens. The agreed quality standard was:
- 8.11 “Urban parks and gardens should be clean and tidy, well maintained and inviting with no litter, dog fouling or graffiti. They should be safe and secure based on an audit of each site with appropriate facilities and infrastructure in good condition. Each site should have a varied range of planting and maintenance in accordance with an adopted management plan”.

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

- Cleanliness & maintenance 5
 - Safety and security 4
 - Vegetation 4
 - Ancillary accommodation 4
 - Accessibility 5.
- 8.12 More details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all parks and gardens identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.
- 8.13 A summary of the consultation results in relation to quality is presented below.

Results of the consultation

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 8.14 The majority of respondents rated the quality of parks and gardens in the urban area as average (46%). The next most popular rating of quality was good (21% of respondents).
- 8.15 However, quite high percentages of respondents rated the quality of parks and gardens in the urban area to be poor (18%) and very poor (13%).

Accessibility

Accessibility thresholds

- 8.16 Local residents, through the market research exercise, were asked how long it takes them to travel to parks and gardens and what mode of transport they normally use.
- 8.17 There was a diverse set of responses for the time taken to travel. Responses ranged from less than five minutes up to over 30 minutes.
- 8.18 According to PPG17 the most appropriate means of defining a local accessibility standard for each type of green space is to estimate how far 75% of residents are prepared to travel. The results for the catchment area analysis are illustrated in Table 8.2 overleaf.

Table 8.2 Time prepared to travel to Parks and Gardens

Time	Total responses	Cumulative totals	Percentage of respondents (%)
No reply	2	2	0.61
Less than five minutes	82	84	25.53
5 -10 minutes	94	178	54.10
10 -15 minutes	47	225	68.39
15 -20 minutes	47	272	82.67
20 - 30 minutes	33	305	92.71
30+ minutes	24	329	100

- 8.19 The table above illustrates that at least 75% of respondents are prepared to travel up to 20 minutes to visit parks and gardens. In terms of the mode of transport, the largest majority of respondents indicated their preferred mode was on foot. The length of time people are prepared to travel to access a park or garden is reflected in the strategic classification applied to this type of green space.
- 8.20 PMP has made certain assumptions related to accessibility thresholds and distances travelled. These can be found in Appendix C. Table 8.3 highlights the recommended accessibility threshold for parks and gardens in Maidstone.

Table 8.3 Recommended accessibility threshold

Accessibility threshold – Parks and Gardens	
Recommended travel time	Estimated equivalent distance
15-20 minute walk	1.6km

- 8.21 It is therefore recommended that this standard is used to assess whether residents in the urban area have access to a park or garden within this accessibility threshold.

Results of the consultation

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 8.22 26% of respondents indicated that the accessibility levels to parks and gardens were good. However, 32% rated accessibility levels to be poor. This indicates that accessibility levels vary from site to site.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

- 8.23 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility ratings. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility ratings. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. However there are variations from this, which suggests that these sites would need further analysis.
- 8.24 There are many sites that have high quality and accessibility and high usage – these are sites that are of high value and importance and therefore need to be protected. These include:
- Cobtree Country Park
 - Whatman Park
 - Collis Millennium Green
 - Ampitheatre
 - Brenchley Gardens.
- 8.25 South Park has been given a good quality ratings, but low accessibility and use ratings. Factors such as opening times, information boards and signage and wheelchair or pushchair access may be issues here.

Proposed recommendations

- 8.26 Maidstone is very fortunate to have a good level of provision of parks and gardens in the urban area but a history of lack of resources to maintain these sites has led to low quality levels and in some cases low usage levels due to poor signage, information and other factors.
- 8.27 Whilst no additional provision of parks and gardens is recommended at this time (subject to regular monitoring of provision levels against the standard), resources should be focused on securing the future of these sites and improve the quality and accessibility of them to meet the relevant local standards.
- 8.28 A number of specific recommendations have emerged from the results of the analysis. These are highlighted in the grey action box below.

Action box for Parks and Gardens

PG1. Programme improvements designed at improving quality ratings for parks and gardens across the Borough in Phases I-III of the Green Spaces Strategy.

PG2. Analyse the quality of sites in detail and apply the quality standards (building on the work completed for the quality audit of key sites contained in Section 16 and the quality workshop) as part of the process of developing management plans, and incorporating proposals for improvement.

PG3. Review existing cleansing specifications, set a “local” BVPI199 target for parks cleaning, set new specification and allocate funding to achieve goal.

PG4. Complete an accessibility, safety and security audit for all parks and gardens, building on work already done as part of strategy.

PG5. Identify a strategic location for a new formal park/garden within the Borough for long-term development. This will be completed through carrying out a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping.

PG6. Establish three “Friends of Parks” within the next five years.

PG7. Ensure the Management Plans for each park include a statement of its distinctive character and its requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity.

PG8. Develop the vision of South Park as a prime venue for sport and young people’s facilities.

PG9. Prepare a “theme” for new signage and entrances to Parks and Gardens and implement over the short to medium term.

PG10. Increase accessibility to parks and gardens through enhanced publicity and marketing activity in accordance with the proposals contained in the Marketing Plan (Section 19).

PG11. Encourage repeat visits to parks and gardens across the Borough by increasing the number of events and activities taking place.

Natural and semi-natural green space

Definition

- 9.1 This type of green space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and bio-diversity.

Quantity

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 9.2 It was agreed that quantity standards should be set using English Nature's ANGSt model: Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards. This analysis is currently being prepared by Kent County Council and will be documented separately from this report.
- 9.3 The ANGSt model is based on research which reviewed the available scientific literature and concluded that provision of natural greenspace in urban areas should be governed by a hierarchy of size and distance criteria which can be translated into a set of standards. English Nature subsequently adopted these standards. This strong research base and adoption by a nationally agency means that the standards are robust and credible, and therefore can be applied locally. The ANGSt model requires:
- that no person shall live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size
 - provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population
 - that there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home
 - that there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km
 - that there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.
- 9.4 It is acknowledged that these may not be achievable in the short term; particularly the larger site standards but they provide threshold aspirations for the long term. Other green spaces also need to be taken into account as they provide multi-functional usage.
- 9.5 English Nature does approve other greenspace standards set by other organisations. We have investigated whether the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Advisory Group recommended any local standards for natural and semi-natural areas, but no standards were identified.
- 9.6 As per the other types of green space, an assessment of quality, accessibility and value has been completed. It is recognised that accessibility levels to this type of green space are likely to be more restricted than at any other due to many sites being designated conservation areas.
- 9.7 Table 9.1 overleaf illustrates the amount of natural and semi-natural green space within the Borough. No local standards have been applied, but it is interesting to note the levels of provision across each of the analysis areas.

Table 9.1 Quantity of Natural and Semi-Natural Green Spaces in the Borough

Amenity Green space	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	160.40
Analysis Area 2 - Southern	16.70
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	30.00
Analysis Area 4 - Urban	5.86

9.8 As Table 9.1 illustrates, there are very large areas of natural and semi-natural green space located within the urban areas. Within the northern area, there are a high number of sites which are circa 40ha in size, most of which have low accessibility levels. The figures for this are large due to the low numbers of people in Detling and Thurnham and North Downs Ward.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

9.9 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for natural and semi-natural green spaces. The agreed standard is:

9.10 Natural and semi-natural green spaces should be clean and tidy with no litter, dog fouling or graffiti, and maintained to an appropriate conservation standard, providing a level of varied vegetation which may include natural features such as ponds, lakes and water where appropriate. The pathways and access routes should be clearly marked with appropriate facilities provided in the least obtrusive manner and maintained to a good standard to enhance the local biodiversity.

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

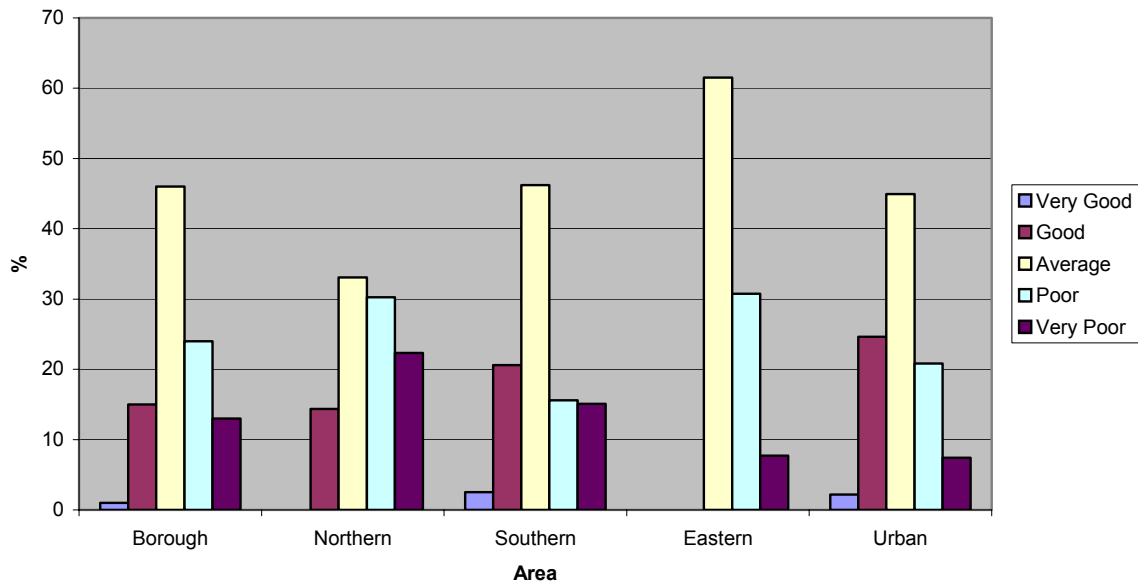
- Cleanliness & maintenance 5
- Safety and security 3
- Vegetation 4
- Ancillary accommodation 4
- Accessibility 3.

9.11 More details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all natural and semi-natural green spaces identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.

Results of the consultation

9.12 A summary of the consultation results in relation to quality is presented below. The ratings given for quality of natural and semi-natural green spaces across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole are illustrated in Figure 9.1 below.

Fig 9.1 Quality of Natural and Semi Natural Green Spaces



Borough-wide

9.13 As the graph illustrates, the largest proportion (46%) of respondents indicated that the quality of natural and semi-natural green spaces in the Borough is average. A further 24% of respondents believed the quality of these spaces were poor.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

9.14 The quality of natural and semi-natural green spaces in this area was generally viewed negatively. Only 14% of respondents rated quality as good and no one rated quality as very good. 33% rated quality as average, 30% rated quality as poor and 22% rated quality as very poor. Out of all areas, 22% was the highest percentage of respondents to rate sites as generally very poor in quality.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

9.15 Quality in this area was rated more positively than in the Northern area with 21% of respondents rating quality as good. However, a large proportion of respondents (46%) indicated quality of natural and semi-natural areas to be average and 15% indicated quality was very poor.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

9.16 In this area, no respondents rated quality as good or very good. A majority (62%) rated the quality of natural and semi-natural green spaces in this area as average whilst 31% believed quality to be poor. This suggests that many improvements need to be made in this area to improve the quality of natural and semi-natural green spaces.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

9.17 The natural and semi-natural areas in the urban area were rated mainly as average. However, the highest percentage of respondents out of all areas rated quality of these sites as good (25%).

Accessibility

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

9.18 It is important that people have access to some areas but there also needs to be a balance between accessibility and protection of sensitive sites. This should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Accessibility thresholds

9.19 With regards to accessibility the definitive national standard has been produced by English Nature (ANGSt), states that no person should live more than 300m (3.75 minutes at 4.8 kmph) from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size. As described in Paragraph 9.3, these standards include the recommendation that there should be at least one accessible site within 2km from home.

9.20 PMP has analysed travel times to natural and semi-natural green spaces using the market research findings illustrated in Table 9.2 below.

Table 9.2 Time prepared to travel to Natural and Semi-natural green spaces

Time	Total responses	Cumulative totals	Percentage of respondents (%)
No reply	0	0	0
Less than five minutes	60	60	54.05
5 -10 minutes	22	82	73.87
10 -15 minutes	12	94	84.68
15 -20 minutes	6	100	90.09
20 - 30 minutes	7	107	96.40
30+ minutes	4	111	100

9.21 The calculations illustrate that for natural and semi-natural green spaces, 54% of respondents are prepared to travel up to 5 minutes to get to these sites, which is in accordance with the ANGSt standard outlined in paragraph 9.19 above. Those respondents who are prepared to walk for a longer period of time/distance will also have their needs met within the ANGSt standard.

SECTION 9 – NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACE

9.22 The preferred mode of transport for accessing this type of green space is on foot. PMP has therefore applied assumptions (see Appendix C) relating to an average walking speed of 3mph to establish the following accessibility threshold for natural and semi-natural green spaces.

Table 9.3 Recommended accessibility threshold

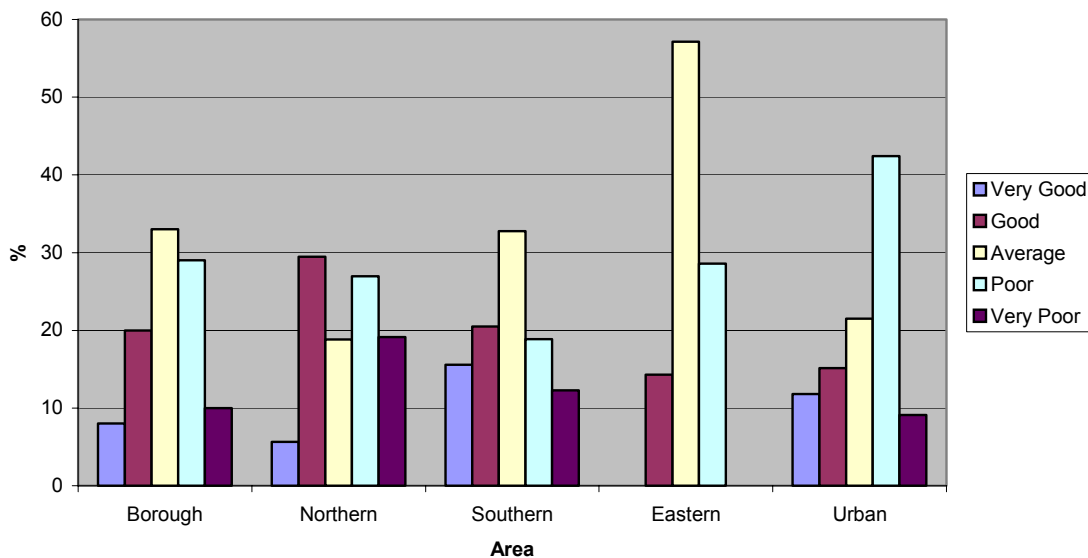
Accessibility threshold – Natural and Semi-natural green spaces	
Recommended travel time	Estimated equivalent distance
3.75 minute walk	300m

9.23 This standard should be used to assess whether residents in the Borough have access to natural and semi-natural green spaces within this accessibility threshold. A catchment mapping method using this standard is recommended to help identify locationally deficient areas of the Borough.

Results of the consultation

9.24 Figure 9.2 below illustrates the results of the consultation in terms of accessibility ratings given to natural and semi-natural green spaces.

Fig 9.2 Accessibility of Natural and Semi Natural Green Spaces



Borough-wide

9.25 Access to natural and semi-natural green spaces in the Borough as a whole was rated as average by 33% of all respondents. However, accessibility appears to vary as 20% rated accessibility levels across the Borough as good but 29% rated accessibility as poor.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

- 9.26 In the northern area, the largest proportion of respondents (29%) rated accessibility of natural and semi-natural areas as good. However, nearly the same proportion of respondents rated accessibility as poor. This again suggests that accessibility levels vary across the area but quite a high percentage of respondents rated accessibility levels as poor and very poor, suggesting that there are more areas with poor accessibility levels than those with good.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 9.27 The ratings for accessibility in this area were more positive than in the northern area although the largest proportion of respondents rated accessibility as average. The ratings were quite spread which therefore again indicates that accessibility varies considerably from site to site.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 9.28 A large proportion (57%) rated the accessibility of natural and semi-natural areas in the eastern area as average. No respondents rated any site as very poor in terms of accessibility however, 29% rated accessibility as poor which suggests that work still needs to be conducted to improve access to sites within this area.

Analysis Area – Urban

- 9.29 Accessibility to natural and semi-natural areas in the urban area was mainly rated as poor. A large proportion (42%) of respondents gave sites a poor rating for accessibility.
- 9.30 There maybe genuine reasons for this. For example, the location of natural and semi-natural sites such as woodlands and wetlands may be remote from the residential areas. The presence of natural and semi-natural spaces in urban areas is very important and so priority should be given to improving access to these spaces in this area.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

- 9.31 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.
- 9.32 There are many sites that have high quality, high accessibility and high usage – these sites are of high value and importance and therefore need to be protected. These include:
- Middle Hill (Stockbury)
 - Cowstead Wood (Stockbury)
 - Vinters Park Nature Reserve (Boxley)
 - Walderslade Amenity Woodland (Boxley)
 - Millers Wharf (South Ward)
 - Loose Valley (South Ward).

SECTION 9 – NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACE

- 9.33 There are a number of rural sites which have low usage or none at all and ratings of quality and accessibility are good or very good. These are:
- Open ground, Chilston Road (Lenham)
 - Abbey Woods (Langley).
- 9.34 Further investigation is recommended regarding use of these sites by wildlife.
- 9.35 Interestingly, Quarry Wood in Boughton Monchelsea has a very good quality rating but a very poor accessibility rating which explains the low usage rating. The importance of good accessibility of sites is therefore demonstrated and improving access to this site is recommended.
- 9.36 Other high quality sites with low accessibility ratings are:
- River Len Urban Nature Reserve (High Street Ward)
 - Beechen Bank Area of Local Landscape Importance (Boxley)
 - Boarley Warren Site of Special Scientific Interest (Boxley).
- 9.37 There are a number of sites where there is no usage or low usage with the possible reasons being that quality and accessibility are poor. The following sites fall into this category:
- Woodland off Faversham Road and Pilgrims Way (Lenham)
 - Old Sand Pit (Lenham)
 - Open Space at rear of Ashford Road (Bearsted)
 - Murraine Drive Scrubland (Downswood)
 - Gleneagles (South Ward)
 - Hayle Place (MBC land) (Tovil).
- 9.38 This indicates that although the quality of the site is high there is limited value to the community of such sites (but potentially higher value for wildlife).
- 9.39 Other sites which were rated as having low or no use and low accessibility were not highlighted if they were listed in the Local Plan as an area of conservation, nature conservation interest and special scientific interest eg Lenham Quarry. It is recognised that it is beneficial for such sites to have limited access and hence low use.

Proposed recommendations

- 9.40 Natural green spaces have an ecological and conservation purpose and should be protected against development where possible. These sites also enable people to experience wildlife close to where they live and play a role in maintaining a cohesive network of undeveloped habitats throughout the Maidstone urban area.
- 9.41 Levels of quality were rated as mainly average throughout the Borough and therefore improvements to existing sites are required. It will be important to focus resources first on those sites which have high use ratings but low accessibility and quality ratings.

Action box for Natural and Semi-natural Green Spaces

NS1. Review existing cleansing specifications, set a “local” BVPI199 target for cleaning, set new specification and allocate funding to achieve the goal.

NS2. Natural and semi-natural sites not currently subject to nature conservation management particularly within the urban area should be surveyed by an ecologist leading to:

- a management review including the production of management guidelines identifying opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and the involvement of the community in biodiversity conservation within the Maidstone area
- identification of opportunities for creating new and preserving existing or potential habitats
- contributing to biodiversity targets
- identification and designation of key sites as SSSIs or SINCs.

NS3. The Council should carry out a quantitative assessment of the provision of natural and semi-natural green spaces based on English Nature catchment standards (ANGSt) and to ascertain local accessibility to natural and semi-natural green space using a catchment mapping method.

NS4. Provide information and promotion of sites increasing the local community awareness of natural and semi-natural green spaces where usage is low, but accessibility and quality ratings are high (open ground on Chilston Road, Lenham and Abbey Woods).

NS5. Analyse the quality of sites in detail and apply the quality standards (building on the work completed for the quality audit of key sites contained in Section 16 and the quality workshop) as part of the process of developing management plans, and incorporating proposals for improvement. Investigate the reasons for low quality and improve the quality of natural and semi-natural sites within northern analysis area in particular and in areas where usage levels are high but quality ratings are low.

Green Corridors

Definition

- 10.1 This green space type includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, Public Rights Of Way (PROW) and disused railway lines with the primary purpose to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel and opportunities for wildlife migration.
- 10.2 The green corridors in Maidstone are part of the structure and fabric of the town and are an indicator of its growth. These undeveloped avenues of land link urban Maidstone with the countryside surrounding the town. The corridors are important visually as they provide relief from built development.
- 10.3 This section analyses the quantity, quality and accessibility of green corridors and also the value of these spaces in terms the balance in use, quality and accessibility for each site.

Quantity

- 10.4 The audit of green corridors is very complex and questions arise over whether to include all types of green corridors (and all PROWs) across the whole of a study area.
- 10.5 The emphasis of PPG17 is on those green corridors in urban areas that stretch out into the rural areas. In addition, other “recreational rights of way” are important recreational facilities which should be protected and enhanced. Facilities for horse-riders, cyclists and walkers should be monitored and quality maintained across the Borough.

Setting and applying minimum provision standards

- 10.6 PPG17 states there is no merit in setting a quantity standard for green corridors:
“The need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling in urban areas. There is no sensible way of stating a provision standard”.
- 10.7 PMP therefore does not recommend setting a local minimum standard for this type of green space. Instead, PMP has set out an alternative policy to adopt *Access to Maidstone’s Countryside* which is described in detail below.
- 10.8 Planning policies should promote the use of green corridors to link housing area to Sustrans national cycle network, town centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sport facilities.

Access to Maidstone’s Countryside

- 10.9 The Green Spaces Strategy should seek to develop a web of green open space. It is striking that the development pattern for Maidstone has involved expansion along the radial routes. This has been previously noted in the Director of Planning and Development’s paper of 1993: “Maidstone’s Green Corridors”. Ribbons of development extend along the A26 towards Barming, the A20 north to Allington and East to Bearsted, the A229 and A249 roads to the north of the town, and along the southern routes at Loose and Parkwood. The result has been star-shaped development with fingers of development into rural areas.

SECTION 10 – GREEN CORRIDORS

- 10.10 The result has been substantial areas of undeveloped land between the fingers of development. Green corridors already penetrate almost into the centre of the town. An example is the Riverside Walk (including Whatman Park) and Millennium Gardens towpath. This allows for walking from the town centre right out as far as the Cobtree Manor Estate to the north of the town. Another example is the route through Mote Park and out of town through Vinters Valley Park to the north east.
- 10.11 As can be seen from the Access to Maidstone's Green Spaces Plan, relatively little would need to be done to link existing green spaces, either in the form of appropriate signage, or by using links already in existence (eg historic streets). Gaps in provision could be remedied by obtaining land as part of any planning proposals, at which juncture linear strips could be sought adjacent to development to inter-connect green spaces at either end.
- 10.12 In order to give the concept an identity, it is suggested that it is branded "*Access to Maidstone's Countryside*", to confer the notion that people can walk from the centre of the town itself out into the surrounding countryside. Physical works might include:
- footpaths (either formal or informal)
 - cycling routes
 - bridleways
 - furniture (seating, litter bins, etc.)
 - signage
 - landscaping.
- 10.13 Landscaping could take the form of more formal lawn areas next to footpaths to give the impression of a managed landscape, and to allow people to use the adjoining spaces for sitting, picnics, informal ball games, play, etc. Further away from paths, and particularly towards the rural areas, a less formal approach could include floral meadow or tree planting.
- 10.14 The project needs to include relevant publicity in order to raise awareness. This should include:
- a dedicated leaflet indicating routeways, points of interest and an appropriate contact for further information
 - distribution of publicity material to the Tourist Information Office, Council buildings, libraries, parks, etc.
 - a publicity campaign to publicise not only the value of the project, but also the key stages of its development (opening up of new footpaths, landscaping, etc.) as they happen
 - a map and details on the Council's website.

10.15 There are many advantages to such an approach:

- outdoor recreation will be promoted, and opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside and the town's open spaces provided, with the resultant benefit to the physical and emotional health of users
- the Council's aims in relation to increasing biodiversity will be enhanced by creating a range of interesting habitats and wildlife corridors
- it allows people to travel sustainably, without the need to generate pollution by driving out of the town to reach countryside areas
- greater use will be made of the Borough's existing network of green spaces
- the effects of pollution will be mitigated by creating a "carbon sink" of trees and other vegetation
- the routeways can be used for educational purposes by providing pleasant walks for schools and other organisations in order to inform children of the value of nature, and to create an appreciation of their local environment
- the project will excite the imagination, and lead more people into the countryside. This passive supervision of green space by users will in itself reduce antisocial behaviour, and encourage more people to walk, cycle or ride in Maidstone's green spaces
- the concept introduces opportunities for the town to increase its value both as a better place to live and work, and as a place to visit as a tourist.

10.16 Using the GIS, the network of green corridors in rural areas can be analysed. For the following major villages, envelope maps have been provided which illustrate registered footpaths and bridleways:

- Lenham
- Sutton Valence
- Coxheath
- Marden
- Headcorn
- Staplehurst.

10.17 PMP has not analysed the network of green corridors in this area, but instead concentrated on the urban area. This constitutes a separate piece of work where a more specific analysis of quantity and quality can be made.

10.18 A broad overview of quality and accessibility for green corridors across the borough can be found overleaf.

Quality

Setting and applying minimum provision standards

10.19 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for green corridors. The agreed standard is:

10.20 “Green corridors should be continuous and viable links to the wider countryside incorporating a diversity of habitat types with access agreements and management plans where appropriate. Routes should be safe and use a suitable [surface?] material with sites to be clean and reasonably tidy.”

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

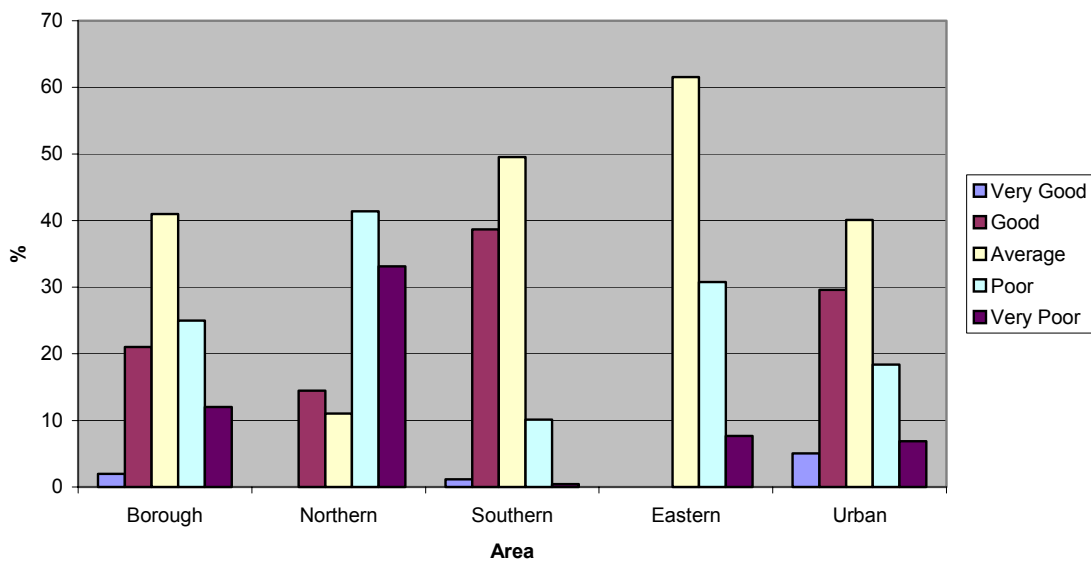
- Cleanliness & maintenance 3
- Safety and security 2
- Vegetation 3
- Ancillary accommodation 3
- Accessibility 3.

10.21 More details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all green corridors identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.

Results of the consultation

10.22 The ratings given for quality of green corridors across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 10.1 below.

Fig 10.2 Quality of Green Corridors



Borough-wide

- 10.23 Figure 10.1 illustrates that a majority of respondents believed quality of green spaces in Maidstone to be average. The next most popular rating given in terms of quality was poor. This indicates that whilst many believed quality to be average, there is some concern that quality levels have dipped to poor in some areas.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

- 10.24 The results for this area suggest that there is a significant problem with quality of green corridors – worse than any other area in Maidstone.
- 10.25 41% rated quality of green corridors as poor and 33% rated the corridors as very poor. No respondents rated any sites as very good.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 10.26 The results for this area are more positive than in the Northern area. 50% of local representatives rated quality of green corridors as average. 39% also rated these green spaces as good.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 10.27 The results from this area illustrated a generally negative view of the quality of green corridors in Maidstone.
- 10.28 No respondents rated any sites as good or very good in terms of quality. A significant proportion of people rate quality levels as average (62%). The remaining respondents rated quality levels as poor (31%) and very poor (8%). There are significant improvements to be made in this area.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 10.29 Finally, quality of green corridors in the urban area was mainly rated as average. However, 30% of respondents rated sites as good which was positive and a higher percentage than in any other area.

Accessibility

Setting and applying minimum provision standards

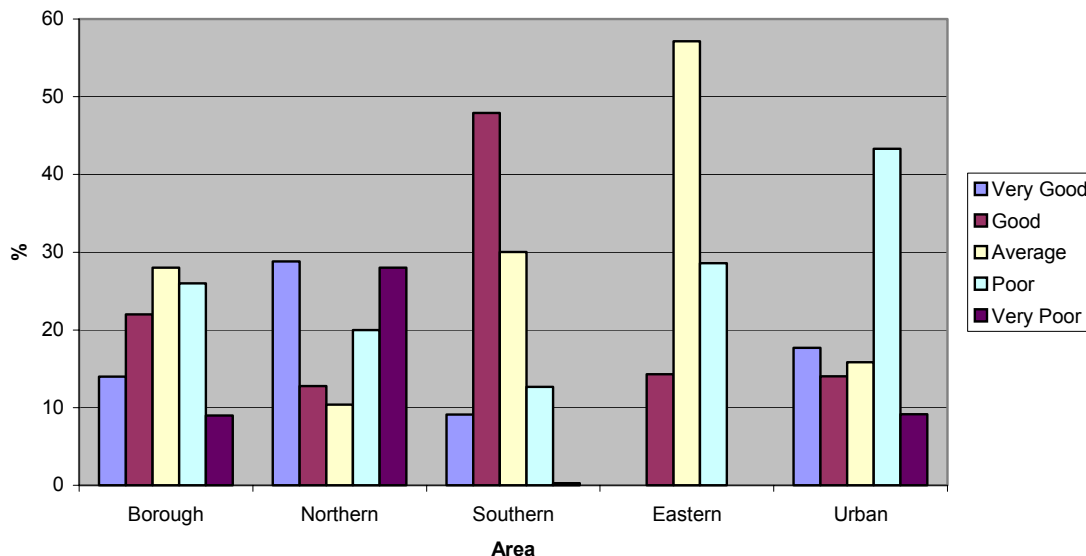
Accessibility thresholds

- 10.30 There is no requirement to set catchment areas for green corridors as they cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation and are very much opportunity-led rather than demand-led.
- 10.31 The results of the consultation however can be taken into account when analysing access to green corridors.

Results of the consultation

- 10.32 The ratings given for quality of green corridors across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 10.3 overleaf.

Fig 10.3 Accessibility of Green Corridors



Borough-wide

10.33 There were varied views on accessibility. Most people rated accessibility levels as average (28%) but a similar level rated accessibility levels as good (22%) and poor (26%). The results from each analysis area should inform the Council as to which areas have particular issues with accessibility.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

10.34 Views on accessibility of green corridors were split with relatively large proportions for ratings of very good (29%) and very poor (28%). Further analysis is recommended to sift out which areas were rated as very poor and then mechanisms put in place to overcome these accessibility problems.

Analysis Area 2 - Southern

10.35 The accessibility levels of green corridors in the southern areas were rated quite positively. 48% of local representatives rated accessibility as good and 30% rated accessibility as average. This is likely to be due to the quantity of green corridors passing through this area and in particular, the River Medway and River Beult.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

10.36 There was only one green corridor that was given high quality, high accessibility and high usage ratings. This was Honeycrook Hill Banks in Stockbury Parish. This site is high value to the local community and therefore should be protected.

10.37 There was also one site in Stockbury where there was a no use rating given along with poor quality and accessibility ratings. This site was Hayes Lane Public Right of Way which is the longest green corridor in this analysis area. The quality and accessibility of this corridor should be improved to increase usage.

SECTION 10 – GREEN CORRIDORS

10.38 In addition to the Hayes Lane PROW, poor or very poor accessibility ratings and therefore no/low use were given to the following corridors:

- banks of the River Medway in West Farleigh
- Walderslade woodland corridor
- Sandling Lane verge green corridor.

Recommendations

10.39 It is recommended that the Council adopts the concept of “*Access to Maidstone’s Countryside*”, and includes it in more detailed planning for the future development of the Green Spaces Strategy.

10.40 An integrated network of green corridors should be developed to promote sustainable transport eg cycle networks and to provide access within and to other green spaces. However, reasonable limitations on development of such networks should be imposed to avoid any potential adverse impact on the important biodiversity of such routes including embankments and cuttings.

10.41 For this reason it is suggested that they are carefully planned to create “honeypot” areas, by leading people past significant attractions on route. Footpaths and cycle routes should deviate from sensitive areas which contain unusual species or sensitive habitats.

10.42 The preponderance of green wedges in the rural areas, particularly in the south, and the shortfall in the urban areas of Maidstone reinforce a clear conclusion. Green corridors should lead from the middle of town and out into the areas surrounding ie to rural Kent, where more significant opportunities for informal recreation exist.

10.43 An action box for green corridors is set out below.

Action Box for Green Corridors

GC1. The Council should continue to develop a network of green corridors (see Section 17 for more detail on the proposed “*Access to Maidstone’s Countryside*” network). This network should encourage the local community to make better use of the abundance of green corridors in the Borough and promote sustainable transport methods. These new green links should link up the larger corridors along the Rivers Medway and Beult.

GC2. Raise awareness of the biodiversity importance of green corridor sites ensuring their protection and management.

GC3. The Council should work in partnership with British Waterways on improving the quality and increasing the usage of rivers and appropriate towpaths.

GC4. The Council should then work to increase awareness of these green links through a targeted marketing campaign (see marketing plan in Section 19).

GC5. Priority should be given to increasing the quality of green corridors in the northern and eastern areas.

GC6. Accessibility should be improved in eastern and urban areas and in specifically at Hayes Lane PROW in the north and the banks of the River Medway in West Farleigh.

Amenity green space

Definition

- 11.1 This type of green space is most commonly found in housing areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and green spaces in and around housing with its primary purpose to provide opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
- 11.2 In rural areas, examples of this type of green space consist of village greens and the grounds around village halls.

Doorstep Greens and Millennium Greens (Countryside Agency)

- 11.3 The Doorstep Greens programme is helping communities around England to create their own new amenity green space, or to transform existing green spaces to meet their needs. Many projects have been funded in urban and rural areas, particularly in disadvantaged areas, to create and manage 'multi-purpose' community greens and for the community to be involved in creating open space.
- 11.4 The aim of the Millennium Greens initiative is to provide new areas of public open space close to people's homes that could be enjoyed permanently by the local community. They were to be breathing spaces - places for relaxation, play and enjoyment of nature and pleasant surroundings. They could be small or large, and in urban or rural locations.
- 11.5 Maidstone has three Millennium Greens:
- Allington Millennium Green
 - Collis Millennium Green
 - Hollingbourne Millennium Green.

Quantity

- 11.6 Green spaces such as playing pitches, although coming under the category of outdoor sports facilities (see section 13) as the primary purpose, do provide the function of amenity green space in many more rural areas and urban areas where there is limited amenity green space. This should be taken into account when making a more detailed specific analysis of an area.

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 11.7 A national standard for amenity green space exists which is 0.5 ha per 1,000 population, based on the current UK average of all applicable local authorities' provision standards for amenity open space as defined in the Rethinking Open Space report (2001).
- 11.8 However, as with the other green space types, local minimum standards were set using PPG17 methodology and through holding a workshop with Council Officers and Members. These standards were agreed as 0.8 ha per 1000 population for the rural analysis areas and 0.7 for the urban area.

11.9 The thematic map in Figure 11.1 below illustrates the provision levels above and below the minimum standard for amenity green space by analysis area across the Borough. This is supported by Table 11.1 which summarises the results. A further, more detailed summary of the quantity results can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 11.1 Provision of amenity green space according to the minimum standard

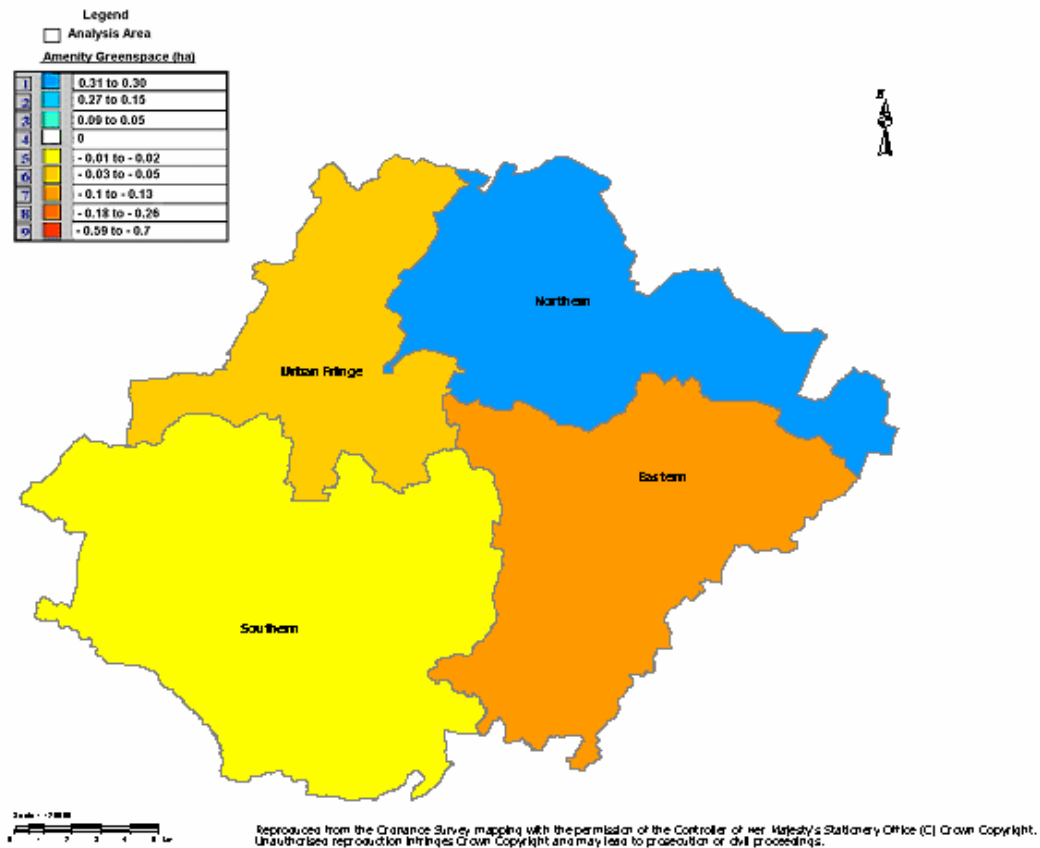


Table 11.1 Quantity figures for amenity green space

Amenity Green space	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)	Local minimum standard (ha per 1000 population)	Balance (above or below the minimum standard) (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	1.11	0.8	+0.31
Analysis Area 2 - Southern	0.79	0.8	-0.01
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	0.67	0.8	-0.13
Analysis Area 4 - Urban	0.65	0.7	-0.05

Analysis Area 1 Northern

- 11.10 When applying the standard to the northern area, **the result indicates that provision levels are above the minimum standard by +0.31 ha per 1000 population.**
- 11.11 However, Detling Parish in particular has expressed a need for a formal green amenity area in the village for all residents to use. Strong protests have been expressed over proposal to build on green space within this area. Further catchment area analyses will indicate whether there are accessible amenity green spaces in other neighbouring parishes.

Analysis Area 2 Southern

- 11.12 When the local standard is applied to the southern analysis area, **the results indicate provision levels are very slightly below the minimum standard at –0.01 ha per 1000 population.**
- 11.13 This indicates that provision levels of amenity green space in this area meet the needs of the population in terms of quantity. As with all types of green space and provision levels however, increases in population provision level should be monitored carefully in the future to ensure this result does not reverse.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 11.14 When applying the rural standard to this area, **the results reveal provision levels are lower than the minimum standard at –0.13 ha per 1000 population.**
- 11.15 Broomfield and Kingswood indicated that they urgently need an area of amenity green space which suits the needs of, and functions for, young and old alike. Consideration should be given to addressing the deficiency in this area.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 11.16 When this standard is applied, provision levels are calculated as just **below the standard by -0.05 ha per 1000 population.**
- 11.17 Bearsted Parish has identified an area of land near Church Landway which may be developed and include some amenity land and other natural open spaces.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 11.18 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for amenity green space. The agreed standard is:
- 11.19 “Amenity green space should be clean and well maintained, free of litter and dog fouling, with clearly defined boundaries, facilities appropriate to their use and appropriate planting.”

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

- Cleanliness & maintenance 4
- Safety and security 5
- Vegetation 4

SECTION 11 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

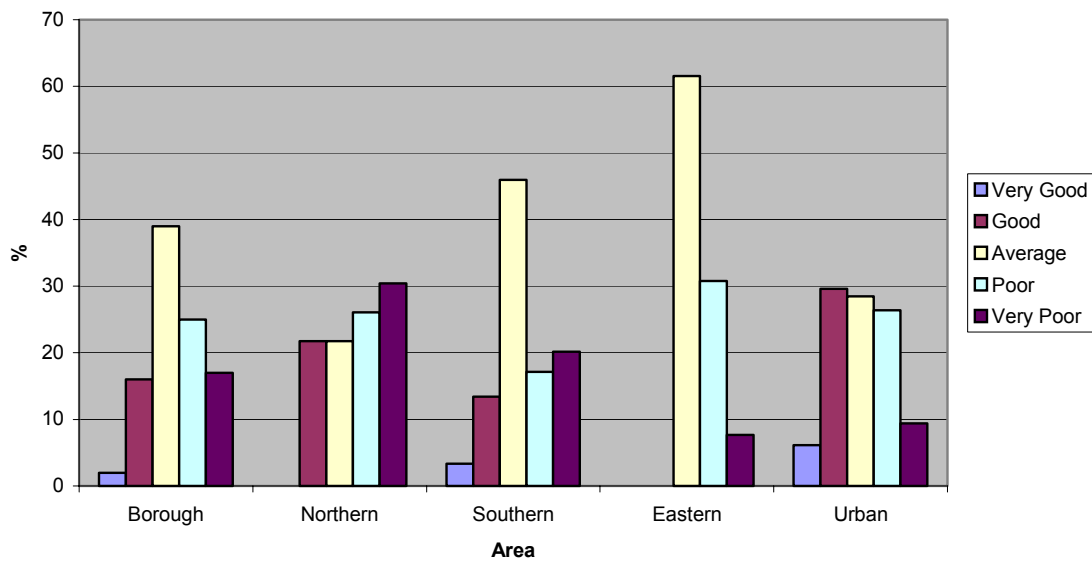
- Ancillary accommodation 3
- Accessibility 5.

11.20 Further details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all amenity green spaces identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.

Results of the consultation

11.21 The ratings given for quality of amenity green spaces across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 11.2 overleaf.

Fig11.2 Quality of Amenity Greenspaces in Maidstone



Borough - wide

11.22 A large proportion of respondents across the Borough indicated that the quality of amenity green spaces was average. 39% rated quality as average and a further 25% rated quality as poor. This result indicates quite a negative view of the quality of amenity green spaces as a relatively high 17% rated quality as very poor.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

11.23 The view on quality of amenity green spaces in this area was quite spread across ratings of good, average and poor. This suggests a variable standard in quality of amenity spaces throughout this area. 22% rated quality as good, 22% as average and 26% as poor.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

11.24 The largest proportion of respondents rated quality of amenity areas as average. 46% gave this quality rating. Significantly, the bulk of other respondents rated quality as either poor (17%) or very poor (20%).

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

11.25 There was a consensus of opinion in this area that the quality levels were average or below average. There appears to be a real issue with quality of this type of green space in this area as, whilst 62% rated quality as average, the rest of the respondents rated it as poor (31%) or very poor (8%).

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

11.26 Similar to the northern area, views on quality of amenity green spaces in this area was varied. Quite high percentages rated quality as good (30%), average (28%) and poor (26%). Clearly, while there are some positive aspects from these statistics, there are still some quality issues which need to be addressed.

Accessibility

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

Accessibility thresholds

11.27 In order to set an accessibility threshold for amenity green spaces, an analysis of the market research results was undertaken for time taken and models of travel. The results are illustrated in Table 11.2 below.

Table 8.2 Time prepared to travel to Amenity green spaces

Time	Total responses	Cumulative totals	Percentage of respondents (%)
No reply	0	0	0
Less than five minutes	59	59	56.19
5 -10 minutes	26	85	80.95
10 -15 minutes	13	98	93.33
15 -20 minutes	5	103	98.10
20 - 30 minutes	1	104	99.05
30+ minutes	1	105	100

11.28 The results show that in accessing amenity green spaces, 75% of respondents are prepared to travel for between 5 and 10 minutes. The preferred mode of transport is on foot. This short travel time is in line with the classification of amenity green space as a neighbourhood facility.

11.29 PMP has made certain assumptions related to accessibility thresholds and distances travelled. These can be found in Appendix C. Table 11.3 below highlights the recommended accessibility threshold for amenity green spaces in Maidstone.

Table 11.3 Recommended accessibility threshold

Accessibility threshold – Amenity green space	
Recommended travel time	Estimated equivalent distance
5 -10 minute walk	0.8km

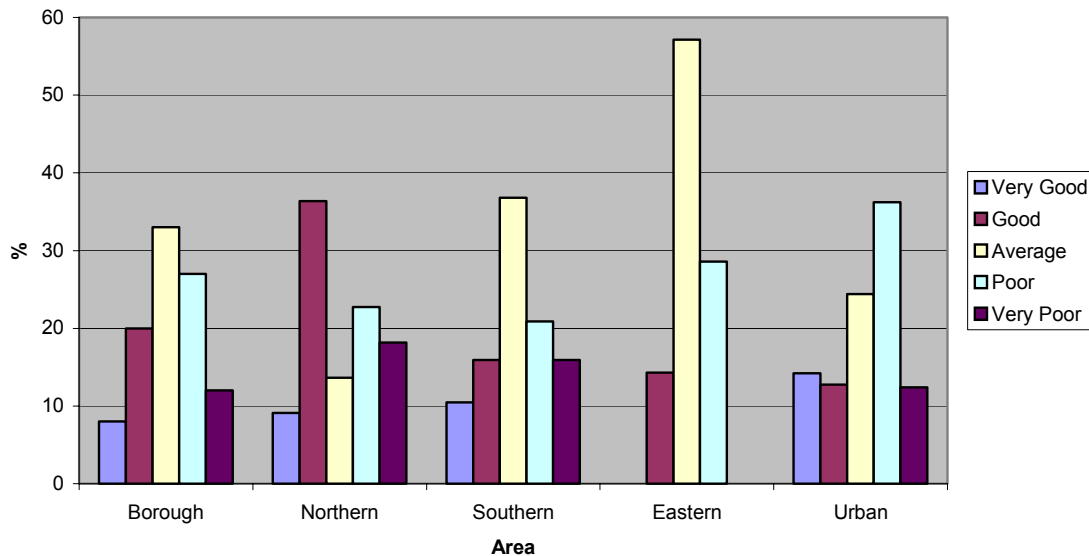
11.30 It is therefore recommended that this standard is used to assess whether residents in the Borough have access to amenity green spaces within this accessibility threshold.

Results of the consultation

11.31 Accessibility to amenity green spaces is very important. This type of green space is provided as an “amenity” to local residents and therefore, access should on the whole be good.

11.32 The ratings given for accessibility of amenity green spaces across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 11.3 below.

Fig 11.3 Accessibility of Amenity Greenspaces in Maidstone



Borough – wide

11.33 The view on accessibility levels of amenity green space was varied across the Borough. A slight majority of respondents rated the quality of these spaces as average but 27% also rated them as poor and 20% rated them as good, suggesting that as with the quality factor, levels of accessibility to amenity green spaces varies across the Borough.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

11.34 The results for accessibility of amenity green spaces in this area of the Borough were quite positive. A high proportion of local representatives rated quality as good (36%). Poor was the next most popular rating with 23%, indicating that there is still some cause for concern.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

11.35 The main view in this area related to accessibility of green spaces was average. 37% gave accessibility of amenity green spaces this rating and a further 21% rated these spaces as poorly accessible.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

11.36 A very large majority of respondents rated the access to amenity green spaces in this area as average. A high 29% rated the accessibility level as poor. This was the most negative area in terms of accessibility out of all the analysis areas.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

11.37 The high level of provision of amenity green spaces in the urban area suggests that accessibility should be good. However, in this area most respondents rated accessibility as poor (36%) or average (24%). Clearly this is an issue which should be addressed.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

11.38 There are many amenity green space sites within the Borough that have high levels of use, in addition to high quality and good accessibility. These sites are of very high value to the Borough and should be protected where possible. They include:

- Village Pond and Grass Area, Lenham
- Stockbury Village Green
- South Green Village Green, Stockbury
- Pope Drive /Reeves Close Open Space, Staplehurst
- Lime Trees Open Space, Staplehurst
- Village Green, West Farleigh
- Bearsted Green
- Lower Road Amenity Green Space, High Street Ward
- Cumberland Green, Shepway North Ward
- Broadoak Estate, South Ward
- Regent Drive Amenity Space, South Ward.

11.39 Mangravet Recreation Ground (one of the larger amenity green spaces in the Borough) has a high level of use but has a low level of accessibility and quality. This site should be a priority for improvements.

SECTION 11 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

11.40 The following sites have low usage, low accessibility and low quality ratings, which suggest that if accessibility and quality levels increase, this may encourage, increased use. These sites are:

- Lucks Way, Marden
- Courtenay Road Amenity Space, High Street Ward
- Quarry Road Amenity Space, High Street Ward.

11.41 On sites where accessibility is poor, this should be improved to enhance the usage. On sites where usage is low, and does not increase through improvements to quality or accessibility, the site classification should be reviewed to ascertain whether the primary purpose of the site is appropriate.

11.42 There are many sites where despite good quality and accessibility levels, the usage by the community remains low. Again, the site classification should be reviewed to ascertain whether the primary purpose of the site is appropriate. Sites falling into this category include:

- Woodlands Walk and Lake Amenity Area, Harrietsham
- Grove Wood Amenity Space, Boxley
- Downswood DPC Amenity Area
- Oakwood House Amenity Space, Heath Ward
- Upper Road Amenity Space, High Street Ward.

Policy implications

11.43 When dealing with developer contributions and new provision of amenity green space the Council should ensure that the area of land is large enough on one site to provide significant recreational value as well as aesthetic value within the new development.

Action Box for Amenity Green Spaces

AG1. To identify opportunities to meet the small shortfall in amenity space in the urban area, in particular in the west and north areas of Maidstone town centre. This will be completed through carrying out a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping.

AG2. Protect and continue to maintain the level of quality and accessibility levels at the highly valued amenity green spaces listed in paragraph 11.38.

AG3. Ensure amenity green spaces are clean, well maintained, safe and secure, appropriate to their use.

AG4. Improve quality and accessibility levels of Mangravet Recreation Ground and other sites listed below:

- Lucks Way
- Courtenay Road Amenity Green Space
- Quarry Road Amenity Green Space.

SECTION 11 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

AG5. Consider re-designating the primary purpose of the following sites from amenity green space to another type:

- Woodlands Walk and Lake Amenity Area
- Grove Wood Amenity Area
- Downswood DPS Amenity Space
- Oakwood House Amenity Space
- Upper Road Amenity Space.

Provision for Children and Young People

Definition

- 12.1 This type of green space includes areas such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people.

“Play for Today” Towards a Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas (2004-2008, Maidstone Borough Council)

- 12.2 The Council’s strategy seeks to achieve four key aims with regards to play areas:
- to ensure the Council in partnership with others provides an appropriate number, quality and diversity of play areas throughout the Borough
 - to provide play facilities which meet the identified needs of young people
 - to maximise the potential support for the development and refurbishment of play areas through external funding
 - to understand and respond to community concerns about play areas.

Quantity

- 12.3 Two separate analysis of quantity were made:
- 1) using the PPG17 standard definition of facilities for children and young people:
“areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, skateboard areas and teenage shelters”
 - 2) fenced, equipped play areas only (in line the NPFA definitions used with Maidstone’s Sport and Play facilities strategy).
- 12.4 The main difference between the two definitions is that for PPG17, the definition includes not only the formal, equipped, fenced play areas but also areas of play designated for children and young people such as skateboard areas and teenage shelters. This definition has allowed local representatives to identify areas which are informal spaces designated for children and young people. Through our consultation with the Maidstone Youth Form, PMP found that such areas are very popular with children aged between 12 and 16.
- 12.5 In both analyses, where play facilities were found to be located amongst a larger area of amenity green space (where primary purposes were distinctly different) these play spaces have been audited separately to the amenity green space. The area of amenity green space in these cases have been adjusted accordingly.

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 12.6 In discussion with Officers and Members, it was agreed that equipped play areas were the priority given the work already completed in the *Sport and Play facilities strategy, Play for Today* and the budgetary pressure on the management and maintenance of equipped play. As a result, local standards have been set for equipped play areas. The quantity standard for equipped play areas have been set at a level which concurs with the findings of the sport and play strategy. This supports the rationalisation of sites which do not meet the required play quality standard or local needs.
- 12.7 Using the parish and ward consultation questionnaires, the wider community market research findings and a workshop with Council Officers and Members, the agreed minimum local standard for the provision of equipped play areas is **0.12 ha per 1000 population for the urban area and 0.09 ha per 1000 population for the rural area.**
- 8.1 The thematic map in Figure 12.1 below illustrates the provision levels above or below the standard by analysis area across the Borough. Table 12.1 beneath summarises the results. Following this table, the results of applying the standard to each analysis area is presented.

Fig 12.1 Provision of equipped play areas according to minimum standard

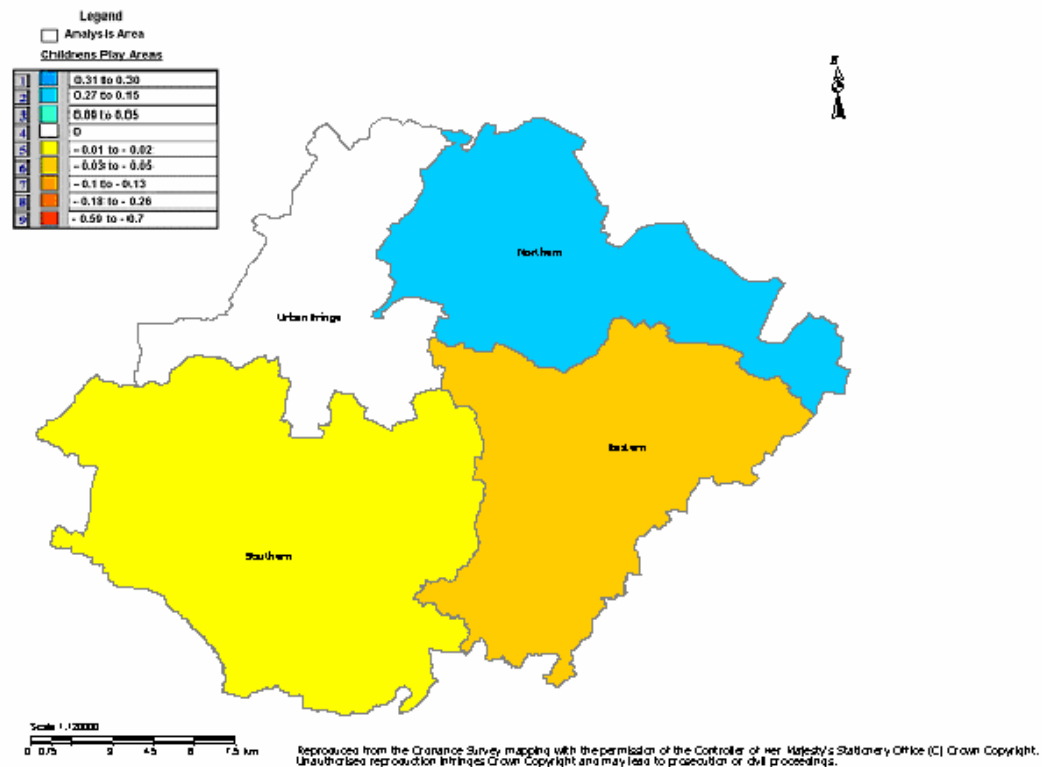


Table 12.1 Quantity figures for equipped play areas

Equipped play areas	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)	Local minimum standard (ha per 1000 population)	Balance (above or below the minimum standard) (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	0.24	0.09	0.15
Analysis Area 2 - Southern	0.07	0.09	-0.02
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	0.05	0.09	-0.04
Analysis Area 4 - Urban	0.12	0.12	0

Analysis Area 1 - Northern

- 12.8 The results show that when analysing existing provision levels, **in the northern area, provision is above the local minimum standard with a balance of 0.15 ha per 1000 population.**
- 12.9 Parishes were asked through the questionnaires to add any further comments regarding quantity, quality or accessibility. Within this analysis area, Detling Parish Council considered the need for facilities for children and young people. Further analysis should therefore be made of the facilities in this particular area but no additional equipped play areas for the Northern analysis area are recommended.

Analysis Area 2 - Southern

- 12.10 When applying the rural minimum standard for equipped play areas to the southern analysis area, the figures illustrate a level of provision very slightly **below the minimum standard at –0.02 ha per 1000 population.**
- 12.11 The results indicate the southern area has a very small deficiency of equipped play areas although this analysis area is fortunate in that it has many large play areas including:
- Cockpits Play Area, Marden
 - Nettlestead Children’s Play Area
 - Scout Field, Marden
 - Playground Cornwallis /Linton Avenue.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 12.12 When applying the rural standard to this area, the results reveal provision levels are again only **slightly lower than the minimum standard at –0.04 ha per 1000 population.**

SECTION 12 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

12.13 Broomfield and Kingswood Parish has reported many requests for additional children's play facilities and the Parish Council has identified an area next to the village hall which would suit this purpose. Currently, this land is in private ownership.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

12.14 The minimum standard for the urban area of 0.12 ha per 1000 population. This is identical to the calculated provision levels for children's play facilities in this area. This indicates the provision levels are adequate to meet the needs of the urban population at this present time. No additional equipped play areas should be provided in the urban area.

12.15 In 2002, Boxley Parish produced a report on children's play facilities in their parish which outlined the following issues with the quantity of provision:

- facilities within the parish for children (1-9 years) and youth (10-17) are often inadequate and there has been concern about the impact this is having on the local communities and the young people themselves
- the two main areas experiencing problems with youths are Grove Green/ Vinters Park and Walderslade/ Lordswood
- young people in Grove Green/ Vinters Park have no formal facilities at all
- the lack of facilities and open space in Walderslade and the lack of facilities for youths in Grove Green/ Vinters Park may be a cause for the anti-social and criminal damage experienced by communities.

12.16 The local representatives have outlined the following specific actions they wish to be implemented:

- a proactive stance from the Borough and County Council to identify land and provide facilities for children and youth in Walderslade/ Lordswood
- the provision of youth facilities at Grove Green/ Vinters Park (area D, Shepherds Gate has already been identified as a potential site)
- the regular maintenance of the small area identified at Sandling - a small triangle of land in the village might be suitable for some facilities or just be maintained as an open space (the land is presently owned by the Highway department).

12.17 The Council should ensure that further monitoring of the levels of provision of this type are regularly undertaken and Boxley Ward prioritised for any new play facilities.

12.18 Representatives from North Ward have identified a need to provide additional provision for children and young people across the ward.

12.19 In High Street Ward, a trust responsible for Collis Field are looking into making this play space the first in the Borough with equipment for both able-bodied and disabled children. Funding for this project is proving difficult.

12.20 A separate section of the surveys were dedicated to finding out the specific views on the provision of children's play areas in the Borough. The results of the quantity related questions can be found in Appendix C.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

12.21 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for facilities for children and young people. The agreed quality standard is:

12.22 “Facilities for children and young people should be in safe and secure locations, well maintained, appropriately planted, free of dog fouling and equipped to provide a challenging range of activities to suit varied interests, age groups and levels of agility.”

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

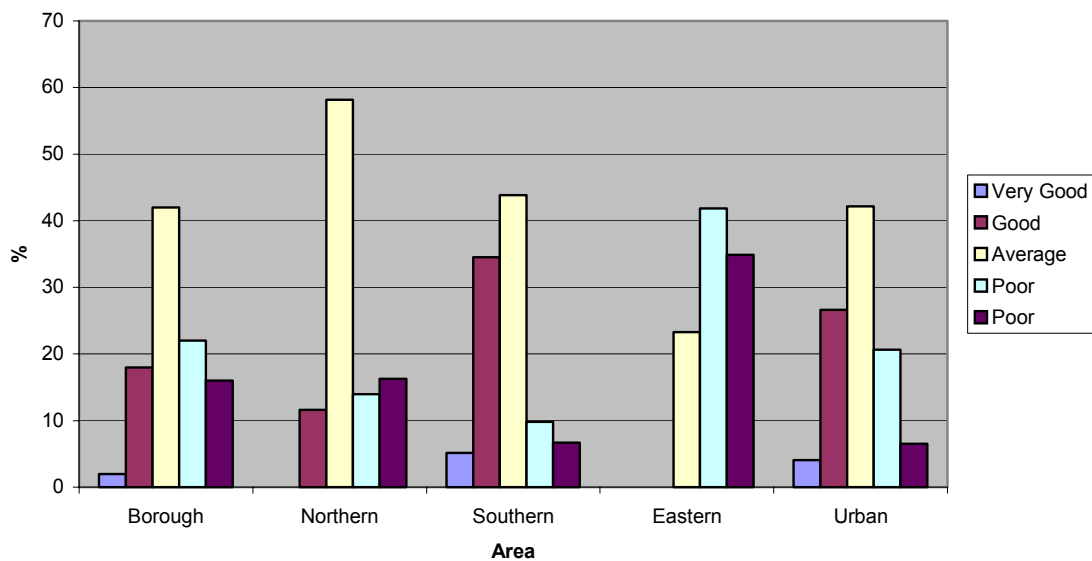
- Cleanliness & maintenance 4
- Safety and security 5
- Vegetation 3
- Ancillary accommodation 4
- Accessibility 5.

12.23 More details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all areas for children and young people identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.

Results of the consultation

12.24 The ratings given for quality of facilities for children and young people across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 12.2 below:

Fig 12.2 Quality of Facilities for Children and Young People



Borough-wide

- 12.25 A high percentage of respondents in the Borough as a whole rated the quality of facilities for children and young people as average (42%). More of the remaining local representatives rated quality as poor (22%) or very poor (16%) than good (15%) or very good (2%).

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

- 12.26 The quality ratings given to areas for children and young people were mainly average (58%) indicating a need for further improvements to raise levels of quality above the perceptions of average.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 12.27 This ratings given to quality in this area were quite positive, with 44% rating quality as average and 35% rating quality as good.
- 12.28 This is particularly positive as this area has more facilities for children and young people than any other area. Best practice examples should be used from this area and compared with other sites throughout the Borough.
- 12.29 Specific quality issues were raised about Surrenden Playing Field and Staple Drive Play Areas where improved, more up-to-date equipment is required. Local youths have also requested that a skate park be provided. A sports wall has also been requested to serve the needs of those aged over 11 years old.
- 12.30 West Farleigh Parish and Langley Parish have also requested improved children's play equipment.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 12.31 The results for quality in this area were mainly negative. 42% of respondents rated quality as poor and 35% as very poor. Therefore, the focus should be on improving the quality of facilities for children and young people in this area.
- 12.32 Broomfield and Kingswood Parish identified a serious issue of dangerous equipment in the children's play areas.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 12.33 The ratings given to quality of children's play areas in the urban area were mostly average. 42% rated quality as average whilst slightly more positively, 27% rated the areas as good.
- 12.34 Specific comments about quality were made about the following sites:
- Upper Fulling Pits – concerns were expressed about the age of the equipment which needs to be replaced
 - Dickens Road Play Area – the children's play equipment is reported to have been removed and the area is now vandalised and inappropriate to use as its primary purpose
 - Woodbridge Drive Play Area – the equipment is dangerous and needs replacing

- YMCA play area needs upgrading
- Trinity Play Area – this should be a priority for improvements.

Accessibility

Accessibility thresholds

- 12.35 With regards to accessibility there are national standards for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs:
- LAPs – aged 4-6 years; one minute walk or within 100 metres with a minimum area of 100m square. LAPs typically have no play equipment and therefore could be considered as amenity green space
 - LEAPs – aged a minimum of five years; minimum area of 400 square metres or within five minutes walking time along pedestrian routes
 - NEAPs – aged a minimum of eight years; minimum area of 1000 square metres and should be located within 15 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes.
- 12.36 For this study, local accessibility standards have been set using the market research results. The results are illustrated in Table 12.2 below.

Table 12.2 Time prepared to travel to Children’s Play Areas

Time	Total responses	Cumulative totals	Percentage of respondents (%)
No reply	0	0	0
Less than five minutes	58	58	68.24
5 -10 minutes	16	74	87.06
10 -15 minutes	3	77	90.59
15 -20 minutes	7	84	98.82
20 - 30 minutes	0	84	98.82
30+ minutes	1	85	100

- 12.37 The table indicates that at least 75% of residents are prepared to travel between five and 10 minutes to visit children’s play areas. By a significant majority, the preferred mode of transport is on foot. These results are in line with the neighbourhood classification applied to this type of green space.
- 12.38 Assumptions have been made related to accessibility thresholds and distances travelled. These can be found in Appendix C. Table 12.3 below highlights the recommended accessibility threshold for children’s play areas in Maidstone.

Table 12.3 Recommended accessibility threshold

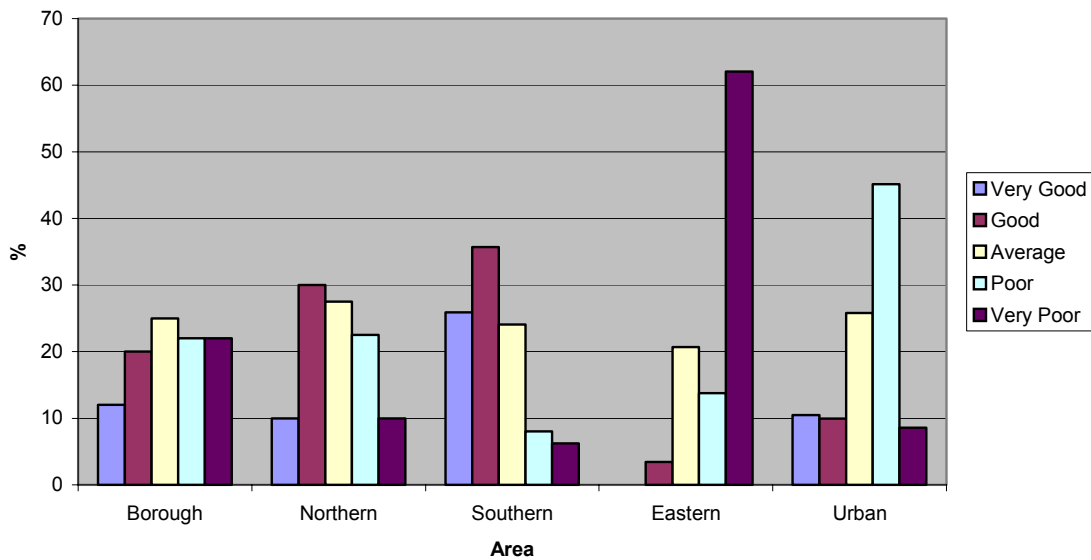
Accessibility threshold – Children’s Play Areas	
Recommended travel time	Estimated equivalent distance
10 – 15 minute walk	1.2 km

12.39 This accessibility threshold should be used to assess the proportion of local residents who have access to a children’s play area within this threshold. A catchment mapping exercise applying this standard will illustrate locationally deficient areas of the Borough.

Results of the consultation

12.40 The ratings given for accessibility of facilities for children and young people across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 12.3 overleaf.

Fig 12.3 Accessibility of Facilities for Children and Young People



Borough-wide

12.41 The views on accessibility to facilities for children and young people were quite varied across the Borough which suggests that levels of accessibility are good and poor in areas. The analysis by area indicates which areas are of concern in terms of accessibility levels.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

12.42 Ratings given to accessibility of facilities provided for children and young people are almost equal between good (30%) and average (28%). The rating of poor also scored quite highly (23%).

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 12.43 Similar to the ratings given to quality in this analysis area, accessibility ratings were also positive. 36% rated accessibility levels as good and 26% rated quality levels as very good.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 12.44 In contrast to the ratings given for accessibility in the southern area, accessibility levels to facilities for children and young people are very poor. A very high 62% of respondents from this area rated accessibility levels as very poor. This is significant and this area should be a priority for improvements.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 12.45 There is also a concern over accessibility levels to facilities for children and young people in the urban area. There is a high number of sites in this area and ratings were negative. 45% rated accessibility as poor and 26% as average.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

- 12.46 Children's play areas are a popular use of open space.
- 12.47 Most sites that have a high level of use usually have good or very good quality and accessibility ratings. The majority of sites with a low level of use have average or poor quality and accessibility ratings. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.
- 12.48 All the sites which are reported to have high use, are also reported to have high quality and accessibility levels. This relates to 23 sites. This supports the hypothesis that people will use sites if access and quality levels are high.
- 12.49 The focus should be on those sites where usage is low and is linked to the reportedly low levels of quality and accessibility of these sites. There is an issue for the following sites:
- Play Area, East Sutton
 - Upper Fulling Pits Play Area, East Ward
 - Play Area – Tall Trees Close, Broomfield and Kingswood.
- 12.50 The Tall Trees Play area is reported to have no use at all and this issue should be further investigated.
- 12.51 One site has low use and very poor quality but has very good accessibility. This site is Woodbridge Drive Play Area and it is recommended that the quality is improved at this site as a priority.

Proposed recommendations

- 12.52 The results of the consultation with ward and parish representatives indicates a dissatisfaction regarding the quantity of provision for children and young people.
- 12.53 However, our quantity audit and the application of the minimum standard agreed by Officers and Members does indicate the correct level of provision is in place.

SECTION 12 – PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 12.54 PMP recommends that the Council therefore focuses resources on improving the **quality** of these spaces rather than investing in additional provision of new areas.
- 12.55 PMP also recommends that the Council further investigates provision levels in the identified problem areas and considers whether the problems highlighted could be addressed by improving the quality of existing sites, making them more appealing and suited to the needs of older children and teenagers.
- 12.56 Hang-out shelters and skateboard facilities should be used to encourage teenagers to use park areas. This would help to bring youths together in one place and make the situation more manageable, avoiding problems with nearby residential areas. This would also need education of the public as to advantages and disadvantages of such areas.

Action Box for Children’s Play Areas

CP1. The Council should seek developer contributions to improve the quality and accessibility of existing facilities for children and young people and ensure a range of well equipped, safe play spaces are available.

CP2. The Council should also strive to achieve a good distribution of play spaces accessible to all and suitable for children of all ages and abilities. This will be completed through carrying out a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping incorporating a suitability assessment.

CP3. It is recommended that further consultation takes place with parish and ward representatives to understand whether their levels of dissatisfaction relate to the variety of equipment provided at sites, or the amount of play space provided. The results of this detailed consultation should feed directly into planning of new Section 106 agreements.

CP4. Improvements in quality and accessibility should be prioritised to the play area in Tall Trees Close (Broomfield and Kingswood Parish) as this site is reported to have no use and has low accessibility and quality levels. Priority should also be given to improving other sites with similar low use, low accessibility and low quality issues such as the play area in East Sutton and Upper Fulling Pits Play Area in East Ward.

Outdoor sports facilities

Definition

- 13.1 Outdoor sports facilities is a wide-ranging category of open space and includes natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens and golf courses with the primary purpose for participation in outdoor sports.

Sport and Play Facilities Strategy (February 2003)

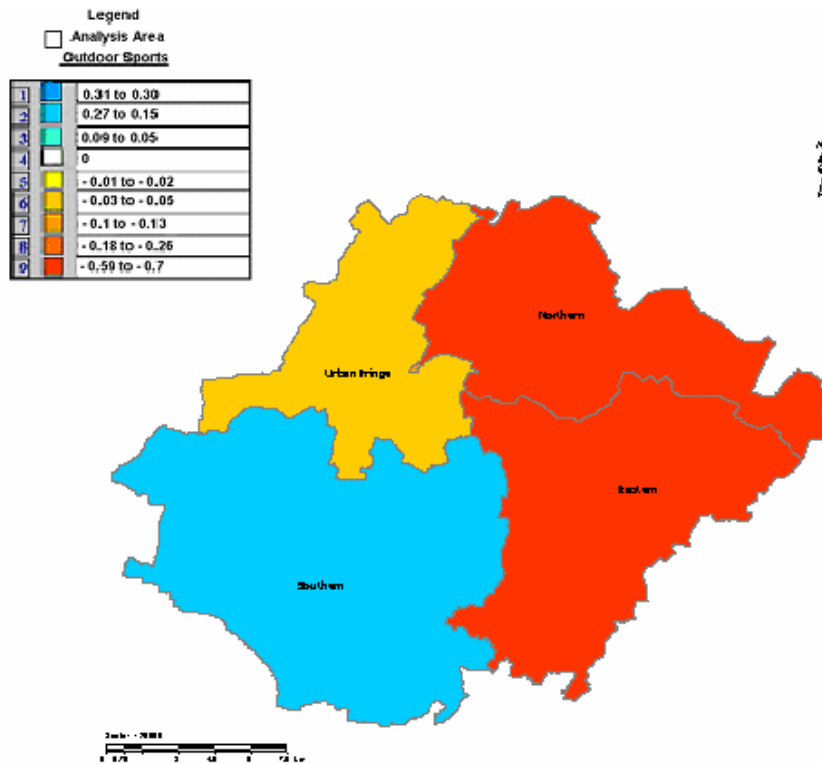
- 13.2 The Council already has a detailed strategy for sport and play facilities which was outlined in Section 4. High priority recommendations in the action plan related to outdoor open space provision included the need to:
- develop firm policies in the Local Plan to ensure that public open space is secured and prevents further loss of grass pitches
 - facilitate the development of community-use agreements for sports pitches at schools sites
 - seek Developer Contributions for additional pitch provision
 - new 400-metre synthetic athletics track to be developed in Borough
 - improvement in the maintenance of Council-owned bowling greens
 - additional children's playgrounds should be provided in a number of wards
 - the provision of additional Outdoor Basketball Initiative (OBI) goals should be considered.
 - additional MUGAs should be provided.
- 13.3 The Playing Pitch Strategy Methodology applied for this work is based upon NPFA standards for the provision of football, rugby, hockey and cricket pitches although local standards are applied as a comparator. The Playing Pitch Methodology focused specifically on football, rugby, hockey and cricket pitches.
- 13.4 The methodology used in this analysis is based upon a definition recommended in PPG17. Because of the wide-ranging definition of this type of open space (ie it includes golf courses, bowling greens and athletics tracks) a comparison cannot be made with the previous work. It is important not to directly relate the PPG17 analysis with the results of the Playing Pitch Strategy and Sport and Play Facilities Strategy in terms of quantity.
- 13.5 PPG17 guidance for quantity assessments is based on calculating the areas of all outdoor sports spaces. The Sport and Play Facilities Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy does not use this method and instead focuses more on the individual and local club needs for sports facilities and can be viewed as a more reliable indication of supply and demand.

Quantity

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 13.6 Using the parish and ward consultation questionnaires, the wider community market research findings and a workshop with Council Officers and Members, **minimum standards have been agreed for outdoor sports facilities to be 1.4 ha per 1000 population for the urban area and 2.7 ha per 1000 population for the rural areas.**
- 13.7 When these standards are applied to figures for existing provision levels, the results are as indicated in Figure 13.1 and Table 13.1 overleaf.

Figure 13.1 Provision of outdoor sports facilities according to minimum standard



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Table 13.1 Quantity figures for outdoor sports facilities

Outdoor Sports Facilities	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)	Local minimum standard (ha per 1000 population)	Balance (above or below the minimum standard) (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	2.00	2.7	-0.7
Analysis Area 2 - Southern	2.97	2.7	+0.27
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	2.11	2.7	-0.59
Analysis Area 4 - Urban	1.37	1.4	-0.03

Analysis Area 1 Northern

- 13.8 When applying the standard to the northern area, **the result indicates that provision levels are below the minimum standard by –0.7 ha per 1000 population.**
- 13.9 The calculations indicate there is a deficiency of space for outdoor sports facilities. This deficiency should be addressed by further investigating what this area of Maidstone requires. For example, it may be that the local communities in this area would all value locally based multi-sport recreation grounds.
- 13.10 However, any new sports facility provision should be guided by the established Sport and Play Facilities Strategy.

Analysis Area 2 Southern

- 13.11 The southern area of Maidstone is fortunate in its provision of outdoor sports facilities. When the rural standard is applied, the current levels of provision are above the minimum standard with a positive balance of 0.27 ha per 1000 population.
- 13.12 No additional outdoor sports facilities should be provided in this area and instead a focus on improving quality levels should be taken. Also a review of the variety of sports facilities provided should be assessed.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 13.13 When applying the rural standard to this area, **the results reveal provision levels are lower than the minimum standard at –0.59 ha per 1000 population.**
- 13.14 Similarly to the northern area, the Council should seek to address this imbalance by determining specific sporting requirements of those living in this area and referring to the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 13.15 When this standard is applied, provision levels are calculated as just **below the standard by -0.03 ha per 1000 population.** This indicates that sports facility provision in the urban area is sufficient for the population living there.
- 13.16 Because of the specific nature of sports facilities, the results of the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy will further guide sports facility provision in this area, which above all areas in the Borough is the most accessible for strategic green spaces such as outdoor sports facilities.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 13.17 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for outdoor sports facilities. The agreed quality standard was:
- 13.18 “All outdoor sports facilities should be safe and accessible. They should follow standards set by the national governing bodies. Ancillary accommodation should be maintained to an appropriate standard and be fit for purpose. Sites should be clean and tidy and free of litter, dog fouling and graffiti.”

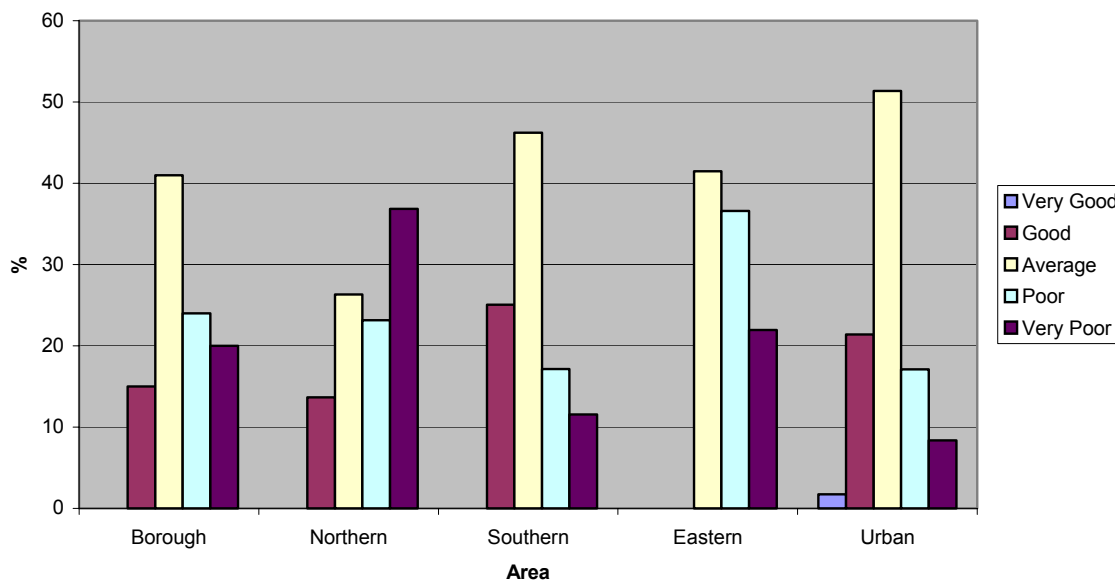
Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

- Cleanliness & maintenance 5
 - Safety and security 5
 - Vegetation 4
 - Ancillary accommodation 4
 - Accessibility 5.
- 13.19 More information can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all outdoor sports facilities identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.

Results of the consultation

13.20 The ratings given for quality of outdoor sports facilities across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 13.2 below.

Fig 13.2 Quality of Outdoor Sports Facilities in Maidstone



Borough – wide

13.21 A significant proportion (41%) of residents in the Borough rated the quality of outdoor sports facilities as average. However, 24% also rated them as poor and 20% as very poor. No respondents rated the quality as very good.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

13.22 The quality of outdoor sports facilities in the northern area is a cause for concern. 37% of local representatives rated the quality as very poor. Many of the other respondents rated quality as either average (26%) or poor (23%).

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

13.23 The most popular rating given to the quality of outdoor sports facilities in the southern analysis area is average: 46% gave this rating. More positively, 25% rated the quality of outdoor sports facilities in this area as good.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

13.24 The results for quality of this type of green space in this area are quite negative. No respondents rated quality as good or very good. 41% rated them as average and 37% rated them as poor.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

13.25 A large proportion of respondents (51%) in this area rated quality as average. 21% rated quality as good and 17% rated quality as poor.

Accessibility

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

Accessibility thresholds

- 13.26 There are no national accessibility standards for outdoor sports facilities. A local accessibility standard has been set through analysing the consultation responses as illustrated in Table 13.2 below.

Table 13.2 Time prepared to travel to Outdoor Sports Facilities

Time	Total responses	Cumulative totals	Percentage of respondents (%)
No reply	0	0	0
Less than five minutes	4	4	16.67
5 -10 minutes	9	13	54.17
10 -15 minutes	6	19	79.17
15 -20 minutes	2	21	87.50
20 - 30 minutes	2	23	95.83
30+ minutes	1	24	100

- 13.27 The travel time which at least 75% of respondents would be prepared to travel is between 10 and 15 minutes. The preferred mode of transport to access outdoor sports facilities is on foot although in reality, due to the specialist nature of these facilities, it is likely that people will travel further and may need cars to transport equipment etc. Travelling by car was the next most popular response to the surveys for this question.
- 13.28 PMP has made certain assumptions related to accessibility thresholds and distances travelled. These can be found in Appendix C. Table 13.3 highlights the recommended accessibility threshold for outdoor sports facilities in Maidstone.

Table 13.3 Recommended accessibility threshold

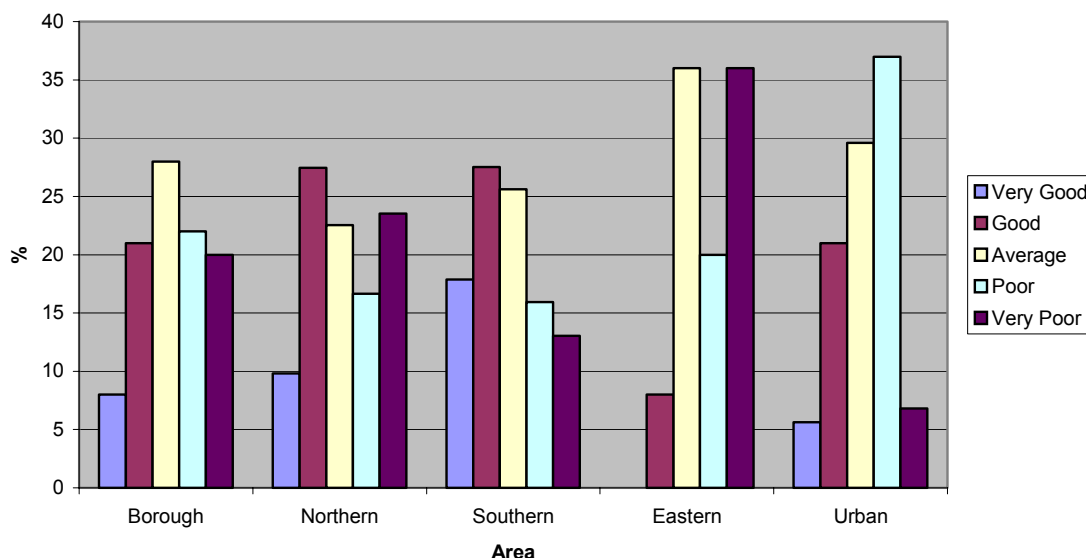
Accessibility threshold – Outdoor Sports Facilities	
Recommended travel time	Estimated equivalent distance
10 - 15 minute walk	1.2km

- 13.29 It is therefore recommended that this standard is used to assess whether residents in the Borough have adequate access to outdoor sports facilities. A catchment mapping exercise will help identify those areas in the Borough which are locationally deficient when applying this standard.

Results of the consultation

13.30 The ratings given for accessibility of outdoor sports facilities across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 13.3 below:

Fig 13.3 Accessibility of Outdoor Sports Facilities in Maidstone



Borough – wide

13.31 The ratings given to accessibility across the Borough were split between good and very poor. Most respondents rated accessibility as average, but 20% rated it as good, 22% rated it as poor and 22% rated it as very poor.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

13.32 The most popular rating given for accessibility to outdoor sports facilities in this area was good (27%). However, 24% rated accessibility as very poor and 23% rated accessibility as average, suggesting that accessibility varied considerably across this area.

Analysis Area 1 – Southern

13.33 Ratings given to accessibility in the southern area were predominantly good (28%) or average (26%).

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

13.34 The results for accessibility in this area were negative. An equal percentage of respondents rated accessibility as average (36%) or very poor (36%). The next most popular rating was poor, where 20% of all respondents rated accessibility as poor.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

13.35 Similar to the eastern area, the accessibility levels of outdoor sports facilities in the urban area are quite negative. 37% of local representatives rated accessibility levels to these spaces as poor and 30% rate them as average.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

13.36 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have good or very good quality and accessibility ratings. Most sites with a low level of use have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating as factors are related and interlinked.

13.37 There are many outdoor sports facility sites that have high quality, accessibility and usage. These sites are therefore highly valued provision of open spaces within the community and it is important that these sites are protected. There are 21 such sites that provide evidence that this is the case in Maidstone.

13.38 There are three sites which are reported to have low use, poor or very poor quality and accessibility levels. These are sites where the low use could be attributed to the low standards of quality and accessibility. There are:

- Sports Field, Broomfield and Kingswood
- Fire Station Land, South Ward.

13.39 It is assumed that as the Fire Station Land has no use that this is a private site with no accessibility to the public. Quality levels are reported to be low and so improving access to this site is beneficial.

Recommendations

13.40 The results of the quantity analysis indicate that the eastern and northern areas in particular are deficient in space to play outdoor sports. Further investigation and reference to the needs identified in the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy should be undertaken to establish the specific sporting needs of the public living in these areas. It is recommended that in terms of sports pitches, more development work is completed to set up formal community use agreements with local secondary and even primary schools.

13.41 Consideration should also be given to widening access at some of the large golf courses in terms of offering subsidised memberships for low-income groups. However, this is very difficult when private commercial operators are involved.

13.42 Quality and accessibility levels are causes for concern on an analysis level (northern and eastern) and at a specific level. The value of these sites should be enhanced through appropriate improvement works.

Action Box for Outdoor Sports Facilities

OS1. Review existing cleansing specifications, set a “local” BVPI199 target for cleaning, set a new specification and allocate funding to achieve the goal.

OS2. Continue to work towards completing the actions outlined in the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy.

OS3. The Council will facilitate the provision of sports facilities where there is an identified shortfall and any facility provided will be maintained to the standards suggested by the appropriate body. This exercise will be assisted through carrying out a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping.

OS4. The Council will use its best endeavours to ensure the proposed athletics track at Oldborough Manor is provided.

OS5. Rationalise the number of senior and junior sports pitches to cater for current demands.

OS6. More development work should be completed to set up formal community use agreements with local secondary and even primary schools, especially for sports pitches. The Council will use its best endeavours to introduce formal agreements with schools (etc.) for community use of its facilities outside school hours.

Allotments and Community Gardens

Definition

- 14.1 This includes all forms of allotments with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. This type of green space may also include urban farms.

Quantity

Setting and applying provision standards

- 14.2 A local standard has been set using the methodology outlined in Section 5. Using the parish and ward consultation questionnaires, the wider community market research findings and a workshop with Council Officers and Members, **the agreed minimum standard for the provision of allotments and community gardens in the urban area is 0.21 ha per 1000 population. A rural minimum standard was set at 0.18 ha per 1000 population.**
- 14.3 The thematic map in Figure 14.1 below illustrates the levels of provision above and below these quantity standards. This is supported by Table 14.1 which summarises the results. A further, more detailed summary of the quantity results can be found in Appendix C.

Fig 14.1 Provision levels of allotments and community gardens according to the minimum standard

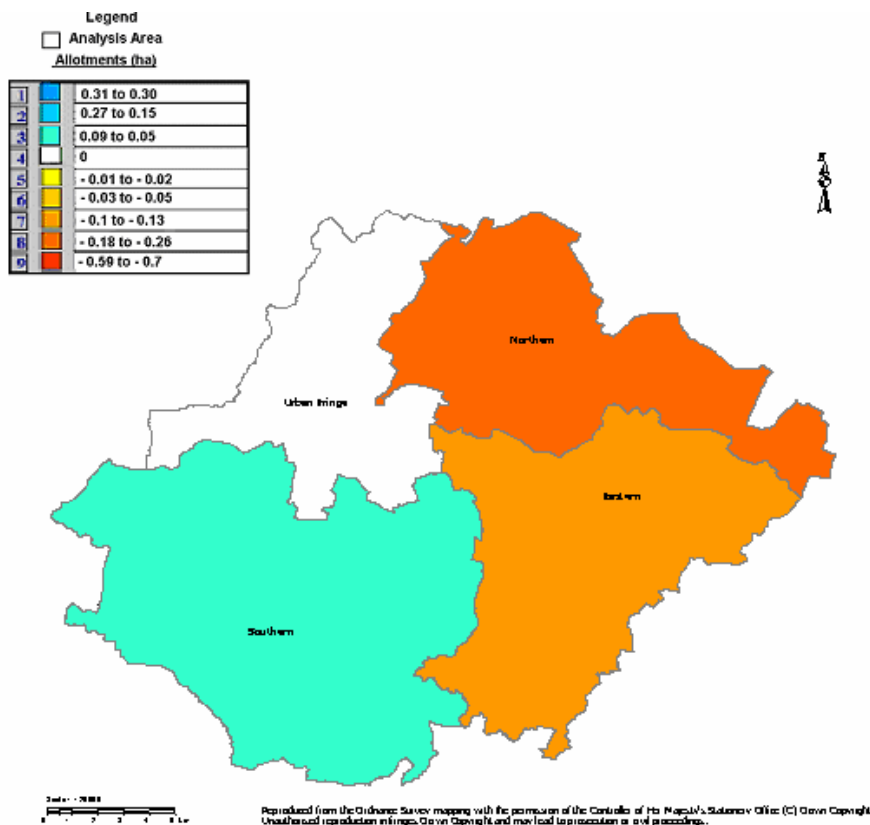


Table 14.1 Quantity figures for Allotments and Community Gardens

Allotments and Community Gardens	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)	Local standard (ha per 1000 population)	Balance (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	0.0	0.18	-0.18
Analysis Area 2 – Southern	0.27	0.18	+0.09
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	0.07	0.18	-0.11
Analysis Area 4 – Urban	0.21	0.21	0

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

- 14.4 No allotments and community gardens were identified in the northern area. Therefore, when applying the minimum standard to the northern area, the provision levels are shown to be below the standard at -0.18 ha per 1000 population.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 14.5 When the provision standard is applied to the Southern area, **existing provision levels are above the standard with a positive balance of 0.09 ha of allotment space per 1000 people.**

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 14.6 This eastern analysis area has a small shortfall of allotments and community gardens equal to -0.11 ha per 1000 population.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 14.7 The provision levels of allotments and community gardens in the urban area is equal to the standard set. Therefore provision levels of allotments and community gardens in this area adequately matches requirements in terms of quantity of provision.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 14.8 Assessing quality levels of allotments and community gardens is different from other green space types in that the levels of quality of the actual plots are the responsibility of the plot holder rather than the Parish or Borough Council. However, the Council would still have ultimate responsibility for the infrastructure of the sites ie security, signage and fencing etc.

SECTION 14 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

14.9 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for allotments and community gardens. The agreed standard was:

14.10 “Allotments should be clean and maintained areas with defined and secure boundaries. Where appropriate, access pathways and signage should be clearly provided and well maintained. Natural features and vegetation should be encouraged to ensure sustainable management of site.”

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

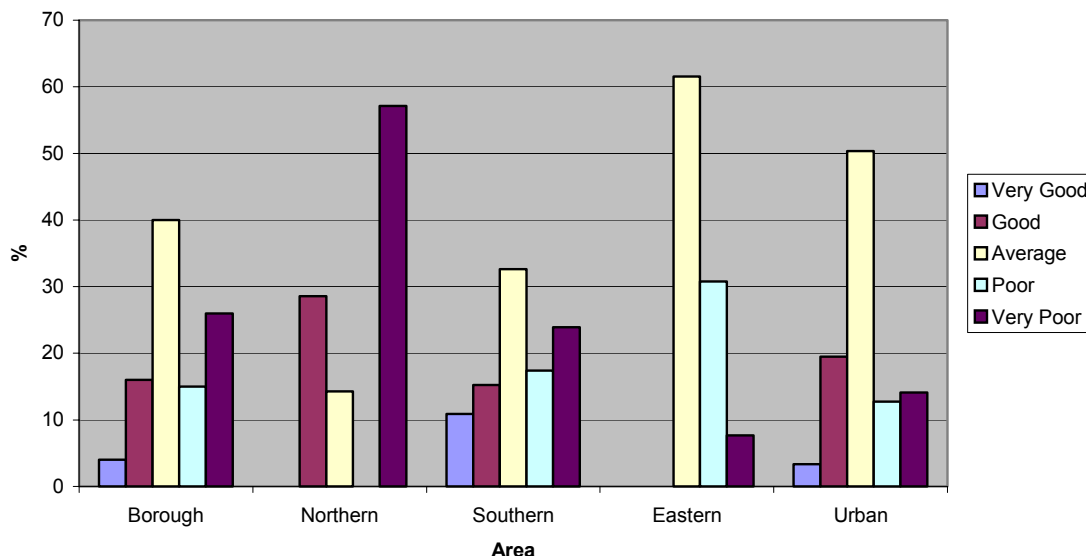
- Cleanliness & maintenance 3
- Safety and security 3
- Vegetation 3
- Ancillary accommodation 4
- Accessibility 3.

14.11 More details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all sites of this type identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first

Results of the consultation

14.12 The ratings given for quality of allotments and community gardens across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 14.2 below.

Fig. 14.2 Quality of allotments and community gardens



Borough-wide

- 14.13 The main view to come out of the borough-wide results is that the allotments are average in quality (40% gave this rating). The next most popular response was very poor (26%) which suggests there is an issue with quality of allotment sites in the Borough.

Analysis Area 1 - Northern

- 14.14 The borough wide result was reflected in the results for the northern area analysis. In this area, a significant percentage of 58% of local representatives rated quality of the Bearsted Golf Course Allotments site as very poor. However, 29% of respondents rated the quality as good.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 14.15 Most of the respondents in this area rated quality levels as either average (33%), poor (17%) or very poor (24%). Again, this suggests that quality of allotments and community gardens is an issue in this area.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 14.16 The quality of the allotment in Harrietsham was rated by most local representatives as average (62%) or poor (31%).

Analysis Area 4 - Urban Area

- 14.17 50% of respondents rated the quality of allotments and community gardens in the urban area as average. The remaining ratings were split from good to very poor, suggesting that quality varies a great deal across the sites.

Accessibility

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 14.18 Similarly to assessing quality, assessing accessibility levels to allotments and community gardens is different from other green space types. All plot holders will have their own keys to the sites and so the only access issues are related to distances and catchment areas, ie accessibility by walking, by pushchair or wheelchair, public transport or cycling.

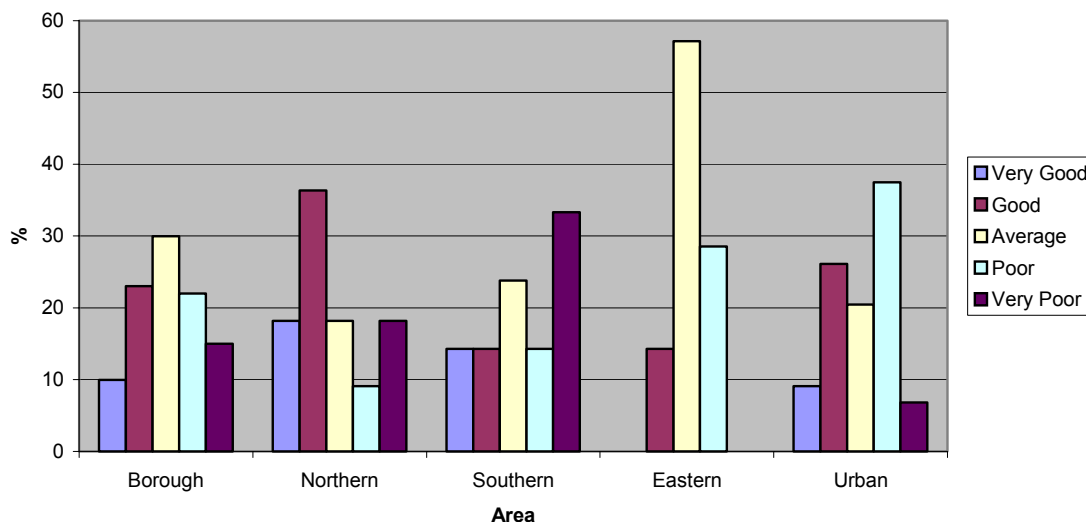
Accessibility thresholds

- 14.19 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national standards for this type of green space.
- 14.20 Setting a threshold for accessing allotments and community gardens has not been set through the market research due to a low number of responses to the relevant questions. It is recommended that more detailed consultation takes place with allotment holders to ascertain their preferred travel times.

Results of the consultation

- 14.21 The ratings given for accessibility of allotments and community gardens across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 14.3 overleaf.

Fig 14.3 Accessibility of Allotments and Community Gardens in Maidstone



Borough-wide

14.22 Accessibility levels to allotments across the borough was rated to be varied between good (23%), average (30%) and poor (22%).

Analysis Area 1 - Northern

14.23 In the northern area, accessibility levels were rated by largest proportion of respondents as good (36%). However, the results suggest that views on accessibility of the allotment in Bearsted varies considerably with the same proportion rating accessibility as very good (18%), average (18%) and very poor (18%).

Analysis Area 2 - Southern

14.24 Accessibility levels to allotments and community gardens was rated as low in the southern area. 33% rated levels as very poor, 14% as poor and 24% as average. Further consultation with users of these allotments is recommended to understand their particular needs.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

14.25 Access to the allotment in Harrietsham was rated to be poor by 38% of all respondents. However, 26% rated the accessibility levels as good.

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

14.26 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating.

14.27 There are a number of allotment sites where usage is high and both quality and accessibility are good. These sites are valued sites to the community and should be protected. They include:

SECTION 14 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

- Harrietsham Allotments
 - Langley Allotments
 - Rocky Hill Allotments, Bridge Ward
 - James Street Allotments in East Ward
 - Mayfair Avenue Allotments, South Ward.
- 14.28 There are no allotment sites where usage is high and quality and accessibility are poor or very poor. Additionally, there are no sites where use is low and quality is good or very good.
- 14.29 Three sites are reported to have low use. The Allotment Gardens on Whistlers Lane have been given a very poor quality rating and an average accessibility rating. This may explain the low use, and priority could be given to improving this site to promote increased use. The same conclusions can be drawn for Buckland Hill Allotments and the allotments in Heath Ward.

Recommendations

- 14.30 Although there are no best value performance indicators currently relating to the provision of allotments the development of some local performance indicators during 2003 would enable a more effective assessment to be made of provision in terms of quality, provision and usage.
- 14.31 There was a view from most parishes in the rural areas that supply of allotment spaces generally meet demand. This indicates that no more allotments should be provided in these areas. However, there was a small deficiency of allotment space in the urban area. Consultation has been undertaken with local allotment holders and there is feedback indicating the current spaces are under used. It is therefore not recommended to provide any additional allotments in the Borough.
- 14.32 Resources should be focused on improving the sites where quality and accessibility levels have reported to be low.
- 14.33 An action box, containing key actions for allotments and community gardens is set out overleaf.

Action Box for Allotments and Community Gardens

ACG1. Establish demand and future/unmet need for allotments where no provision currently exists. This will be illustrated geographically through carrying out a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping.

ACG2. Carry out audit of each allotment site to assess accessibility, facilities provision, (water supply, sheds, car parking, composting) etc to identify improvements required for individual sites.

ACG3. Produce assessment criteria in relation to any potential disposal of allotment sites that must be assessed.

ACG4. Improve access to the allotments in the southern analysis area through consultation with plot holders to determine the key issues and establish a policy for borough-wide allotment provision for people with disabilities.

ACG5. Produce an allotment strategy to establish a clear direction/framework for future allotment management and provision.

ACG6. Protect the following sites for future use because these have high use, high quality and high accessibility ratings:

- Harrietsham Allotments
- Langley Allotments
- Rocky Hill Allotments, Bridge Ward
- James Street Allotments in East Ward
- Mayfair Avenue Allotments, South Ward.

Cemeteries and Churchyards

Definition

- 15.1 Churchyards are burial grounds encompassed within the walled boundary of a church and cemeteries are burial grounds outside the confines of a church. These include private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and disused churchyards. The primary purpose of this type of open space is for burial of the dead and quiet contemplation but also for the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Quantity

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 15.2 There are no definitive national or local standards for cemeteries and churchyards and therefore a local standard has been set using the methodology outlined in Section Five.
- 15.3 Using the parish and ward consultation questionnaires, the wider community market research findings and a workshop with Council Officers and Members, **the agreed minimum standard for the provision of cemeteries and churchyards in the urban area is 0.66 ha per 1000 population. In the rural area, the standard has been set at 0.59 ha per 1000 population**
- 15.4 The thematic map in Figure 15.1 overleaf illustrates provision levels above and below this standard by analysis area across the Borough. This is supported by Table 15.1 which summarises the results. A more detailed summary of the quantity results can be found in Appendix C.

Fig. 15.1 Provision of cemetery and churchyard space according to the minimum standard

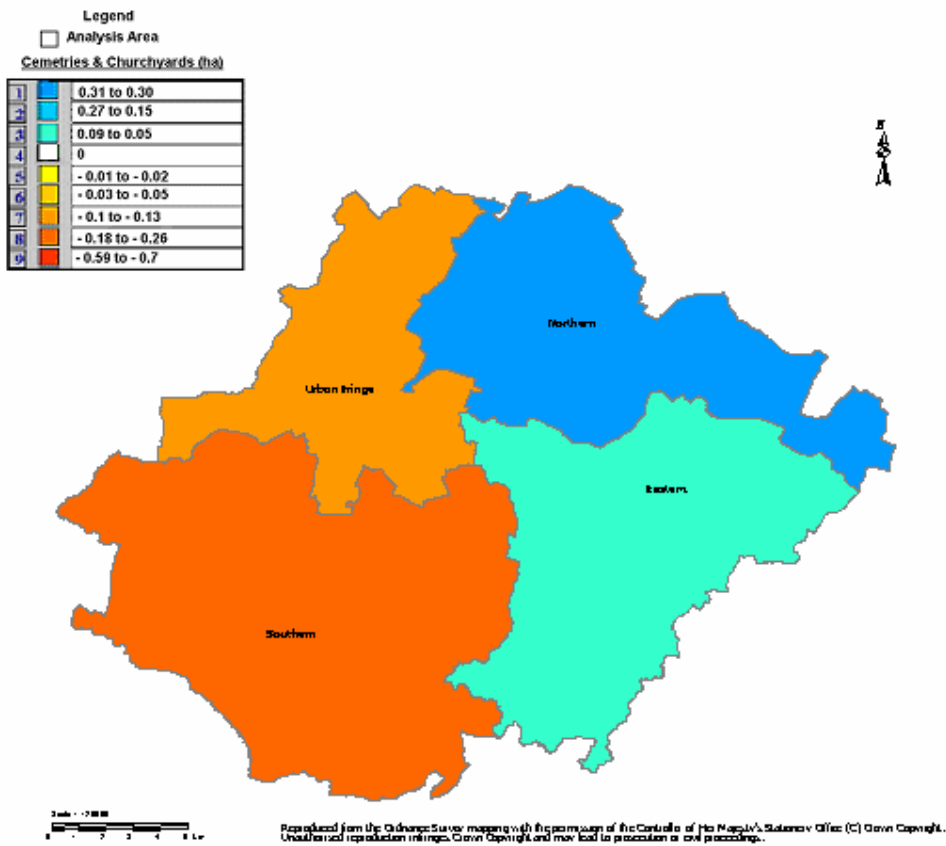


Table 15.1 Quantity figures for Cemeteries and Churchyards

Cemeteries and Churchyards	Existing provision (ha per 1000 population)	Local standard (ha per 1000 population)	Balance (ha per 1000 population)
Analysis Area 1 – Northern	0.89	0.59	+0.30
Analysis Area 2 - Southern	0.33	0.59	-0.26
Analysis Area 3 – Eastern	0.64	0.59	+0.05
Analysis Area 4 - Urban	0.56	0.66	-0.10

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

- 15.5 When applying the minimum standard for the rural area, the quantity figures indicate provision levels are above the standard at +0.30 ha per 1000 population.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 15.6 Provision levels for the southern area are shown through the analysis to be below the provision standard. Provision levels are below the standard by –0.26 ha per 1000 population.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 15.7 The Eastern area’s provision levels are close to the standard with the figures illustrating a small deficiency equal to 0.05 ha per 1000 population.

Analysis Area 4 - Urban

- 15.8 When the minimum standard for the urban area is applied, the quantity analysis shows provision levels in this area to be below the standard at –0.10 ha per 1000 population.
- 15.9 Other factors such as burial space records and death rates should also be taken into account when analysing quantity of this type of provision.

Quality

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

- 15.10 The quality of cemeteries and churchyards is something which is very important to visitors to these areas in time of bereavement.
- 15.11 A workshop held with Council Officers and Members has identified quality standards for this type of green space. The agreed quality standard was:
- 15.12 “Cemeteries and churchyards should be clean and litter free with safe and secure access where appropriate. There should be a variety of planting and facilities which reflect the local landscape character and biodiversity of the site.”

Quality scores (5=very good, 1=very poor)

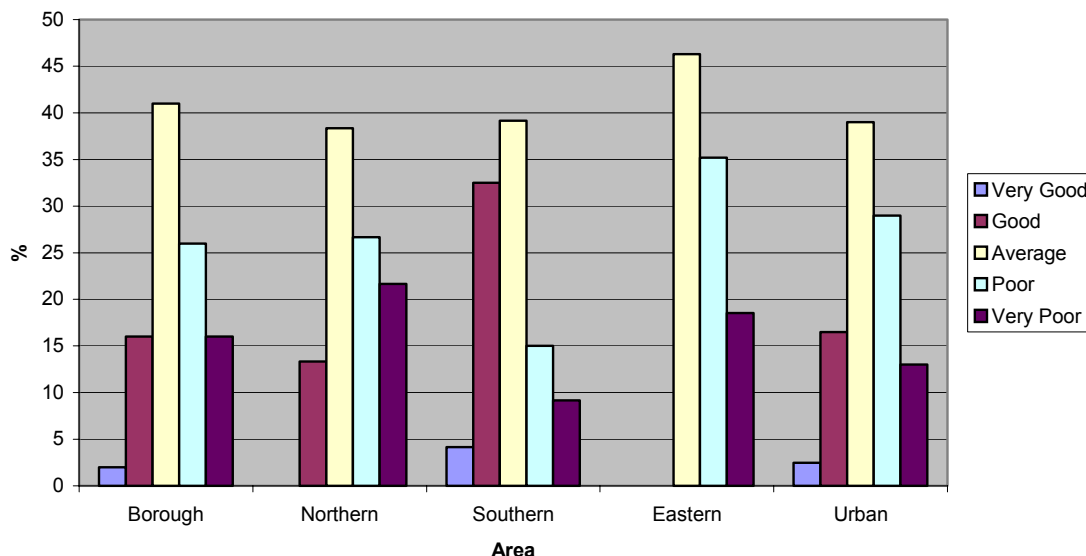
- Cleanliness & maintenance 3
- Safety and security 4
- Vegetation 3
- Ancillary accommodation 4
- Accessibility 4.

- 15.13 More details can be found in Appendix C. These standards should be applied to all cemeteries and churchyards identified within the audit. Those sites which have been identified as poor or very poor within the audit should be addressed first.

Results of the consultation

15.14 The ratings given for quality of parks and gardens across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 15.2 below.

Fig. 15.2 Quality of Cemeteries and Churchyards in Maidstone



Borough-wide

15.15 Quality ratings across the whole of the Borough for cemeteries and churchyards were mostly average, with 41% of all respondents giving these sites this rating.

15.16 The next most popular rating was poor with 26% of respondents giving this rating.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

15.17 The quality results for the northern analysis area were also negative. Most respondents rated quality levels of cemeteries and churchyards in this area as average, however, a large proportion of respondents rated quality levels as poor (27%) and very poor (22%).

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

15.18 The results for quality in this area were more positive. Whilst 38% rated quality as average, 33% also rated quality levels as good.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

15.19 The cemeteries and churchyards in this area were rated as either average (46%), poor (35%) or very poor (19%). There is therefore cause for some concern over the quality of sites in this area.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

15.20 The most popular rating of quality of cemeteries and churchyards was average (39%). followed by 29% who rated quality levels as poor.

Accessibility

Setting and applying local minimum provision standards

Accessibility thresholds

15.21 There are no national accessibility standards for cemeteries and churchyards.

15.22 A local accessibility standard has been set using the results of the market research highlighted in Table 15.2 below.

Table 15.2 Time prepared to travel to Cemeteries and Churchyards

Time	Total responses	Cumulative totals	Percentage of respondents (%)
No reply	0	0	0
Less than five minutes	6	6	50.00
5 -10 minutes	2	8	66.67
10 -15 minutes	1	9	75.00
15 -20 minutes	2	11	91.67
20 - 30 minutes	1	12	100
30+ minutes	0	12	100

15.23 The table illustrates that at least 75% of respondents are prepared to travel between 10 and 15 minutes to visit cemeteries and churchyards.

15.24 The preferred mode of transport is by car. This reflects the classification applied to this type of green space which is middle order in the PPG17 hierarchy. Visitors are prepared to travel further and chose to do this by car.

15.25 When setting an accessibility threshold for this type, we recommend that a travel time standard should be set, rather than a travel distance standard, due to variable road and traffic conditions. Therefore, the maximum accessibility threshold for cemeteries and churchyards is a 15 minute drive (as indicated in Table 15.3 below).

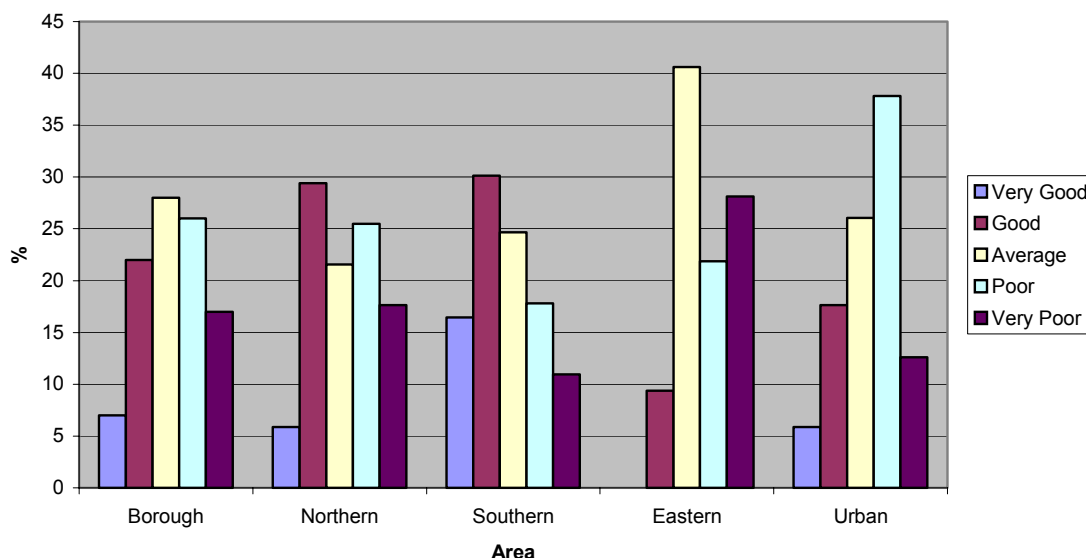
Table 15.3 Recommended accessibility threshold

Accessibility threshold – Cemeteries and Churchyards	
Recommended travel time	15 minute drive

Results of the consultation

15.26 The ratings given for accessibility of cemeteries and churchyards across each of the analysis areas and for the Borough as a whole is illustrated in Figure 15.3 below.

Fig. 15.3 Accessibility of Cemeteries and Churchyards in Maidstone



Borough-wide

15.27 Accessibility levels to cemeteries and churchyards across the Borough was rated as good by 29% of respondents. 22% also rated accessibility as average and 25% rated it as poor.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

15.28 Accessibility levels in this area were good. 29% of respondents believed accessibility levels to cemeteries and churchyards was good and 25% rated accessibility levels as poor.

Analysis Area 2 – Eastern

15.29 Accessibility levels in this area were good. The largest proportion of respondents rated accessibility levels as good (30%) and 25% rated accessibility as average.

Analysis Area 3 – Southern

15.30 The largest proportion of respondents rated accessibility levels to cemeteries and churchyards as poor (38%). 26% rated accessibility as average.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

15.31 Ratings of accessibility to cemeteries and churchyards in the urban area were more varied across the ratings, however the majority of respondents rated accessibility levels as poor (38%).

Assessment of Value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

15.32 There are a number of cemeteries and churchyards that are of high quality and high accessibility in addition to being well used. These sites are highly valued sites and should therefore be protected. They include:

- Burial Ground, All Saints Church Staplehurst
- Brewer Street Graveyard, East Ward.

15.33 St Stephens Churchyard, Tovil, was the only site in the audit to be given a poor quality rating.

Proposed recommendations

Action Box for Cemeteries and Churchyards

CC1. Establish demand and future need for cemetery space to identify future land requirements. To assist this exercise, a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping will be undertaken.

CC2. Produce policy statement for qualitative aspects of cemeteries and closed churchyards such as cleanliness, maintenance, accessibility, etc

CC3. Audit all cemeteries and churchyards in order to identify and prioritise improvements/essential work recognised (including responsibility such as health and safety).

CC4. Protect the cemeteries and churchyards with high use, quality and accessibility ratings which are therefore highly valued to the local community. These are:

- Burial Ground, All Saints Church Staplehurst
- Brewer Street Graveyard, East Ward.

Quality

- 16.1 Previous research on green spaces undertaken by various organisations suggests that what concerns most users and deters non-users of green spaces are resource related issues, with the general condition and quality of green spaces ranking very highly in terms of importance.
- 16.2 Design is often a key part in tackling quality problems and removing barriers to use of green spaces.
- 16.3 Quality depends on both the needs and expectations of users (including wildlife) and also the design, management and maintenance of green spaces.
- 16.4 This section covers the following assessments:
- data from the Ward and Parish surveys
 - setting quality standards
 - detailed quality audit of key parks and recreation grounds in the Borough
 - risk assessment.

Data sources

- 16.5 In the questionnaires distributed to ward and parish representatives, questions were asked about quality factors relating to green spaces in each administrative area. Ratings were also given to factors for all green spaces in the areas. This site-specific information related to quality has been analysed in the earlier sections specific to each type of green space.
- 16.6 Where a local representative did not return the questionnaire, this information about the parish or ward in general was therefore not available. For the site-specific information, PMP undertook individual site visits to rate each of the sites, but overall ratings for a parish or ward could not be given due to a lack of area knowledge.
- 16.7 The results of this analysis of quality are examined by analysis area (see Section Five for details of which parishes and wards are included in each analysis area). For some analysis areas, eg Eastern, not all questionnaires were returned; in this case responses were only received from Harrietsham and Lenham parishes and not from Headcorn or Leeds. This should be taken into account when interpreting the findings.
- 16.8 However, a site by site audit for quality of certain parks and recreation grounds in the Borough has been completed by a specialist Parks and Open Spaces Consultant. The results of this can be found at the end of this section.
- 16.9 General comments relating to vandalism and misuse of green spaces (ie for unsociable activities) are also included in this analysis.

Wider Impact of Quality

- 16.10 High quality green spaces are essential to improving the social, economic and cultural characteristics of areas. The visibility of green spaces and the importance accorded to them by local residents makes them essential to achieving other objectives. They are often key indicators of the state of the area in which they are located.

16.11 The condition of green spaces can be the vital ingredient to successfully regenerating deprived areas, improving townscapes and creating a sense of place for the local community.

Assessment by Quality Factors

16.12 Any assessment of quality of green space requires a scoring system against clear assessment factors. The overall aim is to identify:

- areas of low quality in the Borough and therefore of priority importance
- quality factors that need to be improved.

16.13 As analysed within each green space type, every site within the Borough, where possible, has been given a quality rating. More specifically though, each parish and ward area has been assessed against specific quality factors. A list of these factors is provided within Appendix C.

16.14 The following examination is by analysis area and looks at the key quality factors that are good or poor and therefore identifies the key problems and issues with regards to general quality in each area.

Quality Analysis – Borough-wide

16.15 The overall quality rating given for the Borough on the whole was average (64% of respondents).

16.16 Quality factors which were rated as very good or good by most respondents were the general smell of green spaces (62%) and grass areas (46%).

16.17 A high proportion of respondents rated the following factors as poor or very poor: dog walking facilities eg dog bins (44%), lighting (47%), equipment standards (60%), toilets (69%), parking (52%) and information boards and signage (54%).

16.18 Average ratings were given for many key factors including cleanliness and maintenance, provision of bins for rubbish and litter, maintenance and management, planted areas and pathways.

Analysis Area 1 - Northern

16.19 The overall quality rating for green spaces in the Northern analysis area was average (67% of respondents). The rest indicated that they were very poor (33%).

16.20 The quality ratings for each individual factor in this area were mainly average, poor or very poor.

16.21 All respondents rated the quality of lighting, toilets and parking as very poor. Other factors which were mainly rated as either poor or very poor included provision of bins for rubbish and litter (80%), dog walking facilities (80%), maintenance and management (60%), equipment (66%), overall security and safety (67%), pathways (100%) and information boards and signage (66%).

16.22 Stockbury Parish confirmed it had received many complaints about the nuisance of dog fouling and fly tipping from local residents.

16.23 Bicknor Parish specifically indicated problems with anti-social behaviour and misuse of green spaces along public rights of way. Similar problems with misuse of green

corridors were highlighted by Thurnham Parish. Fly tipping is an issue on Pilgrims Way and generally off-road motor cycling on footpaths and bridleways is an issue for local residents.

- 16.24 Bicknor Parish are in discussions with the Council to determine whether funds are available to purchase a large area (885.5 acres) of ancient woodland which could be used for formal recreation and may help reduce the incidences of off-road motorcycling.
- 16.25 Detling Parish reported problems with young people congregating at bus shelters and incidences of antisocial behaviour, such as alcohol consumption and drug taking. A long-standing issue in the parish has been a lack of any green areas for young people.

Analysis Area 2 - Southern

- 16.26 The overall quality rating for this area was split between ratings of good (29%), average (43%) and poor (29%) which suggests that quality varies a great deal throughout this area. However, most respondents rated each individual factor as good or average.
- 16.27 Provision of bins for rubbish and litter scored highest, with 83% of respondents rating this as either very good, good or average.
- 16.28 However, the main concerns from the parishes include the quality of lighting, toilets, parking and information boards and signage. Toilets were rated by 66% of respondents as poor or very poor.
- 16.29 Problems with vandalism and unsociable activities (and related litter) is high in Staplehurst Parish, mainly at Surrenden Playing Field where police cover is reported to be insufficient. The Parish Council indicated that an application for a Living Spaces Grant has been made for the improvement of this site. The Parish Council also has the following plans for improvements:
- an application to the Borough Council for improvements to Staple Drive Play Area
 - an application to the Sport England Lottery Fund for drainage work and new changing rooms at Jubilee Playing Field.
- 16.30 Unsociable behaviour is reported as a problem at the following sites:
- Marden Playing Field (Marden PC)
 - Firmlins Avenue/Lockland Farm Road (Boughton Monchelsea PC).
- 16.31 Marden Parish Council has indicated that a review of safety, quality and risk is currently being undertaken.

16.32 Local representatives were asked to indicate examples of good and bad practice in their parish or ward area. The following examples were provided by Staplehurst Parish:

- **good:** mowing of amenity green spaces
- **bad:** time taken to renew old equipment
- **bad:** lack of help and expertise.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

16.33 For the parishes that responded from this area (Harrietsham and Lenham) the following information was provided about quality of green spaces.

16.34 Overall, one parish rated the area as average and the other rated it as very poor. This reflects the results over most of the quality factors which were skewed towards the average, poor and very poor ratings.

16.35 Both parishes rated dog walking facilities as very poor, and cleanliness and tidiness, toilets, parking and information boards and signage as poor.

16.36 The parishes in this area have reported problems with antisocial behaviour as follows:

- Broomfield and Kingswood Parish reported incidences of antisocial behaviour at their sports field, in particular young people taking drugs and drinking alcohol. The access to this site is restricted and seems to provide added security to those youths which misuse the sports facility
- Harrietsham Parish also report problems of antisocial behaviour in the village due to a lack of facilities for young people and children
- Lenham Parish reported problems with vandalism of the Children's Play Area and incidences of drug and alcohol use.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

16.37 The overall quality rating given by the majority (80%) of local representatives was average.

16.38 The main issues for concern about quality of green spaces in the urban wards and urban fringe parishes were toilets, lighting, equipment and again, information boards and signage:

- 50% rated the toilets as very poor
- 36% indicated lighting was poor, 9% believed it to be very poor
- 54% rated equipment in green spaces in urban areas to be either poor or very poor in quality
- 50% believed that information boards and signage was either poor or very poor in quality.

16.39 More positively, no respondents indicated the general smell of green spaces in the urban areas to be poor or very poor. 63% indicated that smells were either very good or good.

SECTION 16 – QUALITY

16.40 Maintenance and management scored highly with 83% rating the quality of this to be either good or average. However, excessive litter was reported by Boxley Parish Council at Penshurst Open Space, and High Street Ward reported many complaints about maintenance of River Len area, and Upper and Lower Road and Brenchley Gardens.

16.41 Overall security and safety was indicated to be either good or average by 70% of all respondents. However, the following parishes and wards reported incidences of unsociable activities (mainly drugs, vandalism, off-road motorcycling):

- Boxley Parish (Crownfields Open Space, Impton Lane Open Space and land west of Tesco)
- East Ward
- High Street Ward (Ampitheatre, Collis Field)
- Downswood Parish
- Bearsted Ward
- Tovil Parish (Woodbridge Drive Green Space)
- North Ward
- South Ward (South Park and Postley Road)
- Shepway North Ward.

16.42 Local representatives were asked to indicate sites of good and bad practice in their parish or ward area. The following examples were provided:

Good:

- Penenden Heath Open Space
- Church Landway
- Len Valley Walk
- Loose Valley
- River Len Nature Reserve
- Collis Field.

Bad:

- Upper Fulling Pits Children’s Play Area which needs higher quality equipment
- lack of parking at Whatman Park
- regular flooding of River Len (reportedly due to silting up from High Speed Rail Link)
- Bridge Mill Way Play Area (equipment)
- Woodbridge Drive Play Area (equipment)
- Alnutt Mill Play Area (equipment)
- Dickens Road Play Area (equipment)
- South Park (poor state of shelter).

Determining Quality Standards

16.43 National quality standards do not exist for all green space types. However the Green Flag award scheme does provide some guidance under the following headings:

- welcoming place
- healthy, safe and secure place
- clean and well-maintained place
- sustainability
- conservation and heritage
- community involvement
- marketing.

16.44 This Green Flag scheme is the most advanced national model for assessing the qualities that attract people to parks and green spaces.

16.45 Quality standards have been set for each type of green space through holding a workshop with Council Officers and Members. Appendix C contains the standards agreed.

16.46 It is recommended that these standards should be applied to all green spaces in the Borough going forward. Those sites identified in the audit as poor or very poor in quality should be assessed first.

Aspiring to Specific Standards

- 16.47 In setting local quality standards, the qualities should be recognised and accepted by the local community. Regular surveys of users can then be used to confirm whether the quality standards are being met. Quality standards should:
- enable good designs to create ‘places from spaces’ ie a well designed green space should encourage usage and will create a sense of well-being in the community
 - enable expectations of the local community to be met
 - provide a measurable vision for those green spaces that are rated as poor or very poor and if achieved would give these poor spaces a new lease of life and made to serve the needs of the local community
 - encompass management and maintenance issues – our consultations with the public suggest that public involvement in design and management creates a sense of ownership and therefore an increased likelihood of meeting community needs.
- 16.48 PPG17 recommends that quality standards should not be absolute measures but reasonable aspirations and benchmarks upon which to measure the quality of any existing green space in order to determine the need for enhancement. This matrix of standards covers the main categories of cleanliness and maintenance, security and safety, vegetation and ancillary accommodation. The matrix is provided in Appendix C.

Detailed Quality Audit of Parks and Receptions Grounds in the Borough

Introduction and methodology of the quality audit

- 16.49 The parks and open spaces selected included a range which covered formal parks and informal recreation grounds and countryside areas which cover a range of type of provision and geographical location. Ornamental multi-purpose parks audited were:
- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| • Brenchley Gardens | • Penenden Heath |
| • Clare Park | • Vintners Valley Park |
| • South Park | • Archbishops Palace |
| • Mote Park | • Millennium River Park |
| • Whatman Park | • Cobtree Manor Park. |
- 16.50 The following open spaces operated by voluntary trusts were audited:
- Allington Millennium Green
 - Collis Millennium Green.

16.51 18 recreation grounds were audited:

- Shepway Green
- Parkwood Recreation Ground
- Somerset Road
- Westmorland Road Recreation Ground
- Mallards Way
- Mangravet Recreation Ground
- Giddyhorne Lane
- Gatland Lane
- Barming Heath
- King George VI Field (Loose)
- Surrenden Field (Staplehurst)
- The Green (Bearstead)
- Lenham Recreation Ground
- Marden Recreation Ground
- South Street (Barming)
- Titchfield Road (Senacre)
- Church Lane (Boughton Monchelsea)
- Memorial Recreation Ground (Sutton Valence).

16.52 The audit provides a model on which to make informed assumptions about the quality and type of provision offered to residents and users. A copy of the audit template is included in Appendix C. The audit covers the following areas:

- entrances
- boundaries
- access
- parking
- lighting
- information
- cleanliness
- planting
- grass areas
- facilities: bins
- seats
- toilets.

SECTION 16 – QUALITY

16.53 Table 16.1 below indicates the values achieved by each open space against these criteria, with the highest score indicating the best response against each attribute (as indicated in Appendix C.).

Table 16.1 Performance of Audited Parks Using PPG17 Audit

	Entrance	Boundaries	Access	Parking	Lighting	Information	Cleanliness	Planting	Grass areas	Bins	Seats	Toilets
Brenchley Gardens	2	3	5	1	1	1	4	4	4	5	5	4
Clare Park	3	2	1	0	0	1	4	3	4	5	5	4
South Park	1	3	4	4	0	1	3	4	3	5	4	0
Mote Park	2	1	2	4	2	1	3	2	3	5	5	4
Whatman Park	3	3	5	4	3	2	2	4	4	5	5	5
Penenden Heath	1	2	4	4	0	1	4	4	4	5	5	5
Vintners Valley Park	3	2	3	3	0	2	4	3	n/a	5	3	0
Archbishops Palace	2	3	4	1	3	2	4	5	4	5	5	4
Millennium River Park	2	2	4	1	3	1	4	5	4	4	5	5
Cobtree Manor Park	2	3	3	5	1	1	4	2	4	1	0	0
Allington Green	4	3	4	5	0	0	3	3	1	0	5	0
Collis Green	4	3	2	5	0	2	3	4	3	4	5	0
Shepway Green	0	0	0	4	1	0	2	1	3	5	3	0
Parkwood Rec Gnd	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	1	3	5	1	0
Somerset Road	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	3	1	1	0
Westmorland Road RG	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	4	4	0
Mallards Way	0	3	5	1	0	0	2	4	3	5	5	0
Mangravet RG	1	2	3	4	2	0	2	1	2	0	0	0
Giddyhorne Lane	0	1	0	3	0	0	3	2	3	2	2	0
Gatland Lane	0	1	1	2	0	0	3	0	3	1	3	0
Barming Heath	0	3	0	1	0	0	3	2	2	5	5	0
King George Field (Loose)	2	3	3	4	2	0	4	2	3	5	5	0
Surrenden Field	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	1	5	3	5	0

SECTION 16 – QUALITY

	Entrance	Boundaries	Access	Parking	Lighting	Information	Cleanliness	Planting	Grass areas	Bins	Seats	Toilets
The Green (Bearstead)	0	0	0	3	1	2	3	2	4	5	5	0
Lenham RG	0	2	3	4	0	0	2	1	3	5	0	0
Marden RG	1	0	4	5	3	0	3	1	3	5	5	3
South Street (Barming)	0	3	0	4	0	0	3	1	4	4	5	0
Titchfield Rd (Senacre)	1	3	n/a	5	0	0	3	2	3	2	0	0
Church Lane (Bou Monch)	0	3	0	5	0	0	3	1	4	3	2	0
Memorial RG (Sut Val)	1	3	4	5	0	0	3	1	4	5	4	4

Conclusions from the audit

- 16.54 It has been possible to draw a number of conclusions not just from the audit, but also from observations made during the course of its execution. These have strategic significance for the provision of the service.
- 16.55 The main entrances form a welcoming invitation to a park, as well as advertising its presence. The millennium greens are well designed in relation to this attribute. Parks such as Clare Park were also well designed when they were founded many years ago. However, most open spaces in Maidstone perform poorly. Many of the recreation grounds have not scored at all because they do not meet the minimum criteria of having apparent and clean entrances.
- 16.56 Access covers roads, paths and cycleways. In the case of the main parks audited, most achieved at least an average standard. The same is not true of the more minor open spaces and recreation grounds. In many cases there are no perimeter or other footpath routes. However, this is of less concern than the condition of many of the surfaces. These are very uneven, and in some cases pose an immediate danger to the safety of users, and appear to fall below standards which could be regarded as reasonable in legal terms. Areas of South Park and Clare Park were very uneven, and exhibit decades of neglect.
- 16.57 Many of the play areas contain equipment which is attractive, varied, newly installed, and very well used. A number of basketball posts have also been installed for older children and youths. The problem lies with the safety surfacing. This is almost universally of the rubber tile type, and in many cases is very uneven and unsafe. It cannot fulfil its function of protecting children against long bone injuries, or reducing the impact of head injury. Examples include War Memorial Recreation Ground, Barming Heath, Surrenden Field, Bearsted Green and Marden Recreation Ground.

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- 16.58 Lighting is almost completely absent in the Borough's parks. An absence of light is likely to discourage any significant use after dark, adding to antisocial behaviour, and reducing passive supervision by legitimate users. There were some exceptions, most notably Whatman Park, where ground level lighting has recently been installed along the main footways.
- 16.59 Information about open spaces for visitors is an area of weakness. Newer parks such as Collis Green and Whatman Park, as well as the Archbishop's Palace Grounds have attractive and informative signage. However, most smaller open spaces and recreation grounds have not been scored at all because there was either no evident information, or there were signs which were vandalised or damaged beyond recognition. This reinforced a feeling of neglect, and gave the impression that open spaces were uncared for, even where standards of maintenance were reasonably high.
- 16.60 Standards of cleanliness were generally quite high, with limited evidence of littering or dog fouling. This was assisted by a maintenance programme which is obviously quite regular, given the different periods of the day and week when parks were audited. Litter bin provision is also high, with plenty of well-placed bins in reasonable or good condition.
- 16.61 Planted areas are exceptionally good in some places. The Archbishop's Palace Grounds and Brenchly Gardens were well cared for with a variety of planted areas. Whatman Park and Vintners Valley Park display a more informal style which is nevertheless attractive and appropriate. However, most open spaces lack landscape variety, and in some cases consist of "municipal greensward," unrelieved by more informal floral meadow, shrubbery, or tree planting. This leads to many monotonous landscapes with very little to offer in terms of interest or biodiversity.
- 16.62 There are large tracts of open space which are discrete, but which could be interlinked, particularly if intervening areas of land could be acquired. Alternatively, if acquisition is not an option, routes could be created which encompass walks between open space, but which may have heritage or interest value (e.g. historic streets).
- 16.63 Toilet provision is very poor. The provision of accessible toilets in parks is particularly important in encouraging family visits, and essential if a park has a wide customer catchment area.
- 16.64 The level of interest in green spaces, particularly in the centre of the town, would be considerably enhanced by the use of water features as a medium to introduce movement, light and pleasant sound into key areas. This is particularly effective in many continental towns and cities including Paris, Madrid and Barcelona. Moving water has the effect of increasing oxygenation and keeping water clean. The type of feature proposed could include fountains or cascades, and could include an interactive experience for children in the form of a pressure-activated series of water jets which respond to foot pressure.
- 16.65 We noted that the Maidstone Sailing Club require a new venue, and can no longer use the lake at Mote Park. We suggest that as a matter of urgency a suitable waterway is identified in the region. Readily available watercourses were not identified in the audit. It is therefore recommended that other lakes or waterways are identified by the Council in the region, in order to accommodate the Club.

Risk assessment

16.66 Having identified the context of Maidstone’s Green Spaces Strategy in the national and local sense, and carried out a situational analysis and audit of representative parks and open spaces, it is necessary to conduct an assessment of risk in relation to a range of strategic options which the Council could pursue.

16.67 The following assessment considers risk in relation to:

- taking no action in relation to the development and improvement of the Borough’s green spaces
- taking action to deal with areas of provision which represent an immediate risk to the health and safety of users
- taking action to deal with the failing infrastructure of parks and open spaces as well as immediate health and safety risks
- in addition to health and safety improvements, carrying out a modest programme of improvements such as the provision of signage and welcoming entrances, minor landscaping and the replacement of redundant play equipment
- spreading a wide-reaching programme of major improvements across all significant green spaces in the Borough including the provision of better pavilions, new play areas, public toilet facilities in key locations, and the provision of cafeterias in high profile parks.

16.68 The table overleaf highlights each of the strategies in turn, and assesses the type of risk involved with each, the probability of that risk occurring, and the financial consequences of each option.

Table 6.2 Risk Analysis for Different Strategy Types

Strategy Type	Risk Details	Level of risk	Probability of risk	Financial consequences
1. Take no action. Continue to maintain parks to current standards.	Serious injury to users from poorly maintained park infrastructure and equipped play areas. Satisfaction levels will drop amongst residents and users.	High	High	Levels of injury claim will continue to rise, necessitating additional expenditure in the long-run.
2. Deal with immediate risk to health and safety.	Possibility of serious injury from dangerous play equipment and surfaces, and poorly maintained hard surfaces and sports areas will diminish.	High	Medium	Cost of several £100,000 over five years, but would be offset to high degree by reduced risk of personal injury claims and damage to clothing, etc. There would be a staffing need of approximately 0.5 FTE p.a. for these works to be completed.
3. Phased programme to rectify failing infrastructure.	Requires replacement of footpaths rather than temporary repairs, and replacement of play areas which do not comply with British Safety Standards. Risk is that public perceptions of service will gradually decline unless actual improvements are made.	Medium	Low	Potentially double the cost of emergency repairs as in 2, but financially more sustainable. Funding will reduce expenditure in long-run, and reverse decades of decline which have led to current crisis. An additional full-time member of staff would be required to manage this process.
4. Carry out modest service improvements as well as essential safety works.	Raised public expectations of a strategy combined with heightened awareness of quality in service provision may cause disaffection.	Low	Low	Additional cost of minor improvements incidental in relation to costs of essential health and safety works to infrastructure. High political gain could be made with expenditure of £30K - £40K p.a. An additional allowance of two FTE staff p.a. should be made for this level of strategy intervention.
5. Phased programme of major improvements to parks, including building of toilet and cafeteria facilities, and major upgrade of playgrounds, sports areas, etc.	Some risk that expenditure may be seen as inappropriate in the face of Council difficulties with budgets in other key services, and in the face of cutbacks.	Medium	Low	Additional cost would be considerable. To make significant impact would have to run to several £1,000,000 over five years. Could be offset by income, which may reduce expenditure by approx. 30%, e.g. through increased fees and charges, income from new catering outlets, etc. An additional six FTE staff p.a. would be needed to fulfil this Strategy level.

- 16.69 An attempt has been made, based on experience and knowledge of Maidstone's green spaces, to roughly quantify what Options Two to Five might cost. Clearly there would be a cost of a "do nothing" option, as indicated in Option One. However, it is impossible without detailed examination to estimate the likely costs of future claims for damage or injury, and staff time dealing with such issues.
- 16.70 It is clear from the Strategy and Risk Analysis that a "do nothing" scenario would be not viable for the Council. Option Two, to deal with essential health and safety matters, has its own inherent risks, not least of which would be the presumption that dealing with health and safety issues is something which should be attended to as a matter of course, and does not warrant the classification of a strategic approach to provision.
- 16.71 Option Five may result in a large financial burden on the Council which could not be justified alongside other competing service priorities. It should not be discounted out of hand however, as the funding options outlined elsewhere in this report may release resources which make it a viable medium to long-term option. Options Three and Four do carry risks, although these are less than "Medium" risk. It is for the Council to decide the level of funding which it is willing or able to commit to the Strategy, and thereby the priorities it wishes to apply to the Action Plan.

Choice of Strategy Option

- 16.72 It is recommended that consideration should be given to adopting Strategy type 3 for a number of reasons:
- it is sustainable in terms of the demands being made on the Council's resources for other services
 - it will reverse the decline which has taken place over decades, and would cost a disproportionate amount of money to rectify if allowed to continue any longer
 - it will reduce the level of risk associated with claims for damage or injury caused by accidents on failing infrastructure or playground equipment
 - it is sufficiently ambitious to deal with raised expectations, and rising public demands for higher quality in service provision.
- 16.73 A further recommendation is that this path is pursued, but with the addition of the "Access to Maidstone's Countryside" programme of interconnected corridors of open space. This programme has been considered desirable by the Council for a number of years but has never been fulfilled.
- 16.74 In practice, the Strategy would involve the following:
- Carrying out an audit of all infrastructure, including footpaths, car parks, buildings, fences, etc. as well as children's play areas
 - Creating a programme of improvements based on the state of the infrastructure, ie whether it is unsafe and should have immediate attention, whether it is in poor condition but relatively safe, but in need of attention in the medium term, or whether it is likely to be a problem in future, and therefore is programmed for longer term improvement. The programme will form the basis of the phasing of the Strategy over a period of five years

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- Using the already defined green corridor plan to build in existing green spaces, and to separately identify those areas in between green space which either need to be joined by “heritage walks” through attractive parts of the built environment, or shown as areas where future planning gain can be used to create new green space or walkway, possibly as part of a section 106 agreement adjacent to an area of new development
 - A design guide should be produced to identify the type of surfacing, landscaping and signage which are to be used in order to obtain a unified approach in future
 - Defining an image for the green corridor programme, including the creation of a logo and suitable artwork
 - Creating a programme of improvements to include signage works, leaflets, the creation of walkways and associated landscaping. “Early hits” will be necessary in the short term to convince residents that the Council are committed to the project. These can include the erection of appropriate signage in green spaces which are already
 - Identifying a short, medium and long-term programme of improvements, where known, as part of the Strategy process.
 - The Strategy in its entirety, including “Access to Maidstone’s Countryside,” will need to be resourced adequately to ensure success. A budget should be ring fenced purely for the purposes of resourcing the Strategy, and it will be necessary to identify sources of funding this financial year, with a view to inclusion in the budget cycle for 2005/6 this autumn. The section within this report concerning sources of funding should be used to:
 - Identify how the Strategy can be financed from within existing resources
 - Identify future sources of funding (e.g. by applying for Heritage Lottery Funding for green spaces such as Archbishops’ Palace Gardens or Mote Park).
- 16.75 Adequate time will need to be allocated exclusively to the management of the Strategy. For this reason it has been suggested that a full-time post be created for a Green Spaces Strategy Officer. The Strategy will not happen if it has to be progressed by the small existing officer team whilst they are attempting to maintain and manage the existing service effectively.
- 16.76 Because of the complexity of the Strategy, it is suggested that a multi-disciplinary team is created from across a range of Council professions, but including:
- Parks client officers
 - Planners
 - Accountancy
 - Public relations
 - Building maintenance.

- 16.77 This team should meet initially to define the work programme, and should allocate targets to be completed by fixed dates. Meetings should be held as and when necessary, but certainly at not less than quarterly intervals.
- 16.78 It may be considered appropriate to set up a member steering group to oversee the progress of the Strategy.
- 16.79 The way in which public relations are managed will be crucial to the success of the Strategy. The following steps will need to be taken:
- A media campaign will need to be adopted, including press releases for all significant stages of the Strategy
 - An initial public meeting needs to be held with open access to the public, and with representation from key service stakeholders
 - It would be advisable to phase implementation in accordance with the actions outlined in the Action Plan of this report, and to hold a public meeting in advance of each phase to elicit views on proposals, and to inform detailed proposals.
- 16.80 Detailed actions are contained in the Action Plan, and should be used as a guide to implementation of the Strategy in the initial stages, ie for its five year duration.
- 16.81 It cannot be stressed too strongly that the Strategy should be iterative, ie it should continue indefinitely. The five year duration outlined in this report is therefore the initial phase which “kicks off” the Strategy. New stages should be added after this period in order to:
- Continue improvements initially started
 - Respond to the changing needs and demands of users
 - Continue to develop the corridor programme
 - Seek out new sources of funding obtained after the success of earlier projects
 - Build on relationships developed with the general public, green space users, and stakeholders such as “friends” groups.

Accessibility

- 17.1 There are two components to accessibility: site access, which includes features such as gates, steps, pathways and entrance charges; and catchment area – whether green spaces are within a reasonable distance of where people live. Both components of accessibility are considered in this section.
- 17.2 Without accessibility for the public, the provision of good quality green space sites is of little benefit to the community. Limited accessibility greatly reduces the use of a site, and reduces the value of sites to the community. High quality sites are of little value to the community if accessibility is low.
- 17.3 However, inaccessible green spaces can contribute to the appearance, environmental quality and amenity of an area and contribute to biodiversity.
- 17.4 For the purposes of the database of sites used to formulate the strategy, PMP has taken the advice of the Council in terms of which sites are deemed to be inaccessible. About 90 sites are therefore within the database and categorised as “not accessible” and are not taken into account within the calculations.
- 17.5 Recent government research suggests that issues such as access for disabled people and older people may contribute to the low levels of use of urban green spaces. With the latest requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 in force from October 2004 the accessibility to green spaces for the disabled is now of fundamental importance.

Disability Discrimination Act

- 17.6 The DDA aims to end the discrimination which many disabled people face. This act gives disabled people rights in the areas of:
- employment
 - access to goods, facilities and services
 - buying or renting land or property.
- 17.7 The employment rights and first rights of access code came into force on 2 December 1996; further rights of access came into force on 1 October 1999; and the final rights of access came into force in October 2004.
- 17.8 The key issue for the Council in relation to the provision of green spaces relates to Part III – Access to Goods and Services. Duties under Part III came into force in three stages:
- treating a disabled person less favourably because they are disabled has been unlawful since December 1996
 - since October 1999, service providers have had to consider making reasonable adjustments to the way they deliver their services so that disabled people can use them
 - the final stage of the duties, which means service providers may have to consider making permanent physical adjustments to their premises, came into force in October 2004.

17.9 The Code of Practice in relation to Rights of Access to Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises details standards for landlords and other relevant persons. The status of the Code is that it does not impose legal obligations. However, it can be used in evidence in legal proceedings under the Act. Following the Code of Practice may help to avoid a judgement in any proceedings. The Act stipulates that discrimination against a disabled person occurs in two possible ways:

1. when a service provider treats the disabled person less favourably for a reason relating to a disability
2. when a service provider cannot show that the treatment is justified.

17.10 It does not matter whether the services are provided free (eg for access to a public park) or in return for payment. In relation to green space provision, this has implications in relation to the alteration of physical features if it is impossible or “reasonably difficult” for disabled people to make use of any service. Reasonable steps have to be taken to:

- remove the feature
- alter it
- provide a reasonable means of avoiding it
- provide a reasonable method of making the service available.

17.11 Examples of situations in green spaces which may demand action include:

- buildings – making sure that entrances and fire exits are accessible to people with disabilities
- toilets – ensuring that cubicle size and design allows for wheelchair access, and that appropriate facilities (eg a hand rail) are fitted
- steep slopes – it may be necessary to provide alternative ramped access if steps are present
- kerbs may have to be lowered for wheelchair access
- low benches in prominent positions may need to be fitted with arms to allow disabled people to use them
- an example cited in the Code is of a style preventing access to a lakeside walk.
- a reasonable step to take would be deemed to be for the park authority to remove the style and replace it with an accessible gate.

Determining Accessibility Standards

Aspiring to Specific Standards

- 17.12 In developing this strategy, specific site access criteria were used for each of the ratings from 'Very Good to Very Poor' for all green space types. These should not be seen as absolute measures but reasonable aspirations and benchmarks upon which to measure the accessibility of any existing green space in order to determine the need for enhancement. These cover the main categories of entrance and signage, distance and catchments, cost, transport and access routes. This matrix is provided in Appendix C.
- 17.13 Accessibility standards have been set through reviewing the market research findings. These are about primarily about the second component of access as described in paragraph 17.1 ie whether green spaces are within a reasonable distance of where people live. These standards can be used to understand which areas in the Borough are locationally deficient for each type of open space. The standards are based on the maximum travel times people are prepared to spend in accessing sites and the mode of transport used. They have been presented and discussed in each of the green space typology sections.
- 17.14 Regular surveys of users can be used to confirm whether accessibility standards are being met. Accessibility standards should:
- enable good designs to encourage usage by appropriate forms of transport
 - enable expectations of the local community to be met
 - provide a measurable vision for those green spaces that are rated as poor or very poor and if achieved, would give these poor spaces a new lease of life and enable them to serve the needs of the local community.

Assessment by Accessibility Factors

- 17.15 The overall aim of any accessibility assessment is:
- how accessible sites are
 - areas of the borough with poor accessibility and therefore of priority importance for improvement
 - key accessibility factors that need to be improved
 - how green spaces can be linked together to join the town with the Kent countryside.
- 17.16 Where possible, every green space site within the borough has been given an accessibility rating. Each parish and ward area has also been assessed against specific key accessibility factors. A list of these factors is provided within Appendix C.
- 17.17 The following analysis is by area, analysing the key accessibility factors that are good or poor in each area, therefore identifying the key problems and issues with regards to accessibility in each area of the borough.

Data source

- 17.18 In the questionnaires distributed to ward and parish representatives, questions were asked about accessibility factors relating to green spaces in each administrative area. Ratings were given to factors for all green spaces in the areas. Site-specific information related to accessibility has been analysed in the earlier sections specific to each type of green space.
- 17.19 Where a local representative did not return the questionnaire, this information about the parish or ward in general was not available. This again has to be taken into account when interpreting the findings.

Accessibility Analysis – Borough Wide

- 17.20 The ratings given for accessibility of green spaces in the borough are very mixed but overall 38% of respondents indicated that accessibility was poor or average.
- 17.21 Areas in particular which were given poor or very poor accessibility ratings were:
- pushchair and wheelchair access (63%)
 - access by cycleways (53%)
 - access by public transport (57%)
 - information and promotion (65%).
- 17.22 Access was rated as good or very good for opening times (69%), cost/value for money (74%), access by walking (59%) and distance of green spaces from the majority of the population (46%).
- 17.23 Other factors such as entrance to sites and signage was mainly rated as average.

Analysis Area 1 – Northern

- 17.24 The overall accessibility for this analysis area was rated by 40% of respondents as average and 40% as poor. The other 20% rated it as good.
- 17.25 A particular area of concern for the Council to address is accessibility to green spaces by wheelchairs or pushchairs. 80% of all respondents rated access as poor or very poor.
- 17.26 Other negative areas were accessibility to green spaces by public transport (67% believed accessibility by this means was very poor). Availability of information and promotions of the sites was also rated as either poor or very poor by 75% of respondents from this area.
- 17.27 All respondents believed access in terms of opening times were good and all respondents rated cost and value for money as either very good or good.
- 17.28 In terms of the distances local people had to travel to access a green space, all respondents gave either very good, good or average in response.
- 17.29 Some specific comments were made about access in certain areas. Wormshill Parish indicated that whilst the village is surrounded by woodland and farmland, this is all privately owned and is inaccessible with no formal rights of way.

Analysis Area 2 – Southern

- 17.30 Overall access levels to green spaces in this area were mainly rated as average with 50% of respondents giving this rating.
- 17.31 Areas of concern included accessibility by pushchairs and wheelchairs, which were rated as poor or very poor by 66% of the respondents. Similarly public transport was rated by 50% as average and 50% as poor. 66% of respondents considered accessibility to green spaces by cycleways as either poor or very poor.
- 17.32 Cost/value for money and opening times were again the highest rated accessibility factors.
- 17.33 Boughton Monchelsea Parish made comments about Quarry Wood which is not intended for public use but is a large expanse of open space in their parish. This site is protected for conservation and environmental importance.

Analysis Area 3 – Eastern

- 17.34 Interpretation of findings for this area is difficult because it involves assessing results from only two out of four parishes.
- 17.35 However, some significant findings did emerge. Both responding parishes rated cost and value for money as very poor and also accessibility by public transport and by cycleways as very poor.
- 17.36 Neither parishes rated any factors as very good or good.

Analysis Area 4 – Urban

- 17.37 In the urban area, a majority of respondents (55%) rated overall accessibility of green space sites as poor.
- 17.38 Specific areas of concern in terms of access, where a majority rated the factors as either average or poor, were:
- entrance to the sites (63%)
 - access to spaces by pushchairs or wheelchairs (72%)
 - access by public transport (67%)
 - signage (90%)
 - information and promotion of the sites (73%).
- 17.39 50% of respondents rated opening times as either very good or good and the other 50% rated this factor as average. Accessibility by walking to sites was rated by 54% as either good or average and distance from a majority of the population was given a rating of either good (27%) or average (36%).
- 17.40 Boxley Parish provided further detail on access issues in their area. A problem in some areas towards the boundary edge was access to areas just outside the parish which was either across a dangerously busy road or along a road with no footpaths.

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17.41 East Ward reported that whilst Penenden Heath has good car parking access, the surface of this car park is gravel, which is inappropriate and unsuitable for wheelchairs.

Resourcing the strategy

18.1 The Green Spaces Strategy can be resourced in a number of ways. Initially it may be necessary to allocate funding from within existing budgets for the management of parks and open spaces. The Council may consider it appropriate to follow the review of budgets (Priority-Based Budgeting approach) referred to elsewhere in this report. This funding will be used to “pump-prime” that which is available from external sources, much of which will come from governmental organisations or quangos which require match-funding from local authorities.

18.2 Other sources of income are outlined below.

Sale of Council land

18.3 Generating and reinvesting resources obtained from land which is surplus to requirements is a principle that has been successfully adopted in the London Borough of Bromley and Glasgow City Council (through its Parks and Open Spaces Strategy).

18.4 This is, however, likely to be a long process, and ultimately may prove difficult to achieve in Maidstone. If considered feasible at some future stage, reinvestment would:

- secure political credibility for the sale of land, even though redundant
- provide sufficient funding to carry out significant rather than purely cosmetic Strategy improvements. It should, however, be realised that the process may take two/three years to introduce, owing to planning, legal and other restrictions which could delay its implementation.

Private and voluntary sector investment

18.5 Voluntary sector management of outdoor sports facilities could be considered. This could include an extension of the delegated management of football, cricket and other sports facilities through local clubs. Also, opportunities should be sought for the marketing of cafeterias and other outlets in parks and open spaces.

Use of redundant buildings

18.6 Sympathetic use of redundant facilities for leisure and recreational purposes is also possible. This could include the establishment of small commercial sports facilities (eg tennis) in parks. Another example could be the use of a redundant sports pavilion as a children’s crèche or nursery.

Business funding/sponsorship

18.7 Examples from other boroughs include sponsorship of Cardiff City Council’s events and festivals programme, and the Body Shop Playground Project in Auchinlea Park, Glasgow.

Partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector

18.8 This could include the formation of further parks “friends” groups. An example is that of Rossmere Park, Hartlepool, where the community was encouraged to take ownership. The park was promoted and became heavily-used, attracting investment from funding bodies.

Section 106 planning agreements

- 18.9 Section 106 agreements can be used to achieve environmental improvements. Once a Strategy framework has been established, the process of obtaining improvements will be enhanced because they can be used to achieve specific purposes, eg
- by opening linear routeways to connect green chains
 - providing walking and cycling routes
 - creating open space in areas of deficiency
 - funding open space improvements.
- 18.10 There are maintenance considerations to be taken into account ie significant costs may arise, particularly if new open space is acquired.
- 18.11 It may therefore be necessary to obtain an endowment fund wherever possible to cover these ongoing costs.
- 18.12 It should of course be noted that such Agreements have to meet the test of Circular 1/97, and “Developers should not be expected to pay for facilities which are needed solely in order to resolve existing deficiencies”.

Lottery funding

- 18.13 This could include the Heritage Fund if works are carried out which are of outstanding interest and importance to the national heritage. Funding is provided for whole-park projects, the conservation of park features or park activities. Grants are available from £50,000 to £5 million for a period of up to five years. Projects must be designed to involve all stakeholders, must demonstrate sustainability, and must demonstrate the heritage value of the park in question.

Review of pricing

- 18.14 The Strategy timetable includes provision for a review of pricing. This needs to cover all charges where a significant income is obtained, including outdoor sports, allotments and burial. The review needs to consider:
- charges for similar provision in other local authorities
 - the quality of provision
 - whether the service can be improved to justify a price increase
 - the extent to which the market will bear any future increase
 - whether differential pricing can be used to encourage off-peak usage
 - concessions for minority groups, or those which the Council particularly wishes to encourage
 - pricing at a level which does not deny access
 - higher charges for non-Borough residents.

Living spaces

18.15 The “Living Spaces” grant scheme was launched in May 2003, and covers schemes with a value of £1,000 to £100,000. It is suitable for small local parks, and is open to existing neighbourhood groups. The scheme supports:

- improving local parks
- creating or improving pocket parks or community gardens
- creating or improving play or seating areas
- cleaning up neglected residential land
- restoring village greens
- carrying out planting schemes on estates or verges
- creating or improving nature areas or city farms
- restoring local cemeteries
- restoring paths, gateways, ponds or boundaries.

The “People’s Places” Scheme

18.16 The “People’s Places” scheme runs until the year 2006, and is administered by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. It is provided for local community groups, and is for the transformation of derelict, underused or unsightly land or buildings. The scope of grant available is for schemes with a value of £3,000 to £10,000.

The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

18.17 The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme was revised in April 2003, and allows registered landfill operators to contribute 6.5% of their annual landfill tax liability to environmental bodies approved by the organisation ENTRUST.

18.18 The scheme must be used for social, environmental and community based projects complying with specific “approved objects”. These objects are the provision and maintenance of public amenity, and restoration and repair of buildings open to the public with historical or architectural significance.

18.19 The project must be within 10 miles of a landfill/extraction operation. There are two known operators in the Maidstone area: Hanson Environmental Fund and Waste Recycling Environmental (WREN).

Local Heritage Initiatives

- 18.20 Local Heritage Initiatives are to assist local communities in the preservation of their environment, landmarks and traditions including archaeological, natural, built and industrial heritage. A community group could investigate and celebrate a historic park, prepare a public exhibition in a park, and repair a feature. Up to 100% of project costs between values of £3,000 and £25,000 are payable.
- 18.21 Your Heritage Grants are available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and are for projects of between £5,000 and £50,000 in value. The countryside, parks and gardens are all eligible.
- 18.22 English Heritage supports the Heritage Grant Fund for historic parks and gardens where there is a significant risk of losing important landscape features.

Lottery Small Grants Scheme

- 18.23 The Lottery Small Grants Scheme offers Awards for All grants of between £500 and £5,000 for small projects which involve people in their community, and can include local environmental work and community park projects.

Barclays Sitesavers

- 18.24 Barclays Sitesavers is a grant mechanism for community projects which transform derelict land into community leisure and recreation facilities. Between £4,000 and £10,000 is available.

The Tree Council

- 18.25 The Tree Council supports the Community Trees Fund which funds up to 75% of all expenditure on tree planting schemes having a value of £100 to £700.

The Esmee Fairburn Foundation

- 18.26 The Esmee Fairburn Foundation aims to improve quality of life, particularly for people who face disadvantage. Eligible activities include the preservation and enhancement of open space, and good management of woodlands, gardens and allotments. The size of grant is not limited, with the average award for the year 2002 being £33,500.

Other funding sources

- 18.27 These could include:
- increased income from events and activities
 - strategy improvements negotiated as “added value” from service providers as part of a grounds maintenance procurement plan.
- 18.28 The degree of funding will define the scope and timescale over which the Strategy can be implemented. It is therefore essential to carefully consider all possible sources of funding.

Priority Based Budgeting

18.29 Priority Based Budgeting (PBB) is a technique which has been used by a number of local authorities concerned with the provision of Best Value services which clearly identify priorities and can be used to “top slice” revenue budgets to provide strategy funding.

18.30 PBB has the following key features:

- integration with the Council’s key objectives
- a fresh look at the parks service based on current and future needs of users (and potential users)
- a driver of change – growth as well as reduction at all levels
- involvement of staff in change process.

18.31 The basis of PBB includes:

- a historical need to tackle issues relating to Maidstone’s green space service (budgetary constraints, failing infrastructure, etc)
- definition of key budget heads
- analysis from a “clean slate” perspective
- establishment of base level (eg 70%)
- building of each key area in stages up to base level and growth.

18.32 In order to apply directly to the provision of parks and open spaces in Maidstone, the following issues are crucial:

- needs to provide in accordance with Best Value principles
- application of recent stakeholder consultation
- needs to meet Council’s objectives in relation to sustainable management and Agenda 21 issues.

18.33 The proposed methodology to be pursued is as follows:

- (i) **Define budget heads.** This involves selecting a small number of key service areas which are most relevant to the user, or potential user, eg parks, community safety, conservation, etc.
- (ii) **Define service policies and strategies.** All relevant policies and strategies, including the Council’s core values (sustainability, access for all, etc) must be identified in order to make the process appropriate to the service.
- (iii) **Carry out activity analysis.** This involves service heads analysing all of those activities within the budget heads which are sufficiently key to service delivery as to warrant attention (eg if community safety is a budget head area, then possible relevant activity areas could be the open space service, countryside service keepers, and locking/unlocking of parks).

- (iv) **Define cost allocations.** This will involve service managers working with a finance representative to allocate costs (or income) to each of the activity areas. A simple spreadsheet can then be used to represent all of the activity areas which make up the current budget.
- (v) **Apply ratings.** The importance of each new activity will need to be rated according to whether they are essential (for health and safety or statutory reasons, for example) or less essential (ie useful to carry out for amenity reasons).
- (vi) **Definition of alternative proposals.** This involves identifying possible incremental service levels, eg:
 - minimum
 - intermediate
 - “current”
 - enhanced.

18.34 Each of the activities within budget heads will need to be examined by identifying outputs and benefits; the consequences of not providing; and resources and costs.

18.35 Different ways of providing each of the activities need to be identified in order to assess whether there is a “better way”.

18.36 All of the activities at each of the incremental service levels must be listed along with relevant savings/costs, and relative importance. Decisions can then be made as to which are to be retained and which are to be rejected. In this way the budget can be “top sliced” to provide relevant funding for the Green Spaces Strategy.

Multi-Disciplinary Team Approach

18.37 Many management studies have been conducted in recent years which support the value of adopting a multi-disciplinary team approach to the tackling of key issues or problems.

18.38 Some spectacular work has been achieved in both public and private sector organisations using this method for example, the use of multi-disciplinary medical teams providing complete care packages to individual patients, with much higher recovery rates than had previously been the case.

18.39 In terms of the execution of the Strategy, this would be best served by the formation of a multi-disciplinary team modelled on that formed for the same purpose by the London Borough of Bromley. As detailed in the good practice guide, “People, Parks and Cities” (Department of the Environment, 1996), the advantages of using such an approach have been:

- giving individuals a purposeful context in which to work
- accountability through responsibility for all aspects of Strategy planning, and through responsibility for all aspects of parks improvement planning from budgets to public consultation
- learning how to adapt and modify the Strategy approach as it moves around the District.

SECTION 18 – RESOURCING THE STRATEGY

18.40 Professional elements which could be represented within the team include:

- parks and open spaces development
- parks management
- landscape design
- planning
- street care
- grounds maintenance
- ecology.

18.41 The use of a similar process in Maidstone is recommended. The concept contained within the Action Plan is to create a team which meets initially to define its terms of reference, and to clearly define individual duties within the timescales set for Strategy implementation.

18.42 The team would consist of Council officers with specific responsibility for key aspects of provision in green space in Maidstone. These would probably include:

- a planner because of the clear influence which the profession has on land use and control, and in the attainment of Section 106 planning agreements for improvements such as landscaping and the acquisition of land
- officers from the parks and countryside unit because of their technical expertise and understanding of open space provision
- other officers who may have specific input at key stages, eg an officer from the estates unit in relation to land acquisition to meet demand shortfalls.

18.43 The team would meet regularly to guide and control the Strategy at all key stages, and to ensure that it retained a sense of continuity and direction.

Marketing plan

- 19.1 In order to ensure that green spaces are accessible to all the communities in the Borough, it is essential that guidelines exist for the marketing of the service.
- 19.2 There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved:
- use of publicity material
 - use of local media
 - development of a website
 - development of events and activities programme
 - making green spaces attractive and welcoming.
- 19.3 **Publicity material** needs to be attractive and readily available to both local Borough residents and tourists. This material needs to be developed for the following green space services:
- an overall leaflet to cover all significant green spaces in the Borough, identified on an easy to read map and with a symbolic representation of key features
 - a leaflet for key green spaces in the Borough (eg Mote Park), where the content should include a map, specific features, directions, details of major events and activities, and a point of contact for enquiries
 - a map of the footpaths and cycling routes in the Borough
 - it may be sensible to await the development of the “*Access to Maidstone’s Countryside*” concept, at which point it will be essential to produce a leaflet which indicates key features and routeways, with a description of points of interest at regular intervals
 - specific leaflets for initiatives to encourage recycling, Parks Watch schemes or other significant projects in order to raise awareness and understanding
 - a specific leaflet for the Green Spaces Strategy - this should include details of the concept and what the Strategy intends to accomplish.
- 19.4 The **local media** should be used at every opportunity to provide information about new initiatives or projects. This should include newspaper coverage as well as local radio stations. Once priorities have been established for the Green Spaces Strategy, a programme of releases to the media should cover the following:
- details of policy decisions relating to the Strategy
 - descriptions of projects as they happen
 - details of public consultation meetings, and when and where they are to take place

- the Council's **website** must be used to advertise details of the Strategy - it should contain a separate section specifically to cover Strategy issues, and should include:
 - the aims and objectives of the Strategy
 - the tactics for achieving these objectives
 - timescales for implementation
 - community involvement
 - how people can help in its development.
- 19.5 An extensive **events and activities programme** achieves two key aims: it aims to attract people to green spaces in order to be entertained in a pleasant environment, and to encourage people to return to the same green spaces for further visits unconnected to the event or activity that they visited earlier.
- 19.6 It is essential that events and activities are included in the Strategy. A mechanism for achieving this objective is to set targets within management plans for key green spaces.
- 19.7 Events and activities can cover a wide range including:
- sporting tournaments
 - music concerts
 - firework displays
 - countryside days
 - funfairs
 - craft displays and markets.
- 19.8 It should be stressed that the organisation of a full events and activities programme need not unduly impinge on officer time. The London Borough of Bromley, for instance, has well over 200 events and activities every year in its parks and open spaces, but only a handful are organised in-house. The vast majority are set up by local voluntary organisations, albeit with the encouragement of the Council.
- 19.9 It is suggested that as part of the Strategy process, a hierarchy of green spaces is established which is appropriate for the type of event or activity proposed, ie:
- large parks such as Mote Park: family fun days, large musical events and firework displays
 - recreation grounds: craft markets, funfairs, etc.
 - neighbourhood open spaces: local community events.

19.10 In order to effectively market green spaces, they must in themselves be **welcoming and inviting**. In developing detailed proposals for the Green Spaces Strategy, and in the creation of Management plans, the following steps must be incorporated:

- entrances need to be obvious and well-maintained – this may involve attractive floral displays visible on approach, and an absence of litter
- signage should be evident – it should include a map of the park, key points of interest, and Council contacts.

20 Strategy Action Plan

Vision

20.1 The vision of the Green Space Strategy for Maidstone is:

“to provide accessible, well-maintained, safe and attractive parks and green spaces of the right type, in the right place of the right quantity to fulfil the recreational needs across all neighbourhoods within the borough and managed in co-ordination with the local community”.

Introduction

20.2 The Action Plan sets out how the aims and objectives of the Green Spaces Strategy will be achieved. It sets clear targets, defines responsibility, and indicates any financial implications to enable targets to be achieved.

20.3 The timescale is over five years, but includes those targets which are to be achieved in three phases leading up to the end of the five year plan. These are:

- Phase 1: Years 2005/7 (short-term goals)
- Phase 2: Years 2007/9 (medium term goals)
- Phase 3: Year 2009+ (longer-term goals).

20.4 It is intended that the Strategy should be iterative, ie it will not end in year five (2010) but will continue to evolve in accordance with changing conditions, needs and demands.

20.5 It should be noted that the term “green space” as used in the “Theme/Task” columns of the Plan covers all the eight types of green space covered in this strategy and supporting sections including outdoor provision, sports facilities and children’s play space.

20.6 It is suggested that examples of best practice from other local authorities should be examined in relation to improving the quality of green spaces. PMP would advocate that key Council staff appointed to implement the Strategy should study and visit suitable green spaces themselves. This will assist in applying best practice “blueprints” to green spaces in Maidstone and will be an invaluable tool in ensuring that delivery is carried out effectively.

20.7 The following objectives are covered by the action plan:

1. Overall strategic issues
2. Quality
3. Accessibility
4. Biodiversity
5. Provision levels for each type
6. Awareness.

SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: OVERALL STRATEGIC ISSUES

Themes/Tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
<p>S1. Staffing</p> <p>To ensure adequate staff resources are available to undertake the defined operational tasks within the specific timescale.</p>	1 May 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grade E/G - Salary inc. on costs (max. £26,000) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advert placed in relevant media ▪ Staff member appointed by 1.4.05
<p>S2. External Grant Funding</p> <p>To identify funding sources that will contribute to the defined operational tasks being completed within the specified timescale.</p> <p>Review available grants on a quarterly basis and report updates to the Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>1 Sept 2005 and on-going</p> <p>On-going</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MBC Funding Officer ▪ External funding agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce Funding Register ▪ Report to Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee ▪ Targeted external funding achieved
<p>S3. S106 Funding</p> <p>To identify development areas from the local plan, quantify likely S106 funding for Open Space and quantify open space needs within a relevant distance from the proposed development. Review annually.</p>	1 June 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local developers ▪ Planners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Parks and Planning Officers time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S106 agreements are subsequently signed and to at least the value of the original estimate

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Themes/Tasks	Timescale (phase)	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
<p>S4. Member Involvement in Operational Planning</p> <p>Continue the Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee to help develop and steer policy and operational planning and involve the wider community.</p> <p>To plan workshops for community involvement in operational matters relating to each of the 8 open space categories and to advise the Cabinet Member on operational planning accordingly.</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>4 to be delivered by 1 Sept 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local community ▪ Council Members ▪ Local community ▪ Council Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £400 (Venue costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Committee to meet four times per annum and to advise the Cabinet Member accordingly. ▪ Dates publicised for “community forums” ▪ No. of Consultation Meetings held ▪ Increase in Green Space usage
<p>S5. Community Management in Open Spaces To identify mechanisms for community involvement in and/or control of the management of open spaces and other facilities, their external funding opportunities and Council staffing to ensure its achieved</p> <p>Review best practice elsewhere and apply to two projects (in the short term) where the daily management is undertaken by the community.</p>	<p>Two successful projects by 31 December 2005</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Additional resources to be assessed and subject to further report to the Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of consultative forums and/or the implementation of community management schemes at identified open spaces.

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OBJECTIVE 2: QUALITY

To promote and advocate quality. *So that green spaces add value to the quality of life in the Borough.*

Themes/Tasks	Timescale (phase)	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
Q4. Devise management plans for countryside recreation areas and key green spaces. These will guide the future maintenance and promote high quality and accessibility levels for the future.	31 Dec. 2005 (key green spaces)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sports clubs ▪ User groups ▪ Green space bodies e.g. MVCP/KWT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £5,000 (Consultancy costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of key green spaces with full management plans.

OBJECTIVE 3: ACCESSIBILITY

To improve accessibility. *So that green spaces are accessible to all local communities.*

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
AC5. Design “Access to Maidstone’s Countryside” image for leaflets, signs, etc., including suitable logo. This will then be used in Council’s marketing material used to increase awareness of these sites.	1 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Marketing Officer ▪ Local art college ▪ Members ▪ Multi-disciplinary team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £2,000 - Design and print costs ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Logo Designed ▪ Leaflets produced and distributed
AC6. Set up system for passing statistical antisocial behaviour information to Police Statistical Officer. This will help reduce the presence of anti-social	1 Sept. 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Safety Officer ▪ Members ▪ Parks Officers ▪ MBS/External 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information flow for Police Statistical Officer commences September 2005

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Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
behaviour.		Contractors		
AC7. Produce design guide for landscaping to “design out” crime using thorned planting against buildings, opening vistas, etc.	31 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Safety Officer ▪ Members ▪ Parks Officers/MBS ▪ Planning Officers ▪ Local Police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £1,000 - Design and print costs ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guide produced by end of March 2006
AC9. Commence signage and landscaping works as part of Phase 1 of “Access to Maidstone’s Countryside”. This will be done to increase awareness of the scheme.	31 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers/MBS ▪ Planning Officers ▪ Local Residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £10,000 - Costs of materials and landscaping works © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Early hit” works start no later than end March 2006

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OBJECTIVE 4: BIODIVERSITY

To increase the range of habitats and species. *So that residents have access to a more diverse and interesting local landscape*

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
<p>B1. Create Strategy multi-disciplinary team to develop a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) covering the following key actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ creation of wild flower zones ○ improvement of natural landscapes ○ development of an annual programme of tree planting in the Borough ○ completion and adoption of management proposals for trees throughout the Borough 	31 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planners ▪ Parks Officers ▪ MBS/Grounds maintenance ▪ Ecology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adherence to LBAP targets and timescales. ▪ Improved publicity for the Council's existing Tree Sponsorship Scheme. ▪ Production and adoption of the Tree Management Plan.
<p>B2. Carry out stakeholder analysis to consult views on biodiversity levels in the Borough.</p>	30 September 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Users ▪ Biodiversity Interest groups ▪ Residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Range of stakeholder groups analysed. ▪ Range of analysis.
<p>B3. Create a blueprint for a series of green wedges ("Access to Maidstone's Countryside") where biodiversity will be specifically promoted and wildlife access corridors established.</p>	31 March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental Services Department ▪ Transport Planning Officers ▪ Biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £1,000 (Consultancy costs) @ 2006/07 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved network of green corridors ▪ Improved biodiversity in these areas according to the achievement of key objectives in the Biodiversity Action Plan

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interest Groups ▪ Parks Officers 		and extent of audit.
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OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
PARKS AND GARDENS				
PG1. Programme improvements designed at improving quality ratings for parks and gardens across the Borough of Phases I - 3 of the Green Spaces Strategy.	1 January 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ MBS/External Contractors ▪ Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £3,000 (Consultancy costs for audit) ® ▪ Possible increase in grounds maintenance costs (to be determined) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality Audit, applying quality standards ▪ Programme of improvements prepared
PG2. Analyse the quality of sites in detail (building on the work completed for the quality audit of key sites contained in Section 16 and using new quality standards) as part of the process of developing management plans, and incorporating proposals for improvement.	1 January 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ MBS/External Contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ (Consultancy costs) ® (in PG1 above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of these sites
PG3. Review existing cleansing specifications, set a "local" BVPI199 target for parks cleaning, set new specification and allocate funding to achieve goal.	30 October 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Waste Collection Team ▪ MBS/External Contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Additional contract costs to be determined (if 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of Cleaning Specifications Completed ▪ Report to Cabinet Member July 2005 ▪ Local BVPI199 target

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parish Councils ▪ Community Groups inc. Sports Clubs 	necessary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ determined Implementation of new standard by October 2005
PG4. Complete an accessibility, safety and security audit for all parks and gardens, building on work already done as part of strategy information.	1 January 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Members ▪ Community Groups including Sports Clubs ▪ Disability Groups ▪ Other MBC depts. ▪ Contributors to Management Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £1,500 (Consultancy costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pilot Park Identified ▪ Development Plan available for Consultative Forum April 2005 ▪ Report to Cabinet Member June 2005 ▪ Vision realised by 2009
PG7. Ensure the management plans for each park include a statement of its distinctive character and its requirements to protect and enhance biodiversity.	1 April 2005 and on-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Contributors to Management Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Consultancy costs ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed plans
PG8. Develop the vision of South Park as a prime venue for sport and young people's facilities.	Phase 1 work to commence on site by March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sports Clubs ▪ Maps Group ▪ Current users ▪ Parish Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1.5m 10% available from proposed development (S106) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development Plan available for Consultative Forum April 2005 ▪ Report to Cabinet Member June 2005 ▪ Vision realised by 2009
PG9. Prepare a “theme” for new signage and entrances to Parks and Gardens and implement over the short to medium term.	Theme to be developed 1 July 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Members ▪ Planners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Consultancy costs ® 2004/05 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Theme to be presented to future meeting of Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee ▪ New signage first incorporated at Trinity Park

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OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACES				
<p>NS1. Review existing cleansing specifications, set a "local" BVPI199 target for cleaning, set new specification and allocate funding to achieve the goal.</p>	<p>1 July 2005</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Waste Collection Team ▪ MBS/External Contractors ▪ Parish Councils ▪ Members ▪ Community Groups including Sports Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Additional contract costs to be determined (if necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of Cleaning Specifications Completed ▪ Report to Cabinet Member July 2005 ▪ Local BVPI199 target determined.

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OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
GREEN CORRIDORS				
GC1. The Council should continue to develop a network of green corridors (see Section 17) for more detail on the proposed "Access to Maidstone's Countryside" network.). This network should encourage the local community to make better use of the abundance of green corridors in the Borough and promote sustainable transport methods.	31 March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers ▪ Planners ▪ Transportation Planning Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved network if green corridors
GC2. Raise awareness of the biodiversity importance of green corridor sites to ensure their protection and management.	31 March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers ▪ Members ▪ MBS/External Contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)
GC5. Priority should be given to increasing the quality of green corridors in the northern and eastern areas (as per the results of the auditing).	1 Jan 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers ▪ Members ▪ MBS/External Contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1,500 (Consultancy costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of these sites
GC6. Accessibility should be improved in eastern and urban areas, including greening the Town Centre, and specifically at Hayes Lane PROW in the north and the banks of the River Medway	1 Jan 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Ward Members ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1,500 (Consultancy costs) ® ▪ £20,000 ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of these sites

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in West Farleigh.				
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OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
AMENITY GREEN SPACES				
AG1. To identify opportunities to meet the small shortfall in amenity space in the urban area, in particular in the west and north areas of Maidstone town centre. This will be completed through carrying out a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping.	ALL PHASES – Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developers ▪ Land owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Revenue budgets ▪ Grant aid ▪ Section 106 ▪ Catchment area mapping £1,500 ®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional amenity space is provided ▪ Deficiencies eliminated
AG2. Protect and continue to maintain the level of quality and accessibility levels at the highly valued amenity green spaces. The high value ratings given to these sites reflects their importance due to high quality, accessibility and use ratings.	1 January 2006	Environmental Services Department Grounds Maintenance Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1,500 (Consultancy costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct a PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of these sites between Jan – March 2006
AG3. Ensure amenity green spaces are clean, well maintained, safe and secure, appropriate to their use. This will	ALL PHASES – Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Grounds maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Existing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No complaints

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encourage increased use of these important neighbourhood green areas and help improve quality of life.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contractors ▪ Parish councils ▪ Local community ▪ Developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revenue budgets ▪ Income from event use 	
AG4. Improve quality and accessibility levels of the following sites Giddyhorn Lane Recreation Ground, Mangravet Recreation Ground, Lucks Way, Courtenay Road Amenity Green Space and Quarry Road Amenity Green Space.	1 Jan 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental Services Officers ▪ Members ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1,500 (Consultancy costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of these sites

OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE				
CP3. It is recommended that further consultation takes place with parish and ward representatives to understand whether their levels of dissatisfaction relate to the variety of equipment provided at sites, or the amount of play space provided. The results of this detailed consultation should feed directly into planning of new Section 106 agreements.	31 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental Services Officers ▪ Members ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers ▪ Parish Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultation report presented to Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee
CP4. Improvements in quality and accessibility should be prioritised to the play area in Tall Trees Close (Broomfield	1 Jan 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental Services Officers. ▪ Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1,000 (Consultancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of

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and Kingswood Parish) as this site is reported to have no use and has low accessibility and quality levels. Priority should also be given to improving other sites with similar low use, low accessibility and low quality issues such as the play area in East Sutton and Upper Fulling Pits Play Area in East Ward.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks/Grounds Maintenance Officers 	costs) ®	these sites
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OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES				
OS1. Review existing cleansing specs, set a "local" BVP1199 target for cleaning, set new specification and allocate funding to achieve goal.	1 July 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waste Collection Services ▪ MBS/External Contractors ▪ Parish Councils ▪ Members ▪ Community Groups including Sports Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Additional contract costs to be determined (if necessary) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of Cleaning Specifications Completed ▪ Report to Cabinet Member July 2005 ▪ Local BVP1199 target determined.
OS2. Continue to work towards completing the actions outlined in the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy where specific facility deficiencies were outlined e.g. Athletics Track (see OS4).	ALL PHASES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sport and Play team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achievement of actions

SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

<p>OS4. The Council will use its best endeavours to ensure the proposed athletics track at Oldborough Manor is provided as identified in the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy.</p>	<p>31 March 2007</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Capital already set aside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Athletics track provided
<p>OS5. Rationalise the number of senior and junior sports pitches to cater for current demands as highlighted in the Sport and Play Facilities Strategy.</p>	<p>31 March 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MBS/External Contractors ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Members ▪ Sports Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Any significant capital expenditure will be linked to changing facilities (to be determined) © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report to the Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee by September 2005 on rationalisation proposals ▪ Subject to outcome of report, pitches rationalised

OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS				
<p>ACG1. Establish demand and future/unmet need for allotments where no provision currently exists.</p>	<p>1 April 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Schools ▪ Churches ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Community / Residents Associations ▪ Members ▪ Parish councils ▪ Local community ▪ Allotment Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report to be presented to Green Space Strategy Advisory Committee.

SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
<p>ACG2. Carry out audit of each allotment site to assess accessibility, facilities provision, (water supply, sheds, car parking, composting) etc to identify improvements required for individual sites.</p>	<p>31 July 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Allotment Tenants / Plot holders ▪ Allotment Management Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time (audit and evaluation) ▪ Capital funding to be allocated subject to outcome of site improvement plans © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allotment improvement plan prepared ▪ Funding identified (including external sources) ▪ Implementation of site improvement plans
<p>ACG4. Improve access to the allotments in the southern analysis area through consultation with plot holders to determine the key issues and establish a policy for borough-wide allotment provision for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>31 July 2006</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers Services ▪ Allotment Tenants / Plot holders ▪ Allotment Management Association ▪ Members ▪ MAMC ▪ Mobility Focus Group ▪ Disability Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer Time ▪ Capital funding to be allocated subject to outcome of site analysis © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of quality and accessibility report ▪ Funding identified – if required (including external sources) ▪ Implementation of access improvements
<p>ACG6. Protect the following sites from development because these have high use, high quality and high accessibility ratings</p>	<p>31 December 2005</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MBS/External Contractors ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Members ▪ Parish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £1,250 (Consultancy costs) ® ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit of these sites

SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrietsham Allotments • Langley Allotments • Rocky Hill Allotments, Bridge Ward • James Street Allotments in East Ward • Mayfair Avenue Allotments, South Ward. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allotment Tenants / Plot holders ▪ Allotment Management Association ▪ Planners 		

SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE 5: PROVISION

To improve the provision of green space (by type according to quantity, quality and accessibility factors)

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS				
CC1. Establish demand and future need for cemetery space to identify future land requirements. To assist this exercise, a full accessibility assessment identifying locational deficiencies using catchment mapping will be undertaken.	31 March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Churches ▪ Cemeteries staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Capital funding for possible land acquisition and associated works (subject to outcome of assessment) © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report presented to Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee and other committees (as appropriate) ▪ Funding identified – if required (including external sources) ▪ Implementation of action
CC3. Audit all cemeteries and churchyards in order to identify and prioritise improvements/essential work (including responsibility such as health and safety).	1 June 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Churches ▪ Bereavement Services Officer ▪ Health and Safety Officer ▪ Parish Councils ▪ MBS/External Contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Capital funding once improvement plan prepared) © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report presented to Green Spaces Strategy Advisory Committee and other committees (as appropriate) ▪ Responsibilities and funding identified – if required (including external sources) ▪ Implementation of improvements
CC4. Protect the cemeteries and churchyards with high use, quality and accessibility ratings which are therefore highly valued to the local community. These are:	31 December 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Churches ▪ Bereavement Services Officer ▪ MBS/External 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £500 (Consultancy costs) ® 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of PPG17 Quality and Access Audit

SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Burial Ground, All Saints Church StaplehurstBrewer Street Graveyard, East Ward		Contractors		
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SECTION 20 – ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE 6: AWARENESS

To increase local awareness of the countryside and green space areas *by promoting their value through community involvement and marketing*

Themes/tasks	Timescale	Key partners	Resource implications	Performance indicators
A1. Produce marketing plan for Green Spaces Strategy to focus activities on raising awareness of green spaces in the Borough.	31 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Marketing Officer ▪ Local Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coverage of all key activities
A2. Produce publicity leaflets for Strategy for distribution across the Borough.	1 July 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Marketing Officer ▪ Local Media ▪ Local Businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ £1,000 - Design and Print costs © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of leaflets ▪ Coverage of leaflets
A3. Distribute publicity leaflets	1 Sept 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing Officer ▪ Local Businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coverage of leaflets
A4. Create Strategy website for information/ canvassing of views	1 Sept 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parks Officers ▪ Marketing Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing Officer time ▪ Set up costs £500 © 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of hits to website used ▪ Number of queries generated

KEY: ® = Revenue Funding from 2005/06 (unless otherwise stated)

© = Capital Funding

(S106) = Funding from confirmed Section 106 Agreements

Parks and Gardens (Hierarchy: Strategic Significance)

Ward Name	PMP Analysis Area	Total Population	Current Provision (Hectares)	Hectares per 1000 pop	Local Minimum Standard	Above / Below standard per 1000/pop	Above / below standard (hectares)
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	6,765	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-15.56
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	2,233	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-5.14
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	8,010	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-18.42
29UH GK Boxley	Urban Fringe	8,463	21.65	2.56	2.30	0.26	2.19
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	4,712	8.89	1.89	2.30	-0.41	-1.95
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	Urban Fringe	2,753	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-6.33
29UHGQ East	Urban Fringe	7,910	0.22	0.03	2.30	-2.27	-17.97
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	7,707	1.3	0.17	2.30	-2.13	-16.43
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	4,563	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-10.49
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	7,774	6.41	0.82	2.30	-1.48	-11.47
29UHGY Loose	Urban Fringe	2,207	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-5.08
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	7,778	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-17.89
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	4,030	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-9.27
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	8,560	179.79	21.00	2.30	18.70	160.10
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	5,389	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-12.39
29UH HF South	Urban Fringe	7,130	0	0.00	2.30	-2.30	-16.40
Total Urban		95,984	218.26	2.27	2.30	-0.03	-2.50
29UH GJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Su	Southern	2,531	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH GM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	6,863	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH GZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	7,494	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH HG Staplehurst	Southern	6,003	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH HH Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	2,702	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Southern		25,593	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH GN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	2,951	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH HB North Downs	Northern	2,331	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Northern		5,282	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH GS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	5,051	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH GT Headcorn	Eastern	4,815	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
29UH GX Leeds	Eastern	2,224	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Eastern		12,090	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Rural (Southern/Northern/Eastern)		42,965	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Borough wide total		138,949	218.26	1.57			

Natural and Semi-Natural Green spaces (no standard set)

Ward Name	Analysis Area	Hectares	Population	Hectares per 1000 pop
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	1.17	6,765	0.172949002
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	138.12	2,233	61.85400806
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	50.7	8,010	6.329588015
29UHGK Boxley	Urban Fringe	290.38	8,463	34.3117098
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	0	4,712	0
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	Urban Fringe	19.18	2,753	6.966945151
29UHGQ East	Urban Fringe	1.12	7,910	0.14159292
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	3.91	7,707	0.507330998
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	0	4,563	0
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	2.1	7,774	0.270131207
29UHGY Loose	Urban Fringe	0	2,207	0
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	0	7,778	0
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	0	4,030	0
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	0	8,560	0
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	7.14	5,389	1.324921136
29UHHF South	Urban Fringe	49.26	7,130	6.908835905
Total		563.08	95,984	5.866394399
29UHGJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Su	Southern	14.03	2,531	5.543263532
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	67.91	6,863	9.895089611
29UHGZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	193.35	7,494	25.80064051
29UHHG Staplehurst	Southern	68.92	6,003	11.4809262
29UHHH Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	82.37	2,702	30.48482605
Total		426.58	25,593	16.66783886
29UHGN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	189.56	2,951	64.23585225
29UHHB North Downs	Northern	657.73	2,331	282.1664522
Total		847.29	5,282	160.4108292
29UHGS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	25.42	5,051	5.032666799
29UHGT Headcorn	Eastern	229.98	4,815	47.76323988
29UHGX Leeds	Eastern	107.84	2,224	48.48920863
Total		363.24	12,090	30.04466501

Green Corridors (No standard set)

Ward Name	Analysis Area	Length	Population	Length per 1000 pop
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	0	6,765	0
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	2016	2,233	902.8213166
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	284	8,010	35.4556804
29UH GK Boxley	Urban Fringe	2814	8,463	332.5062035
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	1839	4,712	390.2801358
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	Urban Fringe	1819	2,753	660.733745
29UH GQ East	Urban Fringe	1176	7,910	148.6725664
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	1834	7,707	237.9654859
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	0	4,563	0
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	1311	7,774	168.6390533
29UHGY Loose	Urban Fringe	878	2,207	397.8251019
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	2717	7,778	349.3185909
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	0	4,030	0
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	0	8,560	0
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	0	5,389	0
29UH HF South	Urban Fringe	0	7,130	0
Total		16688	95,984	173.8623104
29UH GJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Southern	29082	2,531	11490.32003
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	21103	6,863	3074.894361
29UH GZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	4860	7,494	648.5188151
29UH HG Staplehurst	Southern	0	6,003	0
29UH HH Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	0	2,702	0
Total		55045	25,593	2150.783417
29UH GN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	0	2,951	0
29UH HB North Downs	Northern	8648	2,331	3709.99571
Total		8648	5,282	1637.258614
29UH GS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	4250	5,051	841.4175411
29UH GT Headcorn	Eastern	20475	4,815	4252.336449
29UH GX Leeds	Eastern	3138	2,224	1410.971223
Total		27863	12,090	2304.631927

Amenity Greenspace (Hierarchy: Neighbourhood)

Ward Name	PMP Analysis Area	Total Population	Current Provision (Hectares)	Hectares per 1000 pop	Local Minimum Standard	Above / Below standard per 1000/pop	Above / below standard (hectares)
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	6,765	8.62	1.27	0.70	0.57	3.88
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	2,233	0.89	0.40	0.70	-0.30	-0.67
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	8,010	2.58	0.32	0.70	-0.38	-3.03
29UHGK Boxley	Urban Fringe	8,463	10.77	1.27	0.70	0.57	4.85
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	4,712	0	0.00	0.70	-0.70	-3.30
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	Urban Fringe	2,753	1.8	0.65	0.70	-0.05	-0.13
29UHGQ East	Urban Fringe	7,910	4.75	0.60	0.70	-0.10	-0.79
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	7,707	0.08	0.01	0.70	-0.69	-5.31
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	4,563	1.99	0.44	0.70	-0.26	-1.20
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	7,774	3.58	0.46	0.70	-0.24	-1.86
29UHGY Loose	Urban Fringe	2,207	0	0.00	0.70	-0.70	-1.54
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	7,778	0	0.00	0.70	-0.70	-5.44
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	4,030	0.51	0.13	0.70	-0.57	-2.31
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	8,560	15.38	1.80	0.70	1.10	9.39
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	5,389	5.15	0.96	0.70	0.26	1.38
29UHHF South	Urban Fringe	7,130	6.32	0.89	0.70	0.19	1.33
Total Urban Fringe		95,984	62.42	0.65	0.70	-0.05	-4.77
29UHGJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Southern	2,531	0.95	0.38	0.80	-0.42	-1.07
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	6,863	5.05	0.74	0.80	-0.06	-0.44
29UHGZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	7,494	10.36	1.38	0.80	0.58	4.36
29UHGG Staplehurst	Southern	6,003	3.81	0.63	0.80	-0.17	-0.99
29UHGG Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	2,702	0	0.00	0.80	-0.80	-2.16
Total Southern		25,593	20.17	0.79	0.80	-0.01	-0.30
29UHGN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	2,951	5.81	1.97	0.80	1.17	3.45
29UHGB North Downs	Northern	2,331	0.04	0.02	0.80	-0.78	-1.82
Total Northern		5,282	5.85	1.11	0.80	0.31	1.62
29UHGS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	5,051	5.77	1.14	0.80	0.34	1.73
29UHGT Headcorn	Eastern	4,815	1.93	0.40	0.80	-0.40	-1.92
29UHGX Leeds	Eastern	2,224	0.41	0.18	0.80	-0.62	-1.37
Total Eastern		12,090	8.11	0.67	0.80	-0.13	-1.56
Total Rural (Southern/Northern/Eastern)		42,965	34.13	0.79	0.80	-0.01	-0.24
Borough wide total		138,949	96.55	0.69			

Provision for Children (Equipped Play) (Hierarchy: Neighbourhood)

Ward Name	Total Population	Hectares	Hectares per 1000 pop	Local Minimum Standard	Above / Below standard per 1000/pop	Above / below standard (hectares)
29UHGF Allington	6,765	1.3	0.19	0.12	0.07	0.49
29UHGG Barming	2,233	0.19	0.09	0.12	-0.03	-0.08
29UHGH Bearsted	8,010	0.02	0.00	0.12	-0.12	-0.94
29UH GK Boxley	8,463	1.44	0.17	0.12	0.05	0.42
29UHGL Bridge	4,712	0.49	0.10	0.12	-0.02	-0.08
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	2,753	0.58	0.21	0.12	0.09	0.25
29UHGQ East	7,910	1.7	0.21	0.12	0.09	0.75
29UHGR Fant	7,707	0.53	0.07	0.12	-0.05	-0.39
29UHGU Heath	4,563	0.08	0.02	0.12	-0.10	-0.47
29UHGW High Street	7,774	0.08	0.01	0.12	-0.11	-0.85
29UHGY Loose	2,207	0.07	0.03	0.12	-0.09	-0.19
29UHHA North	7,778	2.04	0.26	0.12	0.14	1.11
29UHHC Park Wood	4,030	0.22	0.05	0.12	-0.07	-0.26
29UHHD Shepway North	8,560	0.49	0.06	0.12	-0.06	-0.54
29UHHE Shepway South	5,389	0.53	0.10	0.12	-0.02	-0.12
29UHHF South	7,130	1.59	0.22	0.12	0.10	0.73
Total Urban Fringe	95,984	11.35	0.12	0.12	-0.00	-0.17
29UH GJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	2,531	0.16	0.06	0.09	-0.03	-0.07
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	6,863	0.55	0.08	0.09	-0.01	-0.07
29UH GZ Marden and Yalding	7,494	0.83	0.11	0.09	0.02	0.16
29UH HG Staplehurst	6,003	0.12	0.02	0.09	-0.07	-0.42
29UH HH Sutton Valence and Langley	2,702	0.23	0.09	0.09	-0.00	-0.01
Total Southern	25,593	1.89	0.07	0.09	-0.02	-0.41
29UH GN Detling and Thurnham	2,951	0.57	0.19	0.09	0.10	0.30
29UH HB North Downs	2,331	0.71	0.30	0.09	0.21	0.50
Total Northern	5,282	1.28	0.24	0.09	0.15	0.80
29UH GS Harrietsham and Lenham	5,051	0.38	0.08	0.09	-0.01	-0.07
29UH GT Headcorn	4,815	0.23	0.05	0.09	-0.04	-0.20
29UH GX Leeds	2,224	0.04	0.02	0.09	-0.07	-0.16
Total Eastern	12,090	0.65	0.05	0.09	-0.04	-0.44
Total Rural (Southern/Northern/Eastern)	42,965	3.82	0.09	0.09	-0.00	-0.05
Borough wide total	138,949	15.17	0.11			

Outdoor Sports Facilities (Hierarchy: Strategic Significance)

Ward Name	PMP Analysis Area	Total Population	Hectares	Hectares per 1000 pop	Local Minimum Standard	Above / Below standard per 1000/pop	Above / below standard (hectares)
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	6,765	11.43	1.69	1.40	0.29	1.96
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	2,233	1.56	0.70	1.40	-0.70	-1.57
29UHGJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Southern	2,531	0	0.00	2.70	-2.70	-6.83
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	8,010	4.82	0.60	1.40	-0.80	-6.39
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	6,863	10.48	1.53	2.70	-1.17	-8.05
29UHGG Boxley	Urban Fringe	8,463	6.08	0.72	1.40	-0.68	-5.77
29UHGZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	7,494	15.3	2.04	2.70	-0.66	-4.93
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	4,712	0	0.00	1.40	-1.40	-6.60
29UHGG East	Urban Fringe	7,910	6.86	0.87	1.40	-0.53	-4.21
29UHGHG Staplehurst	Southern	6,003	13.84	2.31	2.70	-0.39	-2.37
29UHGP Downwood and Otharr	Urban Fringe	2,753	8.25	3.00	1.40	1.60	4.40
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	7,707	4.32	0.56	1.40	-0.84	-6.47
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	4,563	27.47	6.02	1.40	4.62	21.08
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	7,774	0	0.00	1.40	-1.40	-10.88
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	7,778	4.17	0.54	1.40	-0.86	-6.72
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	4,030	20.17	5.00	1.40	3.60	14.53
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	8,560	5.59	0.65	1.40	-0.75	-6.39
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	5,389	3.47	0.64	1.40	-0.76	-4.07
29UHGF South	Urban Fringe	7,130	18.22	2.56	1.40	1.16	8.24
Total Urban Fringe		95,984	131.45	1.37	1.40	-0.03	-2.93
29UHGGJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Southern	2,531	0	0.00	2.70	-2.70	-6.83
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	6,863	10.48	1.53	2.70	-1.17	-8.05
29UHGGZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	7,494	15.3	2.04	2.70	-0.66	-4.93
29UHGGH Staplehurst	Southern	6,003	13.84	2.31	2.70	-0.39	-2.37
29UHGGH Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	2,702	36.35	13.45	2.70	10.75	29.05
Total Southern		25,593	75.97	2.97	2.70	0.27	6.87
29UHGN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	2,951	4.66	1.58	2.70	-1.12	-3.31
29UHGB North Downs	Northern	2,331	5.91	2.54	2.70	-0.16	-0.38
Total Northern		5,282	10.57	2.00	2.70	-0.70	-3.69
29UHGS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	5,051	9.03	1.79	2.70	-0.91	-4.61
29UHGT Headcorn	Eastern	4,815	9.71	2.02	2.70	-0.68	-3.29
29UHGX Leeds	Eastern	2,224	6.8	3.06	2.70	0.36	0.80
Total Eastern		12,090	25.54	2.11	2.70	-0.59	-7.10
Total Rural (Southern/Northern/Eastern)		42,965	112.08	2.61	2.70	-0.09	-3.93
Borough wide total		138,949	243.53	1.75			

Allotments and Community Gardens (Hierarchy: Middle Order)

Ward Name	PMP Analysis Area	Total Population	Current Provision (hectares)	Hectares per 1000 pop	Local Minimum Standard	Above / Below standard per 1000/pop	Above / below standard (hectares)
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	6,765	0	0.00	0.21	-0.21	-1.42
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	2,233	1.2	0.54	0.21	0.33	0.73
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	8,010	0.53	0.07	0.21	-0.14	-1.15
29UHGK Boxley	Urban Fringe	8,463	0	0.00	0.21	-0.21	-1.78
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	4,712	3.52	0.75	0.21	0.54	2.53
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	Urban Fringe	2,753	0	0.00	0.21	-0.21	-0.58
29UHGQ East	Urban Fringe	7,910	0.12	0.02	0.21	-0.19	-1.54
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	7,707	1.96	0.25	0.21	0.04	0.34
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	4,563	2.78	0.61	0.21	0.40	1.82
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	7,774	0.67	0.09	0.21	-0.12	-0.96
29UHGY Loose	Urban Fringe	2,207	2.26	1.02	0.21	0.81	1.80
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	7,778	4.39	0.56	0.21	0.35	2.76
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	4,030	0	0.00	0.21	-0.21	-0.85
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	8,560	0	0.00	0.21	-0.21	-1.80
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	5,389	0	0.00	0.21	-0.21	-1.13
29UHHF South	Urban Fringe	7,130	2.47	0.35	0.21	0.14	0.97
Total Urban Fringe		95,984	19.9	0.21	0.21	-0.00	-0.26
29UHGJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton	Southern	2,531	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-0.46
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	6,863	1.9	0.28	0.18	0.10	0.66
29UHGZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	7,494	0.42	0.06	0.18	-0.12	-0.93
29UHGG Staplehurst	Southern	6,003	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-1.08
29UHGH Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	2,702	4.49	1.66	0.18	1.48	4.00
Total Southern		25,593	6.81	0.27	0.18	0.09	2.20
29UHGN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	2,951	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-0.53
29UHNB North Downs	Northern	2,331	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-0.42
Total Northern		5,282	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-0.95
29UHGS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	5,051	0.83	0.16	0.18	-0.02	-0.08
29UHGT Headcorn	Eastern	4,815	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-0.87
29UHGX Leeds	Eastern	2,224	0	0.00	0.18	-0.18	-0.40
Total Eastern		12,090	0.83	0.07	0.18	-0.11	-1.35
Total Rural (Southern/Northern/Eastern)		42,965	7.64	0.18	0.18	-0.00	-0.09
Borough wide total		138,949	27.54	0.20			

Cemeteries and Churchyards (Hierarchy: Middle Order)

Ward Name	PMP Analysis Area	Total Population	Hectares	Hectares per 1000 pop	Local Minimum Standard	Above / Below standard per 1000/pop	Above / below standard (hectares)
29UHGF Allington	Urban Fringe	6,765	0	0.00	0.66	-0.66	-4.46
29UHGG Barming	Urban Fringe	2,233	0.68	0.30	0.66	-0.36	-0.79
29UHGH Bearsted	Urban Fringe	8,010	0.72	0.09	0.66	-0.57	-4.57
29UHGK Boxley	Urban Fringe	8,463	13.63	1.61	0.66	0.95	8.04
29UHGL Bridge	Urban Fringe	4,712	0	0.00	0.66	-0.66	-3.11
29UHGP Downswood and Otham	Urban Fringe	2,753	0.23	0.08	0.66	-0.58	-1.59
29UHGQ East	Urban Fringe	7,910	0.12	0.02	0.66	-0.64	-5.10
29UHGR Fant	Urban Fringe	7,707	0	0.00	0.66	-0.66	-5.09
29UHGU Heath	Urban Fringe	4,563	2.45	0.54	0.66	-0.12	-0.56
29UHGW High Street	Urban Fringe	7,774	0.33	0.04	0.66	-0.62	-4.80
29UHGY Loose	Urban Fringe	2,207	0.47	0.21	0.66	-0.45	-0.99
29UHHA North	Urban Fringe	7,778	0	0.00	0.66	-0.66	-5.13
29UHHC Park Wood	Urban Fringe	4,030	0	0.00	0.66	-0.66	-2.66
29UHHD Shepway North	Urban Fringe	8,560	35.16	4.11	0.66	3.45	29.51
29UHHE Shepway South	Urban Fringe	5,389	0	0.00	0.66	-0.66	-3.56
29UHHF South	Urban Fringe	7,130	0.42	0.06	0.66	-0.60	-4.29
Total Urban Fringe		95,984	54.21	0.56	0.66	-0.10	-9.14
29UHGJ Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Suttor	Southern	2,531	1.05	0.41	0.59	-0.18	-0.44
29UHGM Coxheath and Hunton	Southern	6,863	2	0.29	0.59	-0.30	-2.05
29UHGZ Marden and Yalding	Southern	7,494	3.67	0.49	0.59	-0.10	-0.75
29UHHG Staplehurst	Southern	6,003	1.02	0.17	0.59	-0.42	-2.52
29UHHE Sutton Valence and Langley	Southern	2,702	0.76	0.28	0.59	-0.31	-0.83
Total Southern		25,593	8.5	0.33	0.59	-0.26	-6.60
29UHGN Detling and Thurnham	Northern	2,951	0.73	0.25	0.59	-0.34	-1.01
29UHNB North Downs	Northern	2,331	3.98	1.71	0.59	1.12	2.60
Total Northern		5,282	4.71	0.89	0.59	0.30	1.59
29UHGS Harrietsham and Lenham	Eastern	5,051	3.81	0.75	0.59	0.16	0.83
29UHGT Headcorn	Eastern	4,815	2.66	0.55	0.59	-0.04	-0.18
29UHGX Leeds	Eastern	2,224	1.31	0.59	0.59	-0.00	-0.00
Total Eastern		12,090	7.78	0.64	0.59	0.05	0.65
Total Rural (Southern/Northern/Eastern)		42,965	20.99	0.49	0.59	-0.10	-4.36
Borough wide total		138,949	75.20	0.54			