



# RUGBY OPEN SPACE AUDIT

## August 2008

### RUGBY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

**ON BEHALF OF: RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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## **RUGBY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

### **RUGBY OPEN SPACE AUDIT**

**REFERENCE: RBC2936**

**ON BEHALF OF: RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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**DATE: 15 AUGUST 2008**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE OPEN SPACE AUDIT

1.1.1 The purpose of the Open Space Audit is to undertake a comprehensive Borough-wide audit of the distribution, quantity and quality of Rugby's open spaces and play facilities including an assessment of the open space and recreational needs of the local community in accordance with the requisite Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 17<sup>1</sup> and its Companion Guide<sup>2</sup>. The Open Space Audit will help inform the preparation of Rugby's Local Development Framework (LDF) and will support the implementation of policies in the adopted Rugby Local Plan<sup>3</sup> and provide Rugby Borough Council (RBC) with the necessary up-to-date information to inform planning application decisions, including S106 negotiations.

1.1.2 The purposes of the Rugby Open Space Audit, are as follows:

- To help inform preparation of Rugby's LDF;
- To carry out an audit of all existing recreation and open space provision in Rugby;
- To examine the distribution, quantity and quality of Rugby's open spaces and recreation facilities;
- Assess the existing and future needs of the Borough's residents through community engagement and user surveys;
- Analyse existing open space provision standards and identify deficiencies and/or surpluses in type, quality, accessibility of outdoor recreation facilities and open space provision;
- Identify key issues relating to open space, sport and recreation facing the Borough and provide solutions to tackle them;
- Provide recommendations and identify opportunities for alternative sites where deficiencies have been identified; and
- To bring the planning and management "systems" together to ensure that Rugby Borough has a network of green spaces and sport and recreation facilities which make the Borough "a place to be proud of".

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<sup>1</sup> Planning policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation, ODPM, July 2002

<sup>2</sup> Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17, ODPM, Mau 2006

<sup>3</sup> Rugby Borough Local Plan, July 2006, Rugby Borough Council

## 1.2 SCOPE OF THE OPEN SPACE AUDIT

1.2.1 PPG17 sets out a typology of green spaces, based upon the concept of primary purpose. The green space typology adopted for this study is broadly in line with this, but has been adapted to reflect the particular character of green spaces in Rugby. The Rugby Open Space audit will cover:

1. Parks and Gardens
2. Local amenity green space
3. Natural and semi-natural green space
4. Churchyards and cemeteries
5. Green corridors
6. Allotments and community gardens
7. Outdoor sports facilities- football, cricket and rugby pitches
8. Children and young people's play areas and youth facilities
9. School grounds

1.2.2 An explanation of each typology is provided below:

### Parks and Gardens

1.2.3 These areas of land are normally enclosed, designed and managed and maintained as a public park or garden. Their primary purpose is to provide accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.

### Local Amenity Green Space

1.2.4 These are landscaped areas that are a visual amenity and/or separate land uses e.g. green spaces within housing areas and business parks that are usable for informal recreation, social activities and informal play. Their primary purpose is to provide opportunities for informal recreation close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential and other areas. Recreation grounds that are not consciously laid out to an original layout and village greens in rural areas are also included.

### Natural and Semi-Natural Green Spaces

1.2.5 These are areas of undeveloped or previously undeveloped land with residual natural habitats. Their primary purpose is for wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.

### Churchyards and Cemeteries

- 1.2.6 This category includes municipal cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds with legitimate public access. Their primary purpose is for burial of the dead and quiet contemplation, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

### Green Corridors

- 1.2.7 These are green routes/linkages including disused railways, river corridors, canal towpaths, major road verges and hedgerows connecting different areas within urban and rural areas and connecting green spaces together. Their primary purpose is for walking, cycling or horse riding routes and for wildlife migration.

### Allotments and Community Gardens

- 1.2.8 Areas of land rented for growing vegetables, fruits or flowers. Their primary purpose is to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.

### Outdoor Sports Facilities

- 1.2.9 These are large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces used for designated sports e.g. playing fields, football pitches, tennis courts and outdoor bowling greens – areas which can generally be booked and whose primary purpose is for playing of sport. Where these are within parks and borders or large recreation grounds they will be recorded as a subtype to the predominant type.

### Children and Young People's Play Areas

- 1.2.10 This includes equipped play areas, ball courts, BMX tracks, skateboard areas and multi use games areas for children and young people. Where these are within larger parks and gardens or areas of amenity space they will be recorded as a subtype to the predominant type.

### School Grounds

- 1.2.11 These are large areas of open space associated with primary and secondary schools and are generally flat areas of grassland with a combination of playing fields, play grounds, play facilities or other areas of sport such as tennis, cricket or football. Most are inaccessible to the public but can have multi-use purposes and can be used by the public after school hours and at weekends.

### **1.3 EXCLUSIONS FROM THE TYPOLOGY**

1.3.1 These are areas that in shape, form, size are not conducive to public use or are not available continuously to the public such as:

- Private woodlands (note woodlands with public footpaths running through them are excluded unless the whole wood is available to the public);
- Historic gardens not accessible to the public.
- Highway verges unless they provide a broad green corridor;
- Semi-private communal gardens belonging to flats and elderly persons homes; and
- Large private gardens.

1.3.2 Whilst excluded from the typology and the audit of the green spaces, any Open Space Strategy should recognise the above areas as they often provide important visual amenity and biodiversity benefits.

### **1.4 BACKGROUND**

1.4.1 To inform the preparation of the adopted Rugby Local Plan (1996-2011) an open space audit was undertaken. The Open Space audit was published in October 2003. Having regard to the Open Space Audit 2003 the Council's Open Space Standards were set in the Rugby Local Plan.

1.4.2 Policy LR1 in the Rugby Borough Local Plan sets out the open space contributions required for various planning permissions, in order to attain the Council's Open Space Standards set using the 2003 open space audit. Other policies contained within the plan regard the quality and accessibility of open spaces, safeguarding open spaces, provisions of open spaces as part of new developments, meeting the needs of a local community and developments of more than local significance for indoor and outdoor leisure, sport and recreation. The Rugby Local Plan provides Rugby's strategic approach to protecting existing recreational provision, identifies areas where there are deficiencies and sets out planning policies aimed at enhancing and extending provision where it is most needed.

1.4.3 The targets set in Policy LR1 vary between rural and urban areas to ensure close proximity to all open space types in areas with low population densities. Rural amenity greenspace targets are lower because people living in rural areas derive similar benefits through increased contact with the open countryside. Provisions were

not set for civic spaces within the Borough due to the limited amount of civic space provision but the analysis suggested a local need for further provision.

- 1.4.4 Policy LR1 facilitates development, which contributes to meeting current deficiencies in the provision of open spaces, or those, which may emerge over the period of the plan, including a better distribution of such facilities.
- 1.4.5 Through the Open Space Audit 2003, it was also recommended that the Council investigates the opportunities of developing a park within the southern parts of the urban area to meet local needs and expectations and address the deficiency in these areas. This is reflected in Policy LR2 in the Local Plan 100 hectares of land being allocated for the provision of a country park.
- 1.4.6 The 2003 Audit also found that there is an overall deficiency of open space within the urban area, but provision is not distributed evenly. Some areas are fairly well provided for, while others are significantly deficient and provisions throughout the rural areas are inconsistent.
- 1.4.7 Since the Audit was completed in 2003 significant areas of open spaces have been provided through development, particularly in the Coton and Cawston developments. Also some existing open space in Wolston had not been included in the Audit.

## **1.5 MOVING THE 2003 OPEN SPACE AUDIT FORWARD**

- 1.5.1 The 2003 audit is an important piece of work as it formed the basis of Rugby's Open Space Strategy. However there have been considerable changes in open space provision and the updated 2008 audit has taken into account the following:-
10. **Typology** – the 2008 audit has utilised the same typology that was developed as part of the 2003 audit;
  10. **Consultation** – we have carried out further consultation with the local community, schools and sports clubs to gauge current views on open space and recreation provision. The results and conclusions of the consultation carried out as part of the 2003 audit was taken into account as part of the preparation of the 2008 Audit; and
  10. **Provision Standards** – we have ascertained quantity of existing provision and existing surpluses / deficiencies based on the standards developed in the 2003 audit but have made recommendations if it was felt these needed updating in light of changes to the green estate.

The detailed findings of the 2003 Open Space Audit are summarised in Appendix 1.



## **1.6 RUGBY'S OPEN SPACES**

1.6.1 The Borough of Rugby is split into distinct areas: the main urban area of Rugby and the surrounding predominantly rural area. These areas consist of approximately 200 hectares of parks, recreation grounds, open spaces and nature reserves. Within the Borough there are 7 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 3 Local Nature Reserves, 2 Regionally Important Geological Sites and 14 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

1.6.2 Rugby has a legacy of a number of quality parks, countryside sites and other green spaces. However, as in many other areas there is a need to refocus green space planning to ensure effective provision and good management of green space in the future. The Council is committed to good quality, well managed parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities and recognises their important role in:-

- Contributing to the heritage and urban landscape of the Borough;
- Contributing to the attraction of the Borough for residents, visitors, businesses and other organisations and workers;
- Improving the sense of wellbeing for residents and workers;
- Providing a focus for interaction of local communities;
- Education and health of residents;
- Nature conservation and opportunities to enhance biodiversity; and
- Supporting the wider environmental aims of the Council

1.6.3 The Council has also stated that it is committed to ensuring that the recreational needs of local communities are taken into account in planning the development of their areas.

## **1.7 BENEFITS OF GREEN SPACE**

1.7.1 Parks and green spaces make an important contribution to improving the quality of life of communities and provide a sense of place for local communities. Parks and green spaces provide significant benefits to users, neighbourhoods, towns and cities. Provision of quality parks and green spaces contribute to delivering Government objectives and policy on sustainable communities and social inclusion. In particular parks and green spaces, as recognised by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce<sup>4</sup>:

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<sup>4</sup> Green Spaces, Better Spaces, The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, 2002

- Improve the quality of urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal projects and the attractiveness of locations for business, and creating community enterprise and new jobs;
- Promoting healthy living and preventing illness, by providing places for physical activities, including walking and cycling;
- Fostering social inclusion and community development, citizenship and local pride by giving people the chance to participate in the design, management and care of their local spaces;
- Encouraging education and lifelong learning by providing a valuable resource for learning about the natural world and local environment;
- Supporting environmental sustainability by countering the pollution;
- Contributing to heritage and culture by providing venues for local festivals and civic celebrations and a more varied townscape.

1.7.2 Networks of accessible high quality open space and recreation facilities fulfill an important function in terms of the structure of both urban and rural areas, visual amenity, regeneration, townscape and ecological value. Green spaces provide breathing space and offer places for formal and informal recreation, where people can walk and relax and enjoy cultural activities.



**The Oxford Canal is a key element of Rugby's green infrastructure**

1.7.3 Parks and green spaces provide an outdoor environment for children to learn through play and close social and family interaction. Green spaces provide important wildlife habitats and corridors. Attractive walking and cycling routes and riverside walks provide opportunities for recreation and traffic free routes. Urban green spaces in particular have an important role in mitigating the impact of climate change e.g. their cooling and shading effects are likely to become more important with hotter summer temperatures. The benefits of open spaces can be reduced or negated if green space is badly located, badly designed or poorly managed and maintained.

## **2. POLICY CONTEXT**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

2.1.1 A review of relevant policy documents and strategies is an essential component of setting the baseline and ensures that the Open Space Audit reflects the Government's policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation. Planning policies relating to open space, sport and recreation have developed over the past few years and are now seen as part of the government's wide-ranging "liveability" agenda and therefore covers a wide range strategies and policies. The key policies, plans and strategies applicable to the Open Space Audit are summarised below. The full context review is contained in Appendix 2.

### **2.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

#### PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, OPDM, July 2002

2.2.1 In the past 5-6 years, a new green space movement has emerged in the UK which champions the value of networks of high quality green spaces and sport and recreation facilities. Reversing the trend of the past couple of decades will take some time, but the Government has recognised the problem and, with the publication of '*Planning Policy Guidance PPG17, Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17)*', requires planning authorities to undertake assessment of needs and opportunities in their area.

2.2.2 The guidance advises local planning authorities to provide the strongest protection for open space, to resist development pressures that could diminish recreational provision, and to adopt a strategic approach to the provision and protection of sports facilities. In doing this, "local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreational facilities"

2.2.3 This PPG also sets out the benefits of open space, sport and recreation, which are:

- Supporting an urban renaissance
- Supporting a rural renewal
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
- Health and well being
- Promoting more sustainable development

Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17, ODPM, 2002

2.2.4 This guide reflects the Government's policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation as set out in PPG17. The document sets out the long term aims of PPG17 which are: creating a network of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities; new provision and enhancing the existing provision of open space; provides clarity and certainty for developers and land owners in relation to the open space provision. The guidance sets out the four guiding principles of open space local assessments, which are:

- Take into consideration the local needs according to the different socio-demographic;
- The delivery of high quality, sustainable, publicly owned open spaces can be achieved only multi-disciplinary working across different departments;
- Enhance the existing provision of open spaces and the new provision of open spaces should assist in improving the linking of and access from one green space to another;
- The value of open space to the local community, wildlife, biodiversity and the wider environment.

Our Town and Cities: The Future, ODPM, November 2000

2.2.5 The paper sets out a new vision of urban living with an aim to offer a high quality of life and building on the existing success of towns, cities and suburbs. The paper recognises that over the last few decades a lot of public open spaces within urban areas have been lost to development and the remaining has been neglected and poorly maintained. Open spaces in urban areas are one of the most valued features of the places people live in, where access to green spaces reduces stress and promotes well being. Hence the study aims to safeguard open space through encouraging development at reasonable densities to prevent under provision; well designed and managed public open spaces; improves access to well maintained and safe open spaces.

Green Spaces, Better Places, ODPM, November 2001

2.2.6 The study seeks to ensure that open spaces such as parks, play areas and green spaces improve the quality of lives of people in towns and cities. The objective is to create green spaces that are safe, accessible and sustainable for the users and should cater for everyone in the community, with a particular regard to children, young people with disabilities and the elderly.

2.2.7 The report sets out the main principles for delivering a new and sustainable future for urban parks and green spaces, which are:

- Regenerating existing urban parks and green spaces;
- Ensuring that provision of local parks, play areas and green spaces caters for the diverse needs of local people;
- Making best use of available and new resources;
- Developing new partnerships to assist in creating and managing urban green spaces.

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

2.2.8 The management of public open spaces have an important role in the provision of safe, well maintained and attractive open spaces. Public open spaces create a sense of place of where people live and in turn are crucial to building community cohesion and sustainable communities, hence the Government is committed to making public spaces cleaner, safer, greener to enhance the quality of life in towns and cities. This document sets out the approach the Government intends to take in making cleaner, safer, greener public spaces, which are:

- Reducing some forms of anti-social behaviour and improving the public sector's response to the following issues such as: litter, graffiti, fly-tipping, joy-riding, abandoned cars, dog fouling and chewing gum;
- Promoting better 'joined up thinking' and more importantly joined up action amongst the various public agencies responsible for the design and maintenance of the public realm.

Planning Policies for Sport: A Land Use Planning Policy on Behalf of Sport England, Sport England, November 1999

2.2.9 Sport England has a commitment to the land use planning system and actively seeks to influence the planning system in a positive, responsible way on behalf of sport. The document expresses Sport England concerns and how they wish to see these issues addressed through the planning system. Hence they have produced guiding principles of the providing sport and recreation space which are:

- Sustainable development;
- Commitment to working with the land use planning system to ensure that the needs of sport are properly addressed;

- A planning approach to provision, where detailed assessments of requirements should be carried out as part of the strategic planning work of Sport England and local authorities;
- Protecting existing resources and providing new opportunities for sport;
- Partnership approach, whereby local authorities should support and enable appropriate development through the planning system, fostering cooperation between activities and users;
- Management solution should be sought to resolve conflicts of interest and that this principle should inform the development and implementation of land use policies.

## **2.3 REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

### West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, WMRA, January 2004

2.3.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy highlights the need to maximise the use of managed open areas, thereby maximising the positive benefits of sport, leisure, recreation and cultural development. Another key objective of the RSS is to improve access to quality greenspace for sport and recreation and supporting biodiversity. These are emphasised in policies:

- QE1: Conserving and Enhancing the Environment seeks to conserve and enhance areas in the Region through sustainable use and management, including the Peak National Park, the five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the European wildlife sites, and the World Heritage Site and any historical landscape features;
- QE4: Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces encourages local authorities to undertake assessments of local need and audits of provision of open space with a focus on improving the overall quality of public space and enhancing the setting of green spaces in local neighbourhoods. The policy also emphasises on enhancing urban greenspace networks through footpaths, cycleways, river valleys, canals and open spaces and wherever possible identify new physical linkages between these areas.

### Warwickshire Structure Plan, Warwickshire County Council, August 2001

2.3.2 The Warwickshire Structure Plan contains a range of policies relating to open space, with which the Local Plan should be in general conformity. Policy ER.6 states that Local Plans should include policies to protect open space, which contributes to the

character and attractiveness of urban areas. The policy states that areas of restraint within or adjoining the built up areas should be identified in Local Plans. Policy ER.7 seeks to ensure that the importance of informal recreational facilities is recognised and that protection is given against any harmful effects from development. The supporting text of ER.7 states the importance of informal recreational facilities such as parks, local nature reserves, sites of archaeological and geological interest, land with public access and the public rights of way network, for improving and maintaining quality of life in towns and country.

## **2.4 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY**

### Rugby Local Plan Adopted July 2006

2.4.1 The Rugby Local Plan overarching open space policy states: ‘to protect and enhance the environmental and cultural assets of the Borough,’ is in general conformity with Warwickshire Structure Plan and national policy PPG17. The relevant planning policies in the Local Plan relating to open space are:

- E7 – seeks to protect nature conservation sites of national, regional or local importance;
- E8 – seeks to retain, protect and manage wildlife habitats and geological features, in order to enhance ecological diversity and to meet Biodiversity Action Plan targets;
- E9 – prevents development if it results in the loss/damage to trees/woodlands and hedgerows of ecological, landscape, or historic importance;
- E17 – seeks to refuse development if it would adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of a park or registered garden of Special Historic Interest;
- LR1 – The borough has set out open space standards to ensure that there is a sufficient amount of open space provision;
- Policies LR2 – LR6 – safeguards the open space provision for leisure facilities throughout the whole borough for country parks, indoor and outdoor leisure, sport and recreation developments to meet the needs of a local community and the provision of open space as part of new developments.

### Rugby Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 – 1010

2.4.2 The Council’s Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the long term vision for the Borough. The strategy sets out a vision for 2027 for creating sustainable communities, the objectives that are particularly relevant are:

- The Borough is attractive, clean, green and safe;
- There is a network of high quality, liveable public spaces that residents are proud of and actively enjoy;
- Wildlife and green spaces are protected and enhanced and the historic character of the Borough has been preserved;

2.4.3 The strategy sets out the key commitments from 2007 – 1010 for open spaces which are:

- Design and maintain a network of attractive, high quality open spaces and green corridors;
- Seek 'Green Flag' awards for flagship open spaces.



### 3. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 This section provides an overview of our approach for undertaking the Open Space Audit. Our approach to the Open Space Audit is in accordance with best practice guidance including:

- PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and recreation;
- Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17; and
- Green Space Strategies: A good practice guide, CABE Space.

3.1.2 The key tasks involved in the preparation of the Rugby Open Space Audit are as follows:

Open Space Audit Activity	Approach
Establish context through data collection and literature review	A thorough review and collation of all existing information sources on open space and recreation facilities was undertaken. All sites identified were given a unique ID and recorded in a Microsoft Access database, categorised according to their typology and mapped on a suite of GIS maps.
Understanding Local Needs	The assessment of local needs comprised of three main components: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analysing the views of local people through detailed questionnaires sent out to users / non-users and stakeholder groups as well as Council staff;</li> <li>2. A Focus group workshop with Council Officers and local stakeholders and discussion meetings with Council Officers; and</li> <li>3. Face-to-Face interviews with users / non – users in a number of locations across the Borough</li> </ol>
The Audit	In order to assess current supply a comprehensive audit of existing open space and recreation provision was undertaken.  A bespoke audit pro-forma designed to evaluate the quality and value of green spaces was completed for each site. Over 500 sites were audited and each site was classified as either being of high or low quality and value. Each space was assessed against a suite of criteria and the scores accumulated to give each site an overall score. The “cut off” point between high and low quality and value was decided in agreement with the Council as 60% reflecting an overall aspiration to bring all green space sites up to this standard.  A copy of the audit pro-forma and the master spreadsheet of

Open Space Audit Activity	Approach
	<p>results are included at Appendix 3 and 4 respectively. The audit results are presented in Section 6. The results constitute a database of local provision with information on factors such as the location of different spaces or facilities, quality and therefore the possible need for enhancement.</p>
<p>Analysing Quality and Assessing Current Provision Standards</p>	<p>We derived quality standards for the Council's future use from a variety of sources, including the Green Flag scheme and good practice advice from agencies such as Sport England and Natural England. The resulting standards are outlined in Section 6 of this report.</p>
<p>Analysing Quantity</p>	<p>For the quantity analysis, the audit results were analysed to identify the total quantity of existing provision for each typology, expressed as a square metre per person.</p> <p>This is subsequently compared to local views on the adequacy of existing provision. Details of this analysis and the existing quantity standards are in Section 7 of this report. Finally, we compared the level of provision in the Borough with the amount required by the application of the existing quantity provision standard to assess the broad level of need for additional provision across the Borough.</p>
<p>Analysing Accessibility</p>	<p>In order to undertake the accessibility analysis, we derived distance/ accessibility thresholds. The accessibility analysis is detailed in Section 8.</p>
<p>Issues, Options and Recommendations</p>	<p>Using the results and findings of the foregoing steps we provide a number of recommendations and policy conclusions, these issues and recommendations are set out in Sections 10 and 11 respectively.</p>

## **4. ASSESSING LOCAL NEEDS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

4.1.1 Taking into account local views is fundamental to achieving a successful open space network that people are satisfied with, feel safe using and is locally used. Consultation and collaboration with Rugby's local community and stakeholders was a key element of the study process and informed the assessment of local needs and demand for open spaces and recreation facilities in Rugby.

4.1.2 The involvement of local residents and stakeholders is advocated in current advice set out in PPG17. PPG17 emphasises the importance of developing local provision standards, rather than the blanket application of national standards. Consultation will also provide an overview of current attitudes towards open space provision and recreation facilities and will help determine people's priorities for open space and recreation provision.

### **4.2 SCOPE OF CONSULTATION**

4.2.1 To ascertain current public attitudes towards existing open space provision, recreation facilities and opinions for improvements the following community engagement techniques were adopted for this study:

- Use of written questionnaires;
- 200 face-to-face User and / non – users interviews; and
- Focus group workshop.

#### Questionnaires

4.2.2 To help establish the demand for existing open space and recreation facilities and to provide the opportunity provide for stakeholders to give their views on existing provision and provide recommendations for improvement detailed questionnaires were sent to residents groups, community groups, voluntary groups, schools, sports clubs, general open space users and local authority staff. Specifically the questionnaires were distributed to:

- All Rugby's primary and secondary schools via the Warwickshire Educational postal system;
- All relevant sports clubs (clubs with outdoor facilities) in the Borough;
- Parish Councils, Residents Associations, Community Associations, Disability groups, wildlife groups and youth clubs; and

- Council staff

User and / non – users interviews

4.2.3 To help understand local people's attitudes on Rugby's open spaces and recreation facilities and to assist with the quantity, quality and accessibility assessments 200 informal face to face user interviews within existing areas of open space, allotments and at recreational facilities were conducted. Users were interviewed in selected urban and rural open spaces, recreation facilities and children play areas. To ascertain the views of non-users face to face interviews with randomly selected members of the general public in Rugby town centre were also carried out. Open Space User Surveys were carried out at the following locations:

- Linnell Road Open Space;
- Great Central Walk;
- Bawnmore Play Area;
- Whinfield Recreation Ground;
- Coombe Country Park;
- Bilton Allotments;
- Caldecott Park;
- Cock Robin Wood; and
- Rugby Town Centre.

4.2.4 The User Survey was based upon the standard GreenSTAT questionnaire prepared by GreenSpace. The full user/ non user survey results are located at Appendix 10.

Focus Group Workshop

4.2.5 In addition to the questionnaires, user and non-user surveys a focus group workshop with Council Officers and local stakeholders was held. The focus group workshop provided an interactive forum to discuss open spaces and recreation facilities. The full results of the workshop are located at Appendix 9.

4.2.6 Full details on the local community, stakeholder consultation process and a full list of consultees is set out in the Rugby Open Space Consultation Strategy located at Appendix 5.

## 4.3 CONSULTATION KEY ISSUES

4.3.1 The key issues arising from the consultation are summarised below:

### Open Space and Recreation Facilities Key Issues

- There is a high quality of existing open spaces throughout the Borough
- Issues such as litter, anti social behaviour and dog fouling are much reduced compared to recent years
- Green spaces much cleaner than they used to be, though some localised issues
- Good Country Parks
- The leaflets publicising cycle routes within green corridors are generally good and there is potential to extend the use of these particularly in relation to countryside walks and the countryside around town

### Open Space and Recreation Facilities Problems

- More diverse usage of green space is required as the overall value to the community of many is low due to lack of facilities
- Still a perception of a fear of crime in some open spaces i.e. Cock Robin Wood
- Lack of promotion and marketing of open space community events and facilities
- Despite the large amount of green space in Rugby, local people's perception generally is that more is required
- Shortage of youth facilities, particularly skate parks and BMX cycle tracks
- Shortage of allotments
- Accessibility issues in certain areas especially area to east of Rugby town centre
- Some fly tipping issues but less of an issue than it used to be
- Improvements to maintenance in some open spaces is required
- Dog fouling an issue on some sports pitches, but much less a problem than it used to be
- Children's play areas not very stimulating
- The Borough's educational establishments offer varying levels of community usage of the facilities on their sites.
- Increase public access to Artificial Turf Pitches

### Open Space and Recreation Improvements

- Extension of cycling network is needed
- Opportunities for new cycle lanes to and within parks, open spaces and recreational facilities should be explored
- Night time use of outdoor recreational facilities should be allowed
- Parks and gardens should be multi-use, diversification of open spaces
- There should be community use of school grounds

- Many allotments are also important community open spaces and, if suitably planted, can make a significant contribution to nature conservation
- Potential to increase the accessibility of some green corridors
- Further provision of Artificial Turf Pitches



**Middlesbrough's Prissick Plaza skate park is a fine example of a well utilised teenage facility**



**In terms of local environmental quality issues, dog fouling is not a significant problem as previously identified in the 2003 Open Space Study**



**Berlin, Germany has many excellent examples of innovative children's play areas**

## **5. AUDITING LOCAL PROVISION**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

5.1.1 To help establish the quantity, quality and value of open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities a comprehensive audit and qualitative assessment of existing recreation and open space provision was undertaken. The audit recorded the quality and value of each site, facility or space. This task also helped identify those spaces and facilities which should be given the highest level of protection, assess priorities for enhancement and opportunities for new provision.

### **5.2 BASELINE INFORMATION REVIEW**

5.2.1 A thorough review and collation of all existing information sources on open space and recreation facilities was undertaken. The information sources reviewed were as follows:

- Rugby Borough Council documents on Council owned/maintained recreation and play areas;
- Open Space data collected for the 2003 audit
- Existing consultation data;
- Aerial photographs;
- Parish Councils;
- Private Institutions; and
- Countryside Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

5.2.2 This was an important stage of the study and all sites identified were given a unique ID and recorded in a Microsoft Access database, categorised according to their typology (see section 5.3.2) and mapped on a suite of Geographical Information System (GIS) maps. The full suite of typology maps are located at Appendix 11.

### **5.3 CATEGORISING OPEN SPACES**

5.3.1 Not all green spaces serve the same purpose. A playing field is not a park, for example. At the same time many green spaces are multi-functional, for example, a park can contain one or more pitches but it is still primarily a park, whilst a playing field or recreation ground in a residential area also enhances local amenity. For clarity in setting policies and assessing the adequacy of provision, this makes it desirable to use a typology of provision, related to the primary or main purposes of different forms of open space.

5.3.2 The typology we have used for the audit process in is based on the one set out in PPG17. The individual typologies are set out below:

- Parks and Gardens;
- Local Amenity Green Space;
- Green Corridors;
- Natural and Semi-Natural Green Spaces;
- Allotments and Community Gardens;
- Cemeteries and Churchyards;
- Provision for Children and Young People;
- Outdoor Sports Facilities; and
- School Grounds.

#### **5.4 AUDIT OBJECTIVES**

5.4.1 The Audit and qualitative assessment of existing open space and recreation provision had 3 key purposes:

1. To ascertain the quality and value of each site through evaluating a range of features or characteristics as objectively and consistently as possible;
2. To identify the features or characteristics which result in some sites being of low quality or value, to provide a focus for improvements or enhancements; and
3. To identify those sites that the Council should protect from development, those that would benefit from improvement and enhancement or those that may benefit from consideration for alternative uses.

5.4.2 Although driven partly by PPG17, the audit encompasses wider implications than land use planning and seeks to provide the basis for prioritising improvements in local site management and maintenance. It is not intended to provide detailed information for use in planning appeals affecting open space provision. For appeals it will always be necessary to review the audit information specifically for the appeal process and to take account of wider policies.

#### **5.5 QUALITY AND VALUE**

5.5.1 The terms “quality” and “value” are quite different and require definition:

- **Quality** relates to the range of features or facilities on a site and their nature or condition. The quality audit covers factors such as site accessibility, safety and



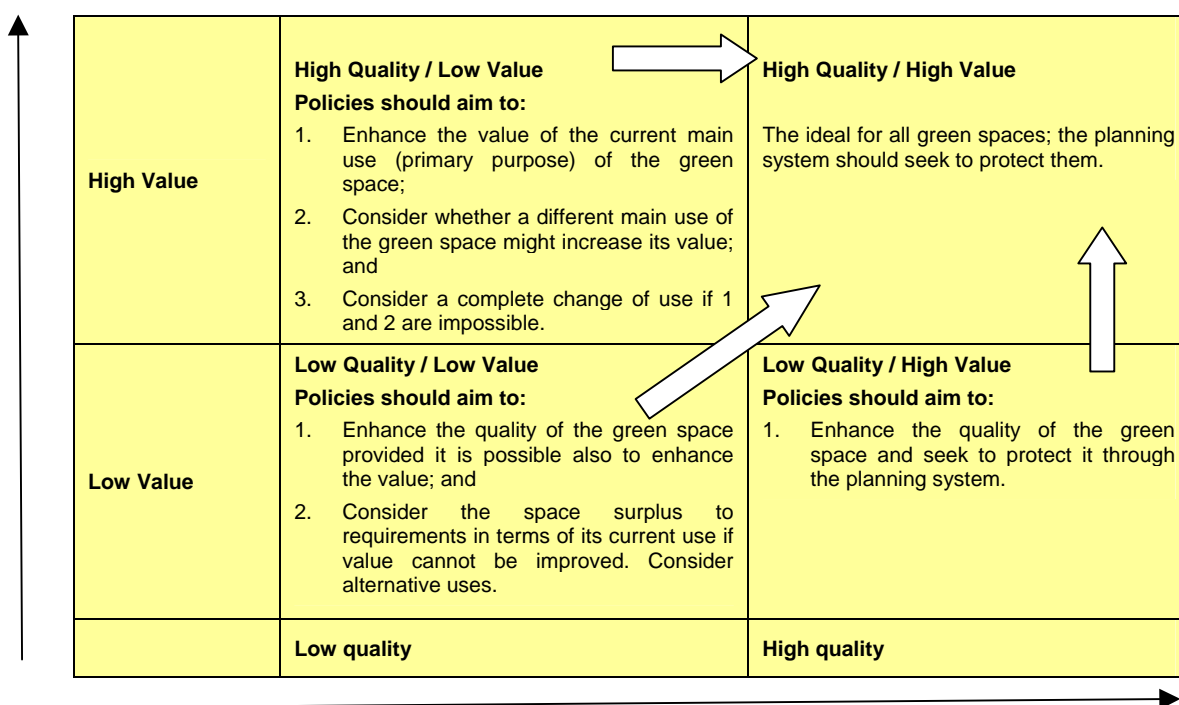
security, management and maintenance and the presence of planting, trees, biodiversity, seats, and other facilities. The quality standards for the typologies are set out in Appendix 6. and

- **Value** relates to the contribution the site makes to local amenity, recreation and well-being, biodiversity, cultural heritage, community or other strategic objectives.

5.5.2 Quality and value are therefore entirely independent of each other. For example, a site that is assessed as being of very poor quality could be of high value if it is the only site within an area where young people are able to participate in a “kick-about” and a site which looks an eyesore may be extremely valuable for wildlife. Conversely, a space or facility of superb quality may be of low value if it is inaccessible.

5.5.3 We consider that the Council should set an overall policy aspiration that all of the spaces and facilities in its area should be of both high quality and high value. The issue is then to determine what “high” means. The audit scores obviously provide comparative data on each site, but it is necessary to use an essentially arbitrary “cut off” point above which sites are classed as high quality or value and below which they are classed as low quality or value. This approach provides an initial method to assess the sites in a broad brush manner and underpin further policy assessments, based on the diagram below:

‘PPG17 Quality/Value Matrix’ – as summarised by CABE Space  
(Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)



## 5.6 THE SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

5.6.1 A quality and value audit of all sites identified through the desk top review was undertaken during Spring 2008. A bespoke audit pro-forma designed to evaluate the quality and value of green spaces was completed for each site. Each space was assessed against a suite of quality and value criteria and the scores accumulated to give each site an overall quality and value score. The audit pro-forma template is located at Appendix 3.

5.6.2 The quality scores provide a basis for comparing sites and provide an overview of the present state of open space in Rugby. They also provide a preliminary identification of those spaces the Council should protect through the planning system and those that are a priority for future enhancement. The number of sites audited is summarised in Table 1. The full suite of quality and value maps are located at Appendix 11.

Table 1: Quantity of sites audited

Typology	Quantity Audited
Multi-Functional Green Spaces (Parks and Gardens, local amenity green spaces, Natural/Semi-Natural Spaces, Cemeteries and Churchyards; Civic Spaces)	275
Allotments	41
Green Corridors	19
Children and Young People's Facilities	57
Outdoor Sports Facilities; and	68
School Grounds	35

5.6.3 The detailed results of the audits are displayed in an audit master schedule in Appendix 4. The master schedule provides a quick and transparent way of determining priorities for future investment. The detailed schedule will assist the Council:

- Rank sites across Rugby in terms of value or quality either in general or in relation to specific features or characteristics;
- Identify priorities for investment or changes to management and maintenance practices;

- Identify the need for S106 developer contributions to fund the enhancement of existing provision within the vicinity of a proposed development; and

5.6.4 The audit schedule can be particularly useful if, for example, the Council adopts a policy aspiration that all of its open spaces and sports and recreation facilities should achieve above a certain quality and value score, as it is possible to identify those sites with overall scores above or below the chosen score automatically. Again, the Council can set its policy aspiration and score at any level it sees fit.

## **5.7 UPDATING THE AUDIT**

5.7.1 Open spaces and recreation facilities do not stay in the same condition for long so it is important to review and update the audit information from time to time so that it remains a useful tool for both planning and management purposes. We recommend that the Council undertake this review on a more or less continuous basis with a target of re-auditing around 20-25% of sites each year. This will give a 100% update roughly every 4 to 5 years. The review will assist the Council identify whether the overall quality and value of open spaces and outdoor sport and recreation facilities in the Borough is improving, declining or static.

## 6. AUDIT RESULTS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 This section summarises the results of the Borough wide audit by providing an overview of the findings in relation to each typology under the following standard headings:

- Scope of the Audit (the audit results have been split into the main urban area and the surrounding rural area);
- Quality;
- Accessibility and Geographical Spread;
- Level of Use;
- Value and Amenity; and
- Desirable Improvements.

Table 2 provides a summary of the quality and value audit scores for each typology. The full audit results are set out in Appendix 4. The scoring thresholds are as follows:

- 0%- 59%: Low
- 60%- 100%: High

**Table 2: Quality and Value Audit Scores**

Typology	Sites audited	Average Urban Quality Score	Average Urban Value Score	Average Rural Quality Score	Average Rural Value Score	Range of quality scores	Range of value scores
Allotments	41	59%	49%	69%	51%	0%-97%	18%-86%
Green Corridors	19	56%	59%	76%	37%	66%-93%	48%-62%
Multi-functional Green Spaces	275	69%	53%	82%	42%	76%-100%	48%-75%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	68	79%	43%	86%	40%	48%-100%	7%-90%
Children and young People's Facilities	57	71%	63%	81%	70%	39%-96%	6%-92%

Note: Although we did audit educational land, much of it was not accessible. We have included it in the analysis as there is a degree of flexibility in how some sites could be used. Education land is publicly owned and therefore could be made accessible in required circumstances where deficiencies may occur.

## 6.2 ALLOTMENTS

### Scope of the Audit

6.2.1 RBC currently owns 10 sites where allotments are maintained, the majority of these being in the Rugby urban area. The sites are listed below:

#### Statutory Sites- held under the Small Holdings and Allotment Act 1908

- Addison Road
- Clifton Road
- Eastlands
- Ashlawn Road (1) adjacent to school – site leased to Hillmorton and Paddock Allotment Association

#### Non Statutory Sites – held under the Public Health Act 1073, Rugby Corporation Acts 1933 and various Housing Acts

- Freemantle
- Newbold Glebe
- The Kent
- Newton Manor Lane
- Ashlawn Road (2) next to Ashlawn Recreation Ground – site leased to Hillmorton and Paddock Allotment Association

6.2.2 In addition allotments on Lytham Road are presently rented to adjacent council house residents only as garden extension allotments. Within the rural area, most sites are managed by Parish Councils and local Trusts (Stretton, Wilcox, Bilton). The majority of these are at full tenure and well cultivated. Access in some cases has been improved locally and in some cases, these have become wildlife / animal / wildfowl sites and are therefore of high value to the existing local community. Their value is often diminished due to their small sizes.

6.2.3 There is an overall good uptake of allotments throughout Rugby with lettings currently running at close to 100%. This is despite the loss of 2 significant sites in recent years, most recently the large plot near Bilton currently being developed for housing as well as the former Parkfield Road allotments.

### Quality

#### *Rugby Urban Area:*

	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	0% (Newton Manor Lane)	18% (Newton Manor Lane)
Average score	59%	49%

	Quality	Value and Amenity
Highest score	86% (Freemantle Road)	94% (Ashlawn Road)

*Rugby Rural Area:*

	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	42% (Grove Road Ansty)	24% (Willey)
Average score	69%	51%
Highest score	97% (Warwick Rd & Stretton Lane, Wolsty)	86% (WI Garden, Clifton upon Dunsmore)

6.2.4 The range of quality scores for the 41 sites is:

- Lowest Score 0%
- Average Score 64%
- Highest Score 97%

6.2.5 Key findings from the quality audit:

6.2.6 Facilities such as water points and composting facilities are on occasions lacking;

- Boundary treatments are often very poor;
- Most sites lack clear signage or information so anyone interested in applying for a plot would not easily know how to do that. Those that do have signage, the lettering is small and almost illegible and certainly do not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA);
- There is evidence on some sites of incursion and vandalism, often associated with poor boundary treatments; and
- Accessibility within some sites is poor particularly for disabled users.

6.2.7 The Council does not currently have a dedicated and adopted Allotments Strategy but is currently investing in a number of sites with capital investment such as Addison Road and Freemantle Road.

Accessibility and Geographical Spread

6.2.8 The spread and accessibility of sites in Rugby is generally reasonable with several large sites available across the urban area, particularly to the east (Eastlands, Ashlawn Road, The Kent and Clifton) as well as to the West (Bilton West, Addison

Road and Freemantle Road). There is only 1 small site to the immediate south at St Andrews which is at full tenure. The provision to the north of the town is very poor. Provision in the rural areas is generally reasonable with most villages having some kind of allotment provision.

#### Level of Use

6.2.9 The main factors influencing level of use are:

- Overall quality;
- Attractiveness and accessibility of location;
- Sense of security;
- Quality of maintenance;
- Amount of car parking;
- Extent of vandalism; and
- Anti-social behaviour on the site.

#### Value

6.2.10 The range of value scores for the 41 sites is:

▪ Lowest Score	18%
▪ Average Score	50%
▪ Highest Score	86%

#### Desirable Improvements

- **Improve Boundary Treatments**

Improving boundary treatments will not only increase the quality of the sites, but also improve the amenity of surrounding areas. Boundary treatments to entire allotments sites are even more significant because of the impact they have on the wider area and the surrounding community.

- **Improve the Appearance of Allotment Sites**

Unused and unkempt allotments reduce the visual quality of a site and a more proactive approach to the management of sites might encourage holders to improve their plots. For example, the Council might provide limited incentives schemes designed to promote biodiversity and support wildlife. Following improvements, when there are fewer numbers of unused or unkempt allotments, the effect on the whole site can be encouraging for other allotment holders to maintain higher standards.

- **Paths and Facilities**

Ideally, the paths on every allotment site should be wide and well drained and there should also be a range of facilities such as water supplies, possibly with toilets at the largest site. While some sites have at least one good main path, the smaller paths leading to individual allotments are often neglected. Although investment would be required to provide additional facilities such as sustainable toilets, smaller and important improvements could be made to the path networks within the allotments quite easily. Another suggestion might be for the Council to make suitable materials, such as paving slabs, available to plot holders at low cost.

- **Improve Signage**

Green spaces throughout Borough, but especially the allotment sites, suffer from a lack of suitable signs. Providing “welcome” signs will be perhaps the single most important and easily achievable improvement. Vacant plots will not be taken up if people do not know how to apply for one. Some signage has been incorporated on some sites, but the wording on the sign was often illegible.

- **A Rugby Allotment Strategy**

Without a doubt, the development of an allotment strategy for Rugby would help raise the profile of allotments within the Borough, raising their profile as well as assisting in the availability and obtaining of capital and revenue funding. Grants are often available to community groups such as allotment associations and an adopted allotment strategy would highlight deficiencies, priorities and assist in the allocation of resources.

## **6.3 GREEN CORRIDORS**

### Scope of the Audit

- 6.3.1 Rugby has a number of significant green corridors throughout the urban and rural area, providing a series of important wildlife as well as pedestrian routes. These range from canal corridors to former railways lines that have been developed as local nature reserves and pedestrian routes. The Great Central Walk in particular is an important link within the urban area that has been developed as popular route. Likewise the Oxford Canal and Grand Union Canal are both important links as pedestrian and wildlife routes. Proposals are developed later within this report in relation to green corridors.



## Quality

### *Rugby Urban Area:*

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value and Amenity</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	18% (Old Railway Line/Cement Works Rugby)	55% (The Kent Scrubland, Rugby)
<b>Average score</b>	56%	59%
<b>Highest score</b>	93% (Oxford Canal Walk)	62% (Charwelton Drive Open Space, Rugby)

### *Rugby Rural Area:*

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value and Amenity</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	79% (Green Close Corridor, Long Lawford)	10% (Wolfhampcote Fishing Lakes)
<b>Average score</b>	76%	37%
<b>Highest score</b>	83% (Wolfhampcote Fishing Lakes)	50% Green Close Corridor, Long Lawford

6.3.2 The range of quality scores for the 19 sites is:

- Lowest Score 18%
- Average Score 66%
- Highest Score 93%

6.3.3 Key findings from the quality audit:

- More consistent, clear signage is necessary although some good examples exist on the Great Central Walk;
- Most of the Corridors and Avenues change character as they pass through different areas and are affected by different pressures.
- More facilities such as seating areas and litter/dog mess bins are required;
- Better management of litter and vandalism, a particular issue where these corridors are heavily used; and
- Improvements to infrastructure such as paths, street furniture and landscaping are required.

- Opening up of existing corridors that are currently inaccessible; and
- Creation of links and connections to the green space network as a whole.

6.3.4 The Council has recently made substantial investments with various improvements to some green corridors, in particular the Great Central Walk that is suitably surfaced and has good access for disabled users and pushchairs. At the same time the Council continues to promote a number of routes that take into account many of these areas as well as connecting other open spaces:-

- The Bluebell Walks – from Whinfield Recreation Ground, via Clifton Brook and the Oxford Canal towpath;
- Brownsover and Clifton-upon-Dunsmore walk – from Whinfield Recreation Ground, via Boughton Road Recreation Ground, the River Avon with the option of a section along the Oxford Canal;
- Central Area Walk No.1 – Town Hall, Caldecott Park, Regent Place, St. Andrews Gardens, returning through the town centre; and
- Central Area Walk No.2 – Whitehall Recreation Ground, Clifton Road Cemetery, Great Central Walk.

6.3.5 At the same time, the Council have successfully created a number of cycle routes that have taken into account the network of canals within the Borough:-

- Leisure Cycle Route 1 – South of Rugby – Dunchurch, Draycote, Birdingbury, Broadwell, Grandborough, Willoughby and Barby; and
- Leisure Cycle Route 2 – North of Rugby – Brinklow, Easenhall, Pailton and Stretton-Under-Fosse.

#### Accessibility and Geographical Spread

6.3.6 Many green corridors have successfully been opened up and developed through such initiatives as “Pathway to a Healthier Lifestyle” and the Leisure Cycle Routes. There is still considerable potential to increase the accessibility of some green corridors, in particular the former railway line to the west of Rugby adjacent to the Relief road with good potential links to the outer countryside and the town centre. There are further opportunities to increase accessibility to areas of local amenity green space within housing areas that are currently undeveloped green corridors, in particular from Bilton Road, south towards Dunchurch Road, via Shakespeare Gardens and Deepmore Road.

6.3.7 In considering links between open spaces and green chains the study looked at

opportunities both within and beyond Rugby's administrative boundary. Open spaces outside Rugby's boundary were not audited as open space provision within the Borough is deemed sufficient with no deficiencies in provision identified. However, it is recognised that there are open spaces and green chains outside the Borough's boundary that both Rugby's community and neighbouring communities visit. The Strategic Network Map located in Appendix 11 identifies potential linkages to areas of open spaces and green chains beyond Rugby's boundary.

#### Level of Use

6.3.8 Many of the spaces within the Green Corridors contain well used play areas, "kick-about" areas and places to relax outdoors. The path network links into the wider pedestrian and cycle networks and forms green corridors commonly used by people moving around Rugby with good links to the outer countryside. The level of use is considerable.

#### Value

6.3.9 Strategically, the Green Corridors are of significance importance to Rugby. They help to divide the town into neighbourhoods; they support wildlife and biodiversity; and they provide attractive, traffic-free radial routes (in some cases) from centre to periphery and the surrounding countryside. Not surprisingly therefore, they tend to score well on the value assessment unless on private land with restricted access.

6.3.10 The range of value scores for the 19 sites is:

- Lowest Score    10%
- Average Score    48%
- Highest Score    62%

### **6.4 MULTI-FUNCTIONAL GREEN SPACES**

#### Scope of the Audit

6.4.1 For the purposes of this Audit, "Multifunctional Green spaces" include parks and gardens, public golf courses, natural and semi-natural green spaces, churchyards and cemeteries and Civic Spaces. We audited 275 of these spaces, including natural and semi-natural green spaces and the remainder parks, churchyards and cemeteries or amenity spaces in housing areas. Playing fields were audited initially as part of Multi-Functional Green Spaces but also assessed separately on the basis of the quality and value of the sports facility.

## Quality

### *Rugby Urban Areas:*

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value and Amenity</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	0% (Yates Ave Open Space)	11% Horton Crescent Open Space
<b>Average score</b>	69%	53%
<b>Highest score</b>	96% (Newbold Quarry Nature Reserve)	75% (Charwelton Drive Common)

### *Rugby Rural Areas:*

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value and Amenity</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	5% (Little Wibtoft Pasture)	1% (Hallway Drive Shilton)
<b>Average score</b>	82%	42%
<b>Highest score</b>	100% (Ryton Pools Country Park)	69% (Ryton Pools Country Park)

6.4.2 The range of quality scores is:

- Lowest score                      0%
- Average score                      76%
- Highest score                      100%

6.4.3 The quality of Rugby multi-functional green spaces is variable, from the high quality Country Parks at Coombe Park, Ryton Pools, and Draycote Water, the town park in Rugby, Caldecott Park, as well as the many recreation grounds and nature reserves within the Borough. At the lower end, there are poor quality open spaces within some housing estates. However, overall the average quality of multi functional open spaces in both the urban and rural areas of Rugby is excellent, particularly due to the high level of maintenance many of these open spaces receive. Issues relating to litter, vandalism, graffiti, dog fouling is low.

6.4.4 The main issues affecting the quality of the poorer sites are:

- Unclear entrances;
- Lack of signage and information, making spaces seem unwelcoming;
- Limited facilities, including seats; and
- Litter, anti-social behaviour and vandalism, giving the impression that they may be unsafe.

6.4.5 Surprisingly, Rugby does not have any green flag parks at present but is considering entering Caldecott Park as well as several others at a later stage. They are however a regular entrant to Britain in Bloom.

6.4.6 Only 16% of all green spaces in Rugby fall into the category of low quality with an average score of 76%. There is clear potential to look at raising the profile of green space in Rugby further and Green Flag is one way in which this should be encouraged.



**Rugby's churchyards provide valuable areas for private contemplation and wildlife habitats.**

**Shilton Park, Rugby**

6.4.7 Key findings:

**Ryton Pools Country Park** – an impressive facility with a well used visitor centre, toilets, good signage, and adequate parking. There are clear maps of the park which make it a legible place to visit. With 2 well equipped adventure play areas, pond dipping platforms, sensory gardens, an energy exhibition, bird hide, and recycling centre, it offers good interactive educational benefits to children. Likewise with lakes, woodlands, meadows of great habitat/wildlife value it is an excellent facility within the Borough.

**Newbold Quarry Nature Reserve** – This is an excellent resource for the local community and is easily accessible from surrounding residential areas. With welcoming signage and disabled parking available it is clearly informative with clear habitat/biodiversity benefits and signage to explain this. Seating/picnic benches are also well located. It loses value for inclusiveness as due to the former quarry land use the park has steep slopes and steps in order to navigate the full perimeter of the lake. Partial wheelchair access.

**Draycote Water Country Park** - Draycote Water Country Park is located off the A426 south of Dunchurch, near Rugby. It is a large reservoir with surrounding parkland. Key issues regarding the Country Park, as an area of open space, are:

- Welcoming and directional signage is well placed and clear, so movement around the site is easy and enjoyable;
- The Visitor Centre (VC) offers: café with views overlooking the reservoir, rangers' office, gift shop and toilet facilities. There are a number of picnic areas located throughout the Park;
- Activities available: watersports including boating, windsurfing and fishing; cycling; walking, including orienteering trails;
- Lighting away from the main gathering areas i.e. the VC and Sailing Club is limited; however, the Park closes at 6pm in Winter and 8pm in Summer;
- The Park has generally good paths with regard to surfacing and user-friendly gradients, though there are some signs of wear and tear, for instance the main path from car park to VC;
- In addition to the user-friendly network of paths, there are a number of disabled parking bays close to the VC, with tactile paving along main routes;
- Planting is predominantly native, enhancing the areas biodiversity value and attracting a range of wildlife. Bird watching is popular, with hides and a feeding station;
- With regard to health and well being, there are 'no dogs' areas, including around the reservoir, and in other areas, dog waste bins are provided;
- There are plans to provide play provision by 2011 through partnership work with Severn Trent Water, RBC, Warwickshire County Council and funding from the Big Lottery Fund and children's play programme.
- Finally but very importantly, all this is free unless parking, where there is a £1.50 car parking day charge.

**Whinfield Cemetery, Rugby** – a high quality open space, the main cemetery in Rugby, with its Clover Leaf Memorial Garden. Maintained to a high quality and complementing existing open spaces in the area, further attempts should be made to increase its current biodiversity.

**Clifton Road Cemetery** – the town's oldest cemetery, having opened in 1863, this is a delightful open space of high quality and maintained to a standard that suits its style. Excellent for quiet contemplation and full of local history - a fine example of a Victorian Cemetery in good condition and respected by the local community.

**Croop Hill Cemetery** – On Addison Road, this cemetery is of a high quality, with a separate area laid out in accordance with Islamic religious requirements.

**Assehtons Recreation Ground** – an excellent example of a recently restored and enhanced local recreation ground maintained to a high quality, with new play area, feature entrance, sitting areas and ornate railings. It was refreshing to see a play area without a fence around it with the play area well integrated into the park.

**Caldecott Park** - Caldecott Park is currently classed as the only urban park within Rugby. It dates from 1902 and currently as with many traditional Victorian urban parks, has declined over many years for well documented reasons. It is now subject to a £1 million restoration with substantial funding coming from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Council. Despite its recent decline, it is still a fine park, and is classed as a high quality / high value park and garden. It provides Rugby town with facilities such as play, tennis, bowling, bandstand as well as excellent floral displays. The restoration will see the introduction of much improved boundaries, new café and a new play and sports area.

We would recommend that as this is currently Rugby's only urban park at present, other local parks are suitably upgraded with increased quality and value enhanced to complement Caldecott Park. We would also suggest that Caldecott Park should be entered for Green Flag.

**Swift Valley Country Park** – The park is of high value for biodiversity/wildlife/variety of habitats, it is a designated SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) and a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) but does not seem to fulfil its country park status as it fails to encourage recreational use due to lack of signage and some negative signage i.e. not clear if private land or not. The addition of public footpath signs could increase the use of the space for informal recreation. It is located in an industrial estate so the resource may be not very widely used/ known about.

**Rugby Recreation Ground (Whitehall)** - The Recreation Ground is the most obvious candidate for Rugby's other principal urban park. Known as Whitehall Recreation Ground, it has features within that would be expected within a principal urban park including formal facilities such as historic bandstand, gates, tree lined avenue as well as leisure facilities such as children's play, football pitch, water play and bowling green. Its proximity to the Ken Marriott Leisure Centre and sports complex means it is ideally placed within the town as a high quality, high value facility. Improvements are required to the play area, infrastructure, playing pitch as well as a need for further youth facilities linked to the Leisure Centre.

**Whinfield Recreation Ground** – currently classed as an outdoor sports facility, this could also be classified as a park and garden, forming part of an emerging parks hierarchy within the town. With play area and multi use ballcourt with basketball and the excellent story-telling tree, further enhancements and introductions to increase biodiversity would see the value of the space considerably enhanced. Dominated by sports pitches at present and the “impressive” changing facilities that are subject to external vandalism, it is well placed to consider further improvements. With Whinfield Cemetery to the rear and Linnel Road open space beyond, there is an excellent opportunity to create a green corridor/link between these open spaces.

**Watts Lane Cemetery, Rugby** – Opened in 1927, and in the far eastern part of the town in Hillmorton, this is an impressive open space that has recently been extended with the unusual shape of a cross dedicated to ashes interments. It is however surprisingly lacking in tree cover and could be considered as a woodland burial site, linked to the new “Green Burial” scheme. This would increase the value of the site considerably.

**Cock Robin Wood** – Created in 1989 in a partnership between the Council and Sainsbury’s, the site is now a LNR managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. With its impressive Sculpture Trail, woodland habitat and wetland areas, it is easily accessed with a car park as well as hard surfaced footpaths. Litter was a problem in some areas and there are indications of some anti social behaviour. More intensive management is perhaps required at this popular site.

**Jubilee Gardens / Regent Place / St Andrew’s Gardens** – These are high quality well maintained and well used open spaces within the town centre with good horticultural value, heritage interest and are well designed. They form part of one of the town centre walks and should be continued to be maintained to the current high standards.

The quality of Rugby’s best parks and open spaces is excellent. Not surprisingly, the best sites are the flagship sites, in particular the Country Parks and some of the town parks and recreation grounds. They show what the Council can achieve with adequate funding and should set the standard for other green spaces. In particular, they are among the few sites where signage is good and the information presented of a reasonably consistent standard and quality.

Several of the neighbourhood Recreational Grounds are however of a slightly lower quality standard providing less comprehensive facilities for local people. However, despite scoring generally quite high, they lack consistency in identity, signage and



overall facilities. Across the Borough, signage is lacking in many open spaces, including allotments, play areas, parks and gardens and natural green spaces. In places, where it exists, it is done well.

Churchyards and cemeteries can also make attractive spaces if accessible and well planted. In general, most of the churchyards and cemeteries are high quality open spaces, maintained to a very high standard and used by formal and informal users, in particular the cemeteries in Rugby and outlying villages.

#### Accessibility and Geographical Spread

6.4.8 Overall the distribution of multi functional open spaces in Rugby is very good with the exception of the north east part of the town, particularly within the Benn Ward.

6.4.9 Accessibility to multi functional open spaces in the rural area is good, with good access generally to open countryside as well as most villages having recreation grounds / playing fields. There are some very good examples of Village facilities in villages such as Dunchurch, Binley, Brinklow, Ryton, Wolston and Wolvey.

#### Level of Use

6.4.10 The main factor that limits many spaces from actually being used more significantly is the lack of facilities, particularly seating areas and rubbish bins. A small grassy area is unlikely to be used by many people if there is nowhere to sit. The issue of local amenity green space is discussed later but many of these are high quality due to good maintenance but most are low in value. In most cases this is due to a lack of facilities but clearly to provide such in every local amenity green space is simply not economically possible.

#### Value

6.4.11 Rugby has a number of strategically important sites. These are natural green spaces, parks and gardens or country parks. It is clear that most of these are very high quality yet value appears to be considerably low.

6.4.12 A number of sites are classed as low value because they are often lacking in facilities. For example a recreation ground may be of low value because it is lacking in facilities relating to children and young people. The introduction of Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) only “ticks” a small box in relation to teenage facilities. A site may also be low in biodiversity value with the value of the site to local people and wildlife diminished as a result. In many cases, improvements to quantity of facilities rather than quality of facilities is required to increase the overall value of a site.

6.4.13 The range of value scores for the sites is:

- Lowest Score 11%
- Average Score 48%
- Highest Score 75%

#### Desirable Improvements

- **Improve Signage**

There are 2 main opportunities for improvement:

1. Clearly marking the entrance(s) to sites with obvious and consistent signage should be cost effective and can be tackled with community involvement and support which, in turn, would also foster a greater sense of identity and local ownership.



**Coombe Country Park has a good selection of quality bespoke signs**

2. Removing signs that are dilapidated and/ or out of date. This will demonstrate that the Council is making an effort both to improve the Borough's environment and persuade local people to make greater use of green spaces.

- **Provide More Facilities**

Litter is a short term issue and a number of sites lack sufficient litter bins. Providing more litter bins should help to reduce litter problems, albeit to only a limited extent. To complement them, the Council needs to work with local communities to try to develop peer group pressure which will work to reduce littering. Basic actions such as this should make spaces seem both safer and more welcoming.

Street furniture and infrastructure (fencing, footpaths etc) in many areas is either lacking or has deteriorated. A program of re-investment is required in key strategic sites based on a developed hierarchy of open spaces.

The average score for value is low and a program of improvements developed through community involvement would make a significant improvement to the value of many of Rugby's green spaces.

- **Provide More Native Planting**

Increasing the amount of planting and trees will provide many low value sites with much needed interest and improve their contribution to nature conservation, thereby increasing their value. This is particularly relevant on a number of Recreation Grounds where sites are dominated by pitches or amenity green space. There are also large areas within housing estates that have potential for improving the wildlife value and hence biodiversity.

## 6.5 OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

### Scope of the Audit

6.5.1 68 outdoor sports facilities and pitch sites were audited. Sport England's Pitch Quality Assessment (PQA) worksheet was used to assess the quality of individual pitches and changing accommodation. The PQA is a tool to assess the quality of pitches. The use of the PQA tool ensured a consistent scoring approach to the quality assessment of pitches. A PQA worksheet was completed for each facility. The sports clubs and schools consultation assisted with this quality assessment. The PQA template is located at Appendix 7.

6.5.2 RBC completed a Playing Pitches Strategy in 2001 which we recommend is updated to ensure compliance with Sport England guidance "Towards a Level Playing Field". The 2001 study provided an analysis of supply and demand in the Borough for football, cricket, hockey and rugby. However it did not include an analysis of quality particularly in terms of playability and no account is taken of games being cancelled. The preparation of a comprehensive Playing Pitch Strategy is of particular importance as the 2008 pitch quality assessment did not include all school grounds and sports clubs facilities as many of these were inaccessible. A detailed Playing Pitch Strategy would identify and analyse all these facilities over a considered period of time.

### Quality

*Rugby Urban Area:*

	Quality	Value and Amenity
<b>Lowest score</b>	48% (Newbold Private Playing Fields)	12% (Rugby School Private Playing)

		Fields)
<b>Average score</b>	79%	43%
<b>Highest score</b>	100% (The Close, Rugby School)	73% (Featherbed Lane Recreation Ground)

*Rugby Rural Area*

	Quality	Value and Amenity
<b>Lowest score</b>	55% (Plott Lane Playing Field, Stretton)	7% (Skyblue Lodge, Coventry City FC)
<b>Average score</b>	86%	40%
<b>Highest score</b>	99% (Skyblue Lodge, Coventry City FC)	90% (Pailton Playing Field)

6.5.3 The range of quality scores is:

- Lowest score                      48%
- Average score                      83%
- Highest score                      100%

Outdoor Sports Facilities 2008 Audit Findings

6.5.4 To assist with the assessment of Rugby's level of playing field provision Sport England's Playing Pitch Model (PPM) was used. The PPM is designed to analyse playing pitch data and relies on data on pitch usage, the number of teams by age group and sport, ratio of home games as well as number of cancellations per season. This information was analysed and supplemented with visual inspections of pitches and changing accommodation and consultation with Sports clubs. Questionnaires were distributed to over 45 sports clubs in the Borough but resulted in an extremely low response (10 responses). The PPM findings are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: Playing Pitch Model Findings**

Changing Room and Pitch Quality Assessment			
URBAN		RURAL	
Changing Rooms	Pitches	Changing Rooms	Pitches
54%	73%	71%	69%

Note: 1% represents low quality and 100% high quality

6.5.5 These figures are based on the PPM model but due to lack of access to many changing rooms and shortage of consultation responses, external assessments were

made based on appearance. The level of pitch bookings and game cancellations each season were used to inform the assessment. Cancellation figures were assessed as 13% for all pitches. A more detailed assessment is required through a detailed Playing Pitch Strategy with close consultation with Sports Clubs and Associations.

### Summary of findings

**Cricket:** There are a number of cricket facilities in the Borough with some high quality pitches particularly in the rural area at Stretton on Dunsmore, Willoughby and Bourton on Dunsmore. The principal facility in Rugby is the Webb Ellis Cricket Ground as well as the exquisite facility as part of Rugby School. A number of pitches are located on shared sites such as Whinfield Recreation Ground where there is little or no protection of cricket squares.

**Football:** The main concern facing football in Rugby is the same as faced throughout the county - that the lack of adequate facilities (changing rooms/showers) is likely to cause a significant decline in adult league football activity in the coming years.

The audit of facilities shows a considerable shortfall in quality of facility provision which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency if Rugby are to prevent a drift away from adult league football.

Of the 13 facilities controlled by RBC only 6 have changing/shower facilities. The quality of these ranges from good to poor.

There are a good number of clubs operating within Rugby including Admirals JFC, Rugby Town JFC, Rugby Town Senior Football Club, as well as clubs in the rural area such as Brinklow Football Club, and Bourton and Frankton Football Club.

Female football is developing throughout the county through the Leicester Girls' football League, this is primarily due to the demand for the game rather than because of the provision of suitable facilities. Few of the existing Rugby facilities are developed to the standards required for use by people with disabilities or for encouraging the development of girls'/women's football.

**Rugby:** Rugby on Council owned pitches is catered for at a number of sites within Rugby including Alwyn Road, Hillmorton, Newbold on Avon as well as at a large facility at the Hart Field, currently being upgraded to Sport England standards.

A number of Clubs operate including Rugby Lions, St. Andrews RFC, Old Laurentians RFC, Rugby Welsh RFC and Newbold on Avon RFC.

**Hockey:** The Rugby and East Warwickshire Hockey Club operate within the town and share the Old Laurentians Ground. There is also an excellent facility with Clubhouse at Hillmorton, which is used by the GEC club.

**Artificial Turf Pitches:** Rugby's artificial turf pitches are in good condition and offer various advantages over grass pitches, including:

- High capacity: in theory, and thanks to floodlighting, they can be used 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except when frozen or snow-covered;
- Flexibility: they can be used for hockey, football, cross pitch markings for small sided games and for training;
- Predictability: maintenance is simple and can be scheduled in advance `minimising disruption to play;
- Most however are in private ownership and affiliated to specific private clubs or schools and public usage is limited.

#### Accessibility and Geographical Spread

6.5.6 The distribution, accessibility and spread of sports facilities and pitches across the Borough are very good, particularly in the urban area and the majority of the rural areas. Securing community use at educational and school sites could help to alleviate some imbalance in the distribution of pitches.

#### Level of Use

6.5.7 The most important factors influencing levels of usage include pitch quality and capacity, location, security, maintenance, car parking, changing accommodation and other ancillary facilities.

6.5.8 The 2003 Open Space Study highlighted varying issues in relation to sports facility usage including:-

- There is a demand for private facilities to be opened to the public in both rural and urban areas- based on the 2008 consultation findings the dual use of facilities remains a key issue.
- There are problems parking adjacent to some sports pitches – Since the 2003 study there has been considerable improvements in relation to car parking with facilities now available at several sites including Addison Road and Frobisher Road.

- Some sports facilities suffer from problems of dog fouling in both rural and urban areas. The 2008 audit highlighted almost no issues in relation to dog fouling on the basis of visual inspections and consultation.
- Both the 2003 and 2008 audits reveal that the majority of users feel the most important aspect in terms of good sports pitch provision is to provide a good standard of pitch maintenance.

### Value

6.5.9 The range of value scores is:

- Lowest score                      7%
- Average score                      42%
- Highest score                      90%

### Desirable Improvements

- **Secure Community Use of School Facilities Where Possible**

In seeking to address any geographical imbalance in playing pitch provision in the Borough the Council should seek to secure increased community use at educational sites. Many of the Borough's primary schools have sufficient land to accommodate at least one mini-soccer or junior pitch.

Through lottery initiatives and an increasing emphasis on community and neighbourhood development, it is likely that more junior teams will be seeking to access primary school pitches and facilities. It will clearly be sensible to maximise the use of these sites before considering any additional provision.

- **Secure Community Use of Private Facilities Where Possible**

The Borough has a considerable number of private club facilities in relation to sports overall including tennis and pitch sports. These are often of a high quality but of a low value to the community as they are deemed "difficult" to access. A Playing Pitch Strategy should seek ways in which to involve local communities with clubs and increasing access to such facilities.

- **Provide More Perimeter Tree Planting**

While many pitches have an element of tree planting or shrubs around their perimeter, strengthened boundary tree planting will make sites more attractive, provide shelter for players and spectators and support nature conservation and biodiversity.

- **Improve Signage**

The provision of improved on-site information and more welcoming signage is clearly desirable and should be reasonably achievable.

**Other issues:**

- The need for improvements to pitch quality at certain sites needs to be identified as part of a Playing Pitch Strategy. In addition with the development of new facilities to satisfy the demands of all sectors of football, any new pavilions supported by RBC must be inclusive of the requirements of women's football and provide segregated changing facilities and toilets.
- In recognising the responsibilities arising from the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act the Council needs to encourage, when reviewing applications for site developments, adequate design for access and facilities in order that people with disabilities are encouraged to watch and participate in sports.
- The demand for small sided football is being hampered by the lack of available facilities. Full encouragement and support should be given to any new proposals for the provision of these facilities.
- The Playing Pitch Strategy should specifically highlight the following recommendations:
- Maximising the playing potential of existing stock through improvements to pitch quality by, for example;
  - Harnessing the expertise of turf specialists and other bodies in establishing the best way to construct pitches in varying locations;
  - Levelling and draining pitches;
  - Supporting improvements in pitch construction (such as interweaving of artificial grass in the goalmouths on football pitches); and
  - Adopting maintenance regimes that are tailored to the priority needs of the site and the strategic significance of venues. Significant improvements can be achieved through maintenance/refurbishment rather than new build.
- Maximising the playing potential of existing stock through a strategic approach to improving ancillary facilities by, for example:
  - Providing changing facilities where none exist currently;
  - Improving existing changing facilities, taking special account of the needs of girls, women and youth players;



- Reviewing the programming and timetabling of the use of sites to ensure the most efficient use of both pitches and changing facilities;
- Promotion of single multi-sports clubs based upon the European model or 'soccer centre' to reduce costs.
- Ensuring that major capital and revenue investment, notably in rural areas, results in sustainable and viable facilities. For example the design for changing facilities should be appropriate to the site and not elaborate or costly if they are primarily designed for grassroots participation;
- Joint development of facilities on multi-use sites (such as football and cricket);
- Strongly enforcing existing legislation regarding fouling of sports pitches by dogs.

## 6.6 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S FACILITIES

### Scope of the Audit

6.6.1 All RBC managed teenagers and children's play areas were audited. RBC presently provides and maintains 33 publicly accessible play areas and 12 young people's facilities within the urban area. A further 29 play areas and 3 young people's facilities are provided by parish councils in the rural area.

### Quality

#### *Rugby Urban Area:*

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value and Amenity</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	39% (Northfields, Craven Road)	6% (Northfields, Craven Road)
<b>Average score</b>	71%	63%
<b>Highest score</b>	93% (Pantolf Place)	92% (Assheton Rec)

#### *Rugby Rural Area:*

	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value and Amenity</b>
<b>Lowest score</b>	40% (Plott Lane Play Area, Stretton)	25% (Bradby Boys Club ballcourt)
<b>Average score</b>	81%	70%
<b>Highest score</b>	96% (Wolston, William Cree Close)	88% (Ryton Rec Ground)

6.6.2 The range of quality scores is:

- Lowest Score 39%
- Average Score 76%
- Highest Score 96%

6.6.3 The quality of spaces designated as play areas varies. The poorer sites are however still in reasonable condition and are lower in quality due mainly to age rather than poor management or maintenance. The majority of play areas are well located in safe positions that are reasonably well overlooked. Within the rural area, quality standards are considerably more varied with a larger number of play areas scoring poor to average, either due to poor design or the facility coming to its end of its lifespan. Poor play areas include:

Urban Area

- Bawnmore Road Play Area
- Caldecott Park
- Freemantle Road
- Oakfield Rec Grd
- Parkfield Rd Play Area
- (East) Union Street Play Area
- York Street Play Area

Rural Area

- Bourton
- Bretford
- Marton
- Princethorpe
- Willoughby
- Withybrook
- Wolvey

Accessibility and Geographical Spread

6.6.4 The Rugby Play Strategy 2007-2011 identifies a number of areas within the Borough that are considered deficient in children's play areas and facilities for young people. Facilities at Eastlands, Paddox and Overslade are deemed as having accessibility issues. We would suggest that these deficiencies are based on quantity standards based rather than distance thresholds on how far someone will actually travel to a facility. This issue is explored in Section 8.

Value

6.6.5 Often the single most important factor affecting the amenity of play facilities is either the quality of restorative work after equipment has been removed or the

unimaginative design of play areas / youth facilities. Many of the older sites are low in value as they simply do not provide any stimulation for play. The Rugby Play Strategy also recognises the limitations and problems in providing facilities for younger people. There are examples of success such as the Ken Marriott skate board facility which is of high quality. The provision of teenage facilities is limited across the Borough, although recent introductions of MUGA's and seating areas have improved the situation. However the most valued children and young people's facility is an integrated facility which combines facilities for young and older children, with not just a basketball facility but other needs catered for – kickabout, skateboarding, seating, BMX. The provision of integrated facilities need to be weighted to balance aspirations, as these facilities would require large areas of open space, something that the urban area of Rugby is lacking in the majority of locations.

6.6.6 Good management and maintenance are also of significant importance to children's play areas and facilities for teenagers. Well maintained play areas where issues of broken glass, litter and vandalism are dealt with quickly make a positive contribution to young people's lives. The majority of children's play areas have surrounding landscaped borders which provide opportunities for planting trees and shrubs to further increase interest for young people and for biodiversity.

#### Desirable Improvements

- **Restore Key Sites**

The majority of children's play areas and facilities for young people are in good, secure locations and maintained in a safe and positive manner. It is recommended that the Council should focus primarily on continuing in restoring facilities, followed by effective management and maintenance. The key improvements required are:

- Replacement of equipment where necessary;
- Repairing and repainting vandalised equipment and fences, ideally in bright colours; changing the colour of something, rather than repainting in the same colour, makes it very obvious to the community that "something has been done";
- Further provision of integrated teenage facilities;
- Surfaced paths between pavements and play areas or between items of equipment within sites; and
- Improved cleaning and maintenance.

- **Develop More Interesting and Stimulating Sites**

Many sites are doing little more than “ticking the box” in terms of meeting the basic minimum requirements for equipped play areas. Sites should be designed to stimulate children’s imagination. The National Playing Fields Association maintains that this requires at least five types of play equipment, although we believe that integrated natural environments offer far more to most children than fairly sterile equipped play areas. The Children’s Play Council has a simple message “Children need and want to take risks when they play”. RBC new Play Strategy endorses the philosophy of creating more risky and stimulating areas to play.

- **Provide better planting**

Young children enjoy trees and watching birds and small animals. Increasing the diversity of planting around the edges of sites to encourage nature conservation will therefore improve their attractiveness to many children. However, any planting scheme should not prevent overlooking as this promotes safety.

6.6.7 The range of value scores is:

- Lowest Score 6%
- Average Score 67%
- Highest Score 92%



**Exemplar young children’s play areas in Berlin, Germany**



## 7. QUANTITY

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 This section analyses the quantity of existing open space provision for the Borough. An assessment of existing open space provision in relation to adopted quantity standards has been undertaken. The existing quantity (provision) of open space within Rugby is summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Quantities of Open Space Provision within Rugby**

Typology	Existing Provision Rugby (M <sup>2</sup> )	Existing Provision Rural(M <sup>2</sup> )	Rugby Urban Area M <sup>2</sup> (per person)	Rugby Rural Area M <sup>2</sup> (per person)
Urban Parks & Gardens	542,077	2,116,236	9	68
Local Amenity Green Spaces	577,421	706,919	9.5	23
Green Corridors	494,010	13,358	-	-
Natural/Semi-Natural Green Spaces	1,062,432	7,027,539	18	226
Allotments	235,499	204,955	4	6.5
Churchyards & Cemeteries	112,562	159,881	-	-
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1,423,368	1,590,571	23.5	51
Education	604,207	166,772	10	5
Children and Young People's Facilities	43,062	63,007	0.7	2
Civic Space	2,794	0	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,097,432</b>	<b>12,049,238</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>387</b>

7.1.2 The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) have for many years advocated open space provision, the most well known being the 6 acres of open space per 1000 population. RBC has adopted a series of provision standards as part of its Open Space Strategy, moving away from the suggested NPFA standards and has set locally based standards based on PPG17 requirements. The adopted quantity standards for open space within Rugby are summarised in Table 5.

**Table 5: Adopted Open Space Provision Standards**

Open Space Typology	Hectare per 1,000 population (m <sup>2</sup> per person)	
	URBAN	RURAL
Parks and Gardens	1.5 (15)	10 (100)
Natural and Semi-natural areas	2.5 (25)	20 (200)
Amenity Greenspace	1.1 (11)	0.5 (5)
Provision for Children and Young People	0.2 (2)	0.2 (2)
Outdoor Sports Facilities	3.5 (35)	5 (50)
Green Corridors	0.4km	13km
Allotments and Community Gardens	0.65 (6.5)	0.8 (8)
Cemeteries and Churchyards	0.5 (5)	1.1 (11)

## 7.2 QUANTITY STANDARDS OF OPEN SPACE

7.2.1 We have reviewed RBC's adopted green space standards and where appropriate have suggested alterations. The proposed quantity standards for each typology have been determined from a number of factors, including:

- Consultation with stakeholders and the local community;
- Combining the existing level of provision with local views as to its adequacy;
- Review of existing provision standards;
- Review of best practice and national standards;
- Qualitative assessment results and issues; and
- Benchmarked against other authorities with similar characteristics to Rugby and who have recently adopted new local standards based on a PPG17 audits. These include Blyth Valley in Northumberland, Mid Sussex District and Horsham in Sussex. The three areas were deemed appropriate for the following reasons:
  - Blyth Valley is a large rural area with 3 major settlements – Cramlington, Blyth and Seaton Delaval, with smaller villages between;

- Mid Sussex District, a large rural authority south of the M25;
- Horsham is a large rural authority similar in characteristic to Rugby; and
- All 3 authorities have gone through the PPG17 process.

7.2.2 Each typology are now considered separately and for each typology we set out:

- Existing quantity standards;
- Existing provision;
- Key Issues from the audit;
- Accessibility issues;
- Proposed quantity standards and revisions if required; and
- The application of quantity standards.

### 7.3 PARKS AND GARDENS

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	15	100
Existing Provision	9	68
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard	9	65
Comparator	Blyth: 3.6 m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: 2.0 m <sup>2</sup> Horsham N/A	

7.3.1 There is currently no parks hierarchy in the Local Plan. It is recommended that the emerging Rugby LDF Core Strategy should comprise a hierarchy of parks. To form the basis of the park hierarchy the following definition of a park is suggested:

***“A high quality green space, with a specific local name and enclosed by walls, railings or hedges, containing a range of landscape features or built facilities, designed and maintained in such a way as to be seen as an attractive place to visit by people of all ages.”***

7.3.2 Given Rugby’s compact nature we suggest a two-tier hierarchy linking the following spaces:

7.3.3 **Town parks:** major parks with a good range of facilities, intended to serve a town-wide catchment. The Council should seek to make these parks different and

complementary. Any future Green Flag parks should be included in this level of the hierarchy. These should include Caldecott Park and Whitehall Recreation Ground.

7.3.4 **Neighbourhood parks:** smaller parks or recreational grounds within walking distance of each of the main neighbourhoods in the town, with a lesser range of facilities, designed to complement those in other spaces in the same neighbourhood but generally with an emphasis on providing a high quality landscape and horticultural interest. The Council should actively seek to maximise pedestrian and cycling access to these spaces.

7.3.5 As a matter of policy, each of the parks should contain a children’s play area and the town parks should also have teenage facilities. The parks hierarchy is recommended to comprise the following town and neighbourhood parks:

<b>Town and Neighbourhood Parks Hierarchy</b>	
<b>Town Parks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caldecott Park</li> <li>• Whitehall Recreation Ground</li> </ul>
<b>Neighbourhood Parks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addison Road Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Alwyn Road Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Ashlawn Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Assheton Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Avon Mill Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Bilton Green</li> <li>• Brownsover Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Charwelton Drive Common</li> <li>• Dewar Grove Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Featherbed Lane Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Frobisher Road Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Jubilee Gardens</li> <li>• Newbold Quarry Recreation Ground</li> <li>• New Bilton Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Parkfield Road Recreation Ground</li> <li>• Richard Lovegrove Recreation Ground</li> <li>• St Andrews Benn Millennium Green</li> <li>• Sorrel Drive Amenity Space</li> <li>• Whinfield Recreation Ground</li> </ul>



### Key Issues from the Audit

- 7.3.6 The detailed audit database contains details of all the parks, many of them lacking in a range of facilities but of a generally high quality, with a few very obvious exceptions where quality is poor overall. Both the urban and rural areas of Rugby are well endowed with parks and gardens, including country parks.
- 7.3.7 The Council should focus its efforts primarily on ensuring that this network of town and neighbourhood parks is of high quality, increase the overall value and that all are accessible.

### Proposed Quantity Standard

- 7.3.8 The Council should protect all the spaces identified as town and neighbourhood parks and these should form the foundation for its ongoing Open Spaces Strategy. However, many of them require significant enhancement in their value to the local community if they are to fulfil their role. As new developments will increase the demand pressure on parks, it will be for developers to contribute to their continued enhancement as a matter of course.

The appropriate provision standard is therefore:

- Town and Neighbourhood Parks                      4 m<sup>2</sup> per person
- Neighbourhood Parks                                      5 m<sup>2</sup> per person
- Total:    9 m<sup>2</sup> per person

### Application of the Quantity Standard

- 7.3.9 For the foreseeable future, the Council's immediate priority should be to enhance its existing parks and especially those designated as neighbourhood parks which are currently dominated by sports facilities and offer little value to the local community. More specifically, they should seek S106 contributions from all developments which will increase the use made of parks, such as residential and office developments, based on two components:
- A contribution towards the general improvement of town and neighbourhood parks, based on 4 sq m per person; and
  - A contribution towards the enhancement of the nearest neighbourhood park, based on 5 sq m per person.

## 7.4 LOCAL AMENITY GREEN SPACES

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	5	11
Existing Provision	9.5	23
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard	5	11
Comparator	Blyth: 6m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: N/A Horsham: 4m <sup>2</sup>	

7.4.1 While there is ample amenity green space in Rugby as a whole, there are some minor geographical imbalances in the distribution of these spaces, with paucity in some areas and a reasonably high number of sites in others. For example, in the north east of the town, communities in this area lack access to most facilities, while many rural communities have a greater choice of amenity spaces than those in other areas of the Borough. Where there is a deficiency of parks and gardens in areas, we suggest amenity green space could be enhanced to provide such facilities, particularly in areas of large housing provision.

### Proposed Quantity Standard

7.4.2 There is no clear rationale for determining the appropriate quantity of amenity green space in a residential or other area and indeed the need for it will vary from one area to another. For example, long established low density leafy suburbs where houses have reasonably large gardens have much less need for a network of publicly accessible green spaces than typical “developer suburbs” containing houses with fairly small gardens. In turn, these areas require less publicly accessible green space than inner suburban areas of high density housing.

7.4.3 Broadly speaking, Rugby has adequate amenity green space; the Council’s clear priority should be to enhance and increase the value of existing run-down spaces rather than seek the provision of more. It is also the case that it could dispose of some of its existing poor quality and low value spaces in order to generate some of the funds required to enhance other spaces. Accordingly the amenity green space quantity standard should be slightly lower than the present level of provision.

### Application of the Quantity Standard

7.4.4 In Rugby most new residential development is likely to be one of three types: typical developer suburbs designed for owner-occupation, infill and other small developments and the “densification” of those areas in which houses have large gardens. The approach to these various types of development should be:

- 7.4.5 **Developer Suburbs:** if there are no existing amenity green spaces within the distance threshold of each dwelling, the development must include an on-site network of green spaces and paths. In addition, the total amount of amenity green space must be not less than that required by the application of the quantity standard to the development. If there are existing green spaces within the distance threshold of the development, the developer must contribute to their enhancement on the basis of the quantity standard. In addition, all developments should contribute to the enhancement of neighbourhood and town parks.
- 7.4.6 **Infill and Other Small Developments:** no requirement for new on-site green spaces but development must contribute to the enhancement of the nearest amenity green space and neighbourhood and town parks.
- 7.4.7 **Densification Areas:** no requirement for new green spaces but development must contribute to the enhancement of the nearest amenity green space and neighbourhood parks and town parks.
- 7.4.8 For the foreseeable future, the Council should ask developers to provide on-site amenity green spaces and seek contributions towards the enhancement of existing spaces.

## 7.5 NATURAL GREEN SPACES

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	25	200
Existing Provision	18	226
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard	18	200
Comparator	Blyth: 20m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: N/A Horsham: 20m <sup>2</sup>	

- 7.5.1 It is proposed that the quantity standard for natural green space should reflect the current level of provision which is seen as sufficient in all areas.

### Proposed Quantity Standard

- 7.5.2 The quantity standard for natural green spaces should be slightly higher than the standard for Parks and Gardens, as local people consider there are insufficient natural green spaces in the Borough, particularly in the urban areas. A quantity standard is therefore recommended as 18m<sup>2</sup> per person (urban) and 200 m<sup>2</sup> (rural).

### Application of the Quantity Standard

- 7.5.3 For the foreseeable future, the Council should not ask developers to provide on-site natural green spaces but seek contributions towards the enhancement of either existing natural green spaces and to increase the biodiversity of other existing green space typologies such as parks and gardens, sports pitches sites, education land and amenity green spaces, particularly in the urban areas on the existing “Recreation Grounds” and sports pitches sites.

## 7.6 EQUIPPED PLAY AREAS

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	2	2
Existing Provision	0.7	2
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard*	0.5	0.5
Comparator	Blyth: 0.8m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: 0.65m <sup>2</sup> Horsham: 0.5m <sup>2</sup>	

\*based on fixed equipped play areas

### Theoretical standards

- 7.6.1 As play areas do not have a fixed capacity to accommodate use, it is not possible to adopt a supply and demand approach to determine an appropriate quantity standard. Accordingly a standard has been developed from first principles based on a conceptual model developed by Kit Campbell Associates (author of the PPG17 Companion Guide) and the key requirements of the recommended quality standards and distance thresholds.

The basis parameters are:

- Minimum size: 400m<sup>2</sup> (taken from recommended quality standards);
- Minimum distance threshold: 400m (taken from recommended distance thresholds);
- Assumed housing density: 30 dwellings/hectare (taken from PPS3); and
- Average dwelling occupancy: 2.34 people (taken from 2001 census for Rugby).

- 7.6.2 The conceptual model consists of a circular residential area with a radius of 400m. It therefore has an area of approximately 50 ha. At 30 dwellings/ha, this area will contain roughly 1,500 dwellings and just over 3,500 people. Assuming that this area

requires a minimum of one play area, this gives a minimum quantity standard of 400 sq m to 3,500 people, or 0.11 sq m per person.

7.6.3 We have also used the same model to derive a provision standard for older children, with a different distance threshold and minimum size:

- Minimum size: 1,000m<sup>2</sup> (taken from the recommended quality standards); and
- Distance threshold: 550m (taken from the recommended distance thresholds)

This gives a minimum quantity standard of 0.15m<sup>2</sup> per person.

7.6.4 These two calculations assume that residents of the conceptual model residential area will require only one 400m<sup>2</sup> play area for young children and one 1,000m<sup>2</sup> area for older ones, giving a composite quantity standard of 0.26m<sup>2</sup> per person. However, older children should have a choice of play areas and there will be few areas where the model will apply on the ground. For example, it is wholly undesirable for children to have to cross main roads to get to play areas. Accordingly, it is recommended to double the above theoretical requirement to allow for these factors, giving a (rounded) quantity standard of 0.5 m<sup>2</sup> per person.

#### Application of the Quantity Standard

7.6.5 When applying the proposed quantity standard, the Council should:

- Aim to achieve only the minimum level of provision, but with the highest possible quality and play value;
- Give priority, in at least the short term, to using developer contributions and any capital investment it can afford to improving the quality, interest, attractiveness, safety and security of existing sites with potential and value;
- Encourage, if not require, residential developers to adopt a “home zone” approach in order to make it possible for children to play safely and informally in their immediate home environment ; and
- Ensure that “play space” is improved as part of proposed improvements to parks, gardens, natural green space or amenity space.

## 7.7 YOUTH ACTIVITY AREAS

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	None- play is simply included as a component of a wider urban parks or play area standard	
Existing Provision	Not defined	
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard	0.3	
Comparator	Blyth: 0.1m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: 0.3m <sup>2</sup> Horsham: 0.2-0.4m <sup>2</sup>	

### Theoretical Standards

7.7.1 We have used the same basic conceptual model for youth provision as for equipped play, with the following parameters as recommended by Kit Campbell Associates:

- Minimum size: 1,000m<sup>2</sup> (taken from recommended quality standards)
- Distance threshold: 500m (taken from recommended distance thresholds)
- Housing density and occupancy: as above.

7.7.2 The conceptual model residential area extends to some 78 ha and contains around 5,500 people, giving a theoretical provision standard of around 0.18m<sup>2</sup> per person. However, this assumes that the area requires only a single youth facility and ignores the findings of the local consultation and the need for both choice and the possible issue of territorialism. Accordingly we recommend a doubling of the theoretical minimum standard to 0.3m<sup>2</sup> per person.

### Application of the Quantity Standard

7.7.3 When applying this quantity standard, the Council should:

- Require developers to involve young people in the design of facilities intended for them; and
- Support brightly coloured facilities: A Council policy of painting the fencing around ball courts for instance would cheer up several sites and mark them out as intended primarily for young people.
- Increase the value of existing teenage and youth facilities by incorporating a range of activities rather than a single use. A MUGA is a high quality addition but its value would be increased by introduction of youth shelters, skate facility, adventure play as well as increased biodiversity. The Council should seek to

develop a number of key strategic teenage / youth sites across the Borough, with town parks having a good range of teenage facilities as a priority.

## 7.8 ALLOTMENTS

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	6.5	8
Existing Provision	4	6.5
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard	As existing quantity standard	
Comparator	Blyth: 4.4m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: 1.75m <sup>2</sup> Horsham: 1.25m <sup>2</sup>	

### Proposed Quantity Standard

- 7.8.1 As Rugby appears to have sufficient allotment sites at present, there is no need for a revised quantity standard. Instead, the Council will review the demand for plots annually and monitor waiting lists, which are noted as currently growing due to increased demand, and adjust supply accordingly.

## 7.9 SPORTS PITCHES

Summary	Urban Area m <sup>2</sup> per person	Rural Area m <sup>2</sup> per person
Existing Quantity Standard	23.5	51
Existing Provision*	35	50
Proposed Revised Quantity Standard	As existing quantity standard	
Comparator	Blyth: 10m <sup>2</sup> Mid Sussex: 12.25m <sup>2</sup> Horsham: 14m <sup>2</sup>	

\*does not include school playing fields, as most are inaccessible

### Proposed Quantity Standard

- 7.9.1 The quantity standard for the Open Spaces Strategy is high and is based on the existing high quantity of existing provision. We see no reason to change it at present but would strongly recommend that the Council research the current usage and provision of sports pitch provision in the Borough through a comprehensive survey of sports clubs, usage, pitch quality and potential future needs. This would require the development of a comprehensive Playing Pitch Strategy.
- 7.9.2 Separately, Rugby has a number of Artificial Turf Pitches (ATP) across the Borough but primarily in the urban area with these being either under school use or club ownership. There is some public access of these facilities, particularly weekend use of the excellent facilities at Rugby School.

### Application of the Quantity Standard

- 7.9.3 Ideally, Rugby should have its pitches on a limited number of sites in the town and across the Borough as this will maximise economies of scale in development, management and maintenance costs. In particular, the Council should avoid creating more pitch sites as current provision appears high. Accordingly, it should not require developers to make any on-site provision but instead require them to contribute to off-site provision on a town-wide basis, using the pattern of participation in pitch sports as the justification for this approach. This will allow the Council to aggregate contributions from different developments in order to make a worthwhile difference to the quality on priority sites. However, this would need further research through current usage rates.
- 7.9.4 As a result of the initial analysis undertaken and the fact that Rugby has been proved to already be over provided in some areas against the recommended minimum guidelines, RBC should initially oppose building development on playing fields in all but exceptional cases, whether the land is in public, private or educational use until a more detailed analysis has been undertaken. However, consideration should be given to possible alternative uses of some playing pitch sites that are currently underperforming. This could include potentially selling for development opportunities or re-allocating for other green space uses e.g. upgrading to park status. Sport England would likely oppose such a move but if disposal is considered, capital receipts must be ring-fenced and re-invested into the green space network, whether by improving other nearby pitch provision or used to invest in upgrading to another green space use. It will however continue to oppose development because the loss of any part of a playing field may represent the irretrievable loss of an opportunity for participation in pitch sports, and with it the many benefits which sports brings.
- 7.9.5 The Council should aim to ensure that there is no immediate reduction in the supply of conveniently located, good quality playing fields to satisfy current and future demand.



## **8. ACCESSIBILITY**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

8.1.1 For green spaces or facilities to be of value to people in Rugby they have to be accessible. Accessibility is therefore of critical importance to assessing the adequacy of provision in the Borough. An evaluation in terms of accessibility to different types of open spaces and recreation facilities has been undertaken.

8.1.2 In order to assess accessibility deficiencies, a range of distance thresholds/ accessibility standards for all typologies has been developed. Appropriate walking and driving thresholds have been set. Buffer zones have been set for each typology. The buffer zones are shown on the accessibility maps in Appendix 11.3

8.1.3 There are 3 key factors relating to Rugby's geography which has an important bearing on the formulation of distance thresholds for the Borough and determining which communities have "accessibility deficiencies" to different forms of provision. The key factors are:

- The compact nature of the main town of Rugby;
- The relatively high degree of community severance between the town and rural areas, and
- The low levels of multiple deprivation and related high levels of car ownership.

### **8.2 THE NATURE OF DISTANCE THRESHOLDS**

8.2.1 Distance thresholds are not hard facts, but a broad and flexible guide to the distance which people in general will be willing to travel in order to use or visit a facility or space. This point is made in paragraph 5.9 of the Companion Guide to PPG17 by Kit Campbell Associates. They are affected by many issues – such as human factors and individual circumstances and variations in external circumstances.

8.2.2 The distance that people in any particular area travel to spaces or facilities is a function of the distribution of provision, coupled with the range of factors summarised above. In an area with little provision, empirically established distance thresholds will be much higher than in another area with a high level of well distributed provision.

8.2.3 There is a clear difference between people's need to travel and willingness to do so. In parts of the country, for example, people need to travel 50-60 miles to visit an NHS dentist but may not be willing to travel a few hundred metres to their local park if they perceive it as not being worthy of a visit, or if the route is potentially dangerous.

Football players may not be willing to travel more than a mile, say, to their local club, but the distance they will need to travel to take part in matches depends primarily on the geographical area covered by the league in which their team plays. The higher a player's standard of skill, the wider this area will be.

### 8.3 RUGBY'S DISTANCE THRESHOLDS

8.3.1 The 2003 Open Spaces Strategy rated accessibility in the Borough as "very good" in the rural areas to "good" within the urban area. Each site was given an accessibility rating based on a site survey. However, based on considerable recent research on distance thresholds and local consultation, we have determined appropriate distance thresholds for straight-line walking and driving distance thresholds. Table 6 provides a summary of the distance thresholds for open space. Appendix 9 provides further details on how these have been determined.

**Table 6: Straight Line Distance Thresholds for Open Spaces**

Typology	Accessibility Walking Threshold	Accessibility Driving Threshold
Urban Park and Gardens	800 metres	3.3 km
Local Amenity Green Space	500 metres	
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	700 metres	3.3 km
Allotments	700 metres	
Sports Pitches and other outdoor sports facilities	850 metres	3.5 km
Play Areas	400 metres	4.5 km
Youth Facilities	400 metres	

8.3.2 To assist in identifying potential accessibility deficiencies the accessibility thresholds were plotted onto GIS maps. The accessibility maps for each typology located in Appendix 11.

### 8.4 DEFICIENCIES IN ACCESSIBILITY

8.4.1 Most forms of green space are multi-functional in nature and serve other uses besides their primary function. For these reasons, it would be wrong to apply the distance thresholds in a mechanical manner and assume that those areas beyond them automatically require additional provision. There will nearly always be a proportion of dwellings slightly beyond the distance thresholds for most forms of provision. Accordingly, we have made a pragmatic judgement based on a number of factors:

- The character of the location: in some areas, amenity green space is not a priority, for example in a residential area where the dwellings have large garden grounds or where there is easy access to rural countryside areas;
- Whether the facility or space that requires a Borough - wide catchment to support it or is one to which people would generally drive;
- Whether there are likely to be sufficient people within the area of deficiency who would support or require a specific type of provision in order to justify the additional spaces or facilities. If so, what form of provision would meet local needs most effectively and economically?
- Quality issues: are the available sites of such unusually high quality that people may be willing to travel further?
- Is there any land available for new provision?

8.4.2 We have analysed walking distance thresholds for sports pitches, play areas, parks and gardens, natural and semi natural spaces, local amenity green space as well as allotments and community gardens. We have then combined parks and gardens, local amenity green space and natural / semi natural green space, as these are the most easily accessible, as well as often being multi functional to assess any accessibility deficiencies

#### Rugby Urban Area

8.4.3 Allotments and Community Gardens – There is reasonable accessibility across the urban area but particular deficiencies to the north and through the central section of the town, in particular Brownsover and Overslade. In comparison to many other areas, accessibility is good.

8.4.4 Parks and Gardens - For the sites we have audited overall accessibility across the town is very good with some deficiencies only in Overslade, parts of Bilton as well as Cawston. The Recreation Grounds are well distributed across the town and provide good access for this particular typology.

8.4.5 Natural / Semi Natural Green Spaces – As the largest typology area, it is not surprising to see that accessibility is also very good across the whole of the urban area with only deficiencies in Overslade, Bilton and New Bilton as well as part of Hillmorton.

- 8.4.6 Local Amenity Green Space – with only a 500m threshold for walking, this should be the most accessible of green spaces and this is shown by the very good access across the town apart from the town centre area only.
- 8.4.7 Combined Parks and Gardens / Natural / Semi Natural / Local Amenity Green Space – as the most accessible types of green space, when these are combined across the urban area based on the higher threshold of 800m, there is total accessibility across the whole of the urban area with no deficiencies identified.
- 8.4.8 Sports Pitches – Not surprisingly there is almost total accessibility across the urban area highlighting excellent provision and access to sports facilities.
- 8.4.9 Children’s and Young People’s Facilities – with a 400m distance threshold for walking, a number of accessibility issues are highlighted, especially in Hillmorton, Overslade, Newbold, parts of the Brownsover Estate and the town centre. In comparison to other areas however, coverage is good.

#### Conclusion

- 8.4.10 Access to green space overall within the urban area is excellent with a number of deficiencies highlighted in certain typologies. However, when combined, everyone in the urban area has access within the walking distance threshold to some kind of green space.

#### Rugby Rural Areas

- 8.4.11 The use of distance thresholds is particularly relevant within the rural areas as is the classification and typology of open spaces. In many areas within local villages, green space is truly multi functional with recreation grounds often acting as a sports pitch, playing field and local amenity space. We have also derived driving distance thresholds for some of the typologies based on national recommended guidance.
- 8.4.12 Allotments and Community Gardens – Rural provision is supply led and accessibility in relation to walking is reasonable but with several communities having no access within walking distance. This is not unusual as the number of properties with gardens in the rural areas is obviously higher than in the urban area itself. However, driving distance thresholds show full accessibility across the Borough. Whether plots are available is another issue. Increased local provision in the rural areas based on walking distance thresholds is obviously more desirable.
- 8.4.13 Parks and Gardens – These are few and far between within the rural area with most recreation grounds being dominated by playing pitches and the Country Parks being

classed as natural / semi natural green space. Coombe Country Park is the only formal park within the rural area which most people drive to.



**The Visitor Centre and wide selection of children's play facilities are two of the reasons why Coombe Country Park has become such a popular destination.**



8.4.14 Natural and Semi Natural Green Space – on the doorstep of much of the rural area, both driving and walking thresholds show very good accessibility to this typology, provided by the Country Parks in particular. There is access to this typology for all residents within the driving distance threshold.

8.4.15 Local Amenity Green Space – many villages and rural settlements have local amenity green space and access to it, but as previously stated, this may be classified predominantly as sports pitches.

8.4.16 Combined Parks and Gardens / Natural / Semi Natural / Local Amenity Green Space – as the most accessible types of green space, when these are combined across the rural area based on the higher threshold of 800m, there is total accessibility across the whole of the rural area with few deficiencies highlighted at all. Nearly all rural settlements have access to green space when combined.

8.4.17 Sports Pitches – As with the urban area, walking distance thresholds show excellent accessibility to playing fields across the whole rural area. As previously discussed, teams play at home and away so driving distance thresholds are especially relevant and when applied, shows total coverage across the whole Borough.

8.4.18 Children's and Young People's Facilities – Access within the rural areas to children and young peoples facilities is poor. There are a number of play facilities in many villages but almost as many without access to fixed play or youth facilities. These obviously need to be within a walking distance threshold to be of any value to the local community.



**There are some good examples of children's play areas in Rugby, where children can engage in sustained and purposeful play**

**These new children's play areas in the villages of Ansty (opposite) and Shilton (below) are good examples of children's play areas**



### Conclusion

8.4.19 Accessibility within the rural areas is reasonable. Local facilities such as play and allotments are in many areas sporadic and accessibility is an issue with some villages not having any provision. However for the typologies covering natural / semi natural green space and sports pitches, where driving accessibility is more relevant, accessibility is very good with no deficiencies identified.

## 9. APPLYING PROVISION STANDARDS

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

9.1.1 This section provides a series of recommendations on how the different components of the provision standards should be applied.

9.1.2 PPG17 states that planning agreements designed to mitigate the impact of new developments should relate only to deficiencies in quality and quantity. However, in terms of assessing current deficiencies, all three components of the standard must be balanced according to typological and spatial requirements. In broad terms, because of Rugby's compact as well as rural nature, accessibility is more important than quantity. The Council should therefore use the following policy test:

**Apply either the quantity or accessibility standards, together with the quality standard. If this test is not satisfied by existing provision, the Council's priority should be to remedy that deficiency.**

9.1.3 Provision standards represent both a requirement in relation to new developments, and an aspiration in relation to areas which have already been developed. While developers can be required to comply with adopted standards for new developments relatively easily, it is more difficult to achieve results in developed areas. In some areas, the only way to achieve a standard might be to demolish buildings in order to release land, and this is clearly unlikely unless long term regeneration initiatives are planned. An excellent local example was highlighted as part of a recent focus group discussion. A Primary School in the central eastern part of the town, currently has no green space provision and relies on other nearby schools for field activities and sports. There are clear deficiencies within this area and some open space provision is to be made available as part of proposed redevelopment of the "Market" site. However, the school is close to Caldecott Park, Rugby's principal public park. It is in circumstances that accessibility and quality are important as clearly it is unlikely that further green space can be created. Improved access to the park is clearly a priority for the school.

9.1.4 In some circumstances, it may be possible to overcome an identified existing deficiency in a way which is linked to a new development, but developers can be required to fund or provide only the level of community infrastructure required as a direct result of their developments. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

### Application of Provision Standards

9.1.5 In general, the Council should aspire to all green spaces and facilities meeting the quality standards. How the accessibility and quantity standards should be applied to each of the typologies of green space set out below.

## **9.2 NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL GREEN SPACE**

9.2.1 It is not desirable for accessible natural green space to be a discrete category of provision. Instead, the Council and its partners should adopt a policy of supporting its integration into other forms of green space wherever possible especially on the many sports pitch sites and recreation grounds where biodiversity is low and the site is dominated by pitches. In addition to this strategy, the development and improvement of green corridors should be a key focus for the continuing improvement of the quality and accessibility of natural green space within the urban area.

### Accessibility

9.2.2 Every dwelling should be within 700m of at least one accessible natural and semi natural green space. Every dwelling should be within 2 km of at least one accessible natural green space site of at least 20 Ha (based on Accessible Natural Green Spaces Standards recommended by Natural England)

9.2.3 Well located accessible natural and semi natural green space should be given a high degree of protection by RBC and should be protected by LDF policies relating to nature conservation or specific nature conservation designations.

### Justification

9.2.4 Natural and semi natural green spaces offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and to be close to nature. Such sites should be easily accessible to all residents. When coupled with high quality, accessibility is more important than quantity because smaller but higher quality sites should have a greater capacity to accommodate users than larger but lower quality ones. They should also provide a better experience for visitors.

## **9.3 ALLOTMENTS**

### Quantity

9.3.1 The amount of provision of allotments should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard.



### Accessibility

- 9.3.2 All dwellings should be within walking distance threshold of at least one allotment site.

### Justification

- 9.3.3 The main need for allotments is in the most densely built-up areas where gardens linked to dwellings tend to be small, shared spaces or almost non-existent. In the more affluent, low density leafy areas where dwellings have large gardens demand for allotments is generally lower.

## **9.4 LOCAL AMENITY GREEN SPACE**

- 9.4.1 Most forms of green space are multi-functional and therefore serve a number of purposes, the most important of which is to “soften” and enhance the appearance of an area and provide an attractive setting for buildings and for pathways and other transport routes. When assessing whether there is adequate amenity space in an area, it is important to consider the whole of the green network. Therefore, distance thresholds for amenity green spaces can be applied to other forms of green space, irrespective of their primary purpose, where they serve an amenity function.

### Quantity

- 9.4.2 The total amount of amenity green space should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard. This could include some of the parks that could be downgraded from parks to amenity space or vice versa where there is under provision of parks, amenity green space could be upgraded to meet that deficiency. The latter is the key priority with some sites having the potential to be upgraded to parks status along with a number of recreation grounds dominated by sports pitches.

### Accessibility

- 9.4.3 Every dwelling should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one amenity green space or public access pitch.

### Justification

- 9.4.4 Accessibility is more important than quantity because accessible, high quality green spaces meet local needs better than larger, more distant sites.

## 9.5 EQUIPPED PLAY AREAS

### Quantity

- 9.5.1 The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard.

### Accessibility

- 9.5.2 All dwellings with more than one bedroom should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one town or neighbourhood equipped play area.

### Justification

- 9.5.3 All children should be able to use play areas. These spaces also meet a valuable social need for parents and carers. Accessibility is more important than quantity because many young children will not be able to walk far to a play area.

## 9.6 SPORTS PITCHES

### Quantity

- 9.6.1 The total quantity of grass and artificial pitches available to community based clubs and teams should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standards.

### Accessibility

- 9.6.2 All dwellings should be within walking distance of at least one football pitch and the driving distance threshold of at least one publicly accessible pitch site or recreation ground.

### Justification

- 9.6.3 All residents should have the opportunity to take part in the pitch sport of their choice. In the first instance this requires that there should be enough pitches and accessibility is secondary as the competitive nature of sports pitches means that participants will not always use the pitch nearest their home. In addition, approximately half of all matches are played “away”.
- 9.6.4 Cricket and rugby teams tend to draw their membership from a wider area than football teams and many football pitches are also used by young people for mini-soccer or casually for “kick-about”s. Especially in the more built-up areas, there is a need for football pitches to be more accessible than cricket or rugby pitches.

## 9.7 OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES

### Quantity

- 9.7.1 The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the provision standards.

### Accessibility

- 9.7.2 All dwellings must be within the driving threshold of at least one bowling-green, multi-use games area (MUGAs) and tennis court. (Multi-use games areas may be on school sites provided there is public access).

### Justification

- 9.7.3 Bowling greens are particularly popular amongst older people and in principle every resident of the town should be able to enjoy the sport within a reasonable distance of home. However, for a bowling club to be viable it needs around 80-100 members.
- 9.7.4 MUGAs and tennis courts are needed most in densely populated areas and tend to be used by young people, many of whom lack personal transport. Therefore a walking distance threshold is most appropriate. For both forms of provision it is possible to improve their capacity by using artificial surfaces or floodlighting and therefore accessibility is more important than quantity.

## 9.8 URBAN PARKS, GARDENS AND RECREATION GROUNDS

### Quantity

- 9.8.1 The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard.

### Accessibility

- 9.8.2 All dwellings should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one park, garden, recreation ground or a sports pitch site providing opportunities for informal recreation.

### Justification

- 9.8.3 All residents should have easy access to a park, garden or recreation ground. This means that accessibility is more important than quantity. Suitable designed and managed sports pitches can fulfil some of the functions of parks and recreation grounds, but there will be a need for additional space over and above that required for the pitches and support accommodation alone. Where particular forms of green

space can be multifunctional – and recreation grounds generally contain a mix of several recreation opportunities – this makes the most effective use of land.

## **9.9 YOUTH FACILITIES**

### Quantity

- 9.9.1 The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the quantity standard.

### Accessibility

- 9.9.2 All dwellings with more than one bedroom should be within walking distance of at least one neighbourhood youth area.

### Justification

- 9.9.3 Young people tend to be a neglected group in terms of access to community infrastructure, partly because their needs can be difficult to define. Indeed, many young people are unable to give a clear answer when asked to identify the facilities they would like in their area; and if they can, may be fickle with the result that what they want today may be ignored tomorrow. However, young people have every right to “hang about” and indulge in largely harmless but sometimes noisy activities close to home, so there is a clear need to provide for them. Given the nature of youth culture and the difficulties of territorialism, it is important that young people should have a degree of choice, through access to more than one youth area within their neighbourhood.

## 10. KEY GREEN SPACE ISSUES AND OPTIONS

### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

10.1.1 This Section outlines the main issues and options facing the Council if it is to achieve the proposed vision for green spaces in Rugby. The vision for Rugby's open spaces should guide and support the Council's actions in improving the Borough's open space network. We recommend that the following amended vision that includes references to 'quality', 'value' and 'sustainability' is adopted in the emerging LDF Core Strategy.

***“Rugby will aim to provide a network of accessible, high quality, highly valued green spaces which its local communities are proud of, and which promotes sustainability, supports biodiversity and extensively contributes to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the Borough.”***

10.1.2 The vision has a number of key components:

- The network of spaces and facilities is more important than any individual space or facility: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts;
- Every space and facility does not have to be suitable for every possible use. Spaces that are designed and used for specific purposes can be of as much value as multi functional spaces. The Council will therefore adopt a different regime for different forms of provision;
- Quality and accessibility in Rugby, are more important than quantity;
- Meeting local needs is more important than retaining spaces if they have no or very low value;
- Green Spaces and facilities support “liveability”. Green spaces in particular help to form an image of the Borough for residents and visitors;
- Green spaces support sustainability in various ways; provided they are managed in a manner which makes this possible;
- Green spaces should be designed and managed in ways which support and encourage biodiversity; and
- Making the best use of land implies that the Council will see low value low quality spaces as an opportunity to make better use of the land.

10.1.3 We suggest the reappraisal of the Rugby Open Spaces Strategy should be developed around 3 key issues:

- 1) The Green Spaces Strategy Action Plan – a draft framework for the creation of the strategy that will guide all future green spaces and public places improvements based on a more defined action plan than the initial 2003 strategy;
- 2) The Green Spaces Consultative Network – identifying a way in which the local community will be actively involved in decisions about the management and development of our green spaces and public places; and
- 3) Measuring progress – suggesting how to measure what has been done and how much there is still to do. This could link with RBC’s Annual Monitoring Report.

10.1.4 We recommend that RBC develop a series of policies in relation to green space based on the following 10 principles:

### **Stewardship**

#### **1. The Council’s Stewardship Role**

As the representative of the residents of Rugby, the Council should manage green spaces in the interests of the whole community.

#### **2. Green Space History and Heritage**

The Council should protect and preserve the historic and architectural heritage found within Rugby’s green spaces. They should ensure that this heritage is protected, now and for the future.

### **Management**

#### **3. Green Spaces as Community Assets**

Rugby’s green spaces are an essential and permanent community resource. The Council should work in partnership with partners, users, and stakeholders and involve them in the “decision making” process relating to the use, development and management of the Borough’s green spaces.

#### **4. Investing in Community Green Space**

The Council recognise that green spaces require investment. They should actively secure resources for the regeneration of many of their green spaces, in partnership with the local community and external agencies based on a developed “strategic network”. The proposed Strategic Network is located at Appendix 11.4. They should ensure any investment is sustainable, maintenance regimes are developed and

where new developments and initiatives are introduced, maintenance issues are taken into account in the design, management and ongoing sustainability of the facility.

## **Use**

### **5. Universal Access to Green Spaces**

Rugby's green spaces are available for use by all sections of the local community, including the business community. The Council should support and promote fully inclusive access and use of Rugby's green spaces for all lawful purposes.

### **6. The Right to Safety**

All sections of the local community have the right to use Rugby's green spaces in safety and without fear of crime. The Council should work in partnership with local people and other agencies in order to provide cleaner, safer and greener environments.

### **7. Education for Citizenship**

The Council should recognise that their green spaces are a rich resource for learning, not only about the living environment, but Rugby's history and culture. They should encourage the use of their green spaces as important centres of education as well as places to celebrate Rugby's cultural diversity.

### **8. Spaces for Play, Sport and Recreation**

Rugby's green spaces are an essential community resource in providing quality spaces for play, sport and recreation. They should ensure that these uses are provided for, in health, enjoyment and well being of the Borough's local communities.

## **Environmental Protection**

### **9. Community Living Space**

The Council should continue to develop their green spaces to ensure that they remain "living spaces". They should protect and enhance the Borough's biodiversity, maximise resource efficiency by increasing recycling opportunities, establish a better use of essential energy sources and minimise the use of pesticides and chemicals.

### **10. Aiming High and Ensuring Quality**

The Council should make best use of resources available to ensure the highest quality for all their green spaces. They should strive to adopt the principles of the Civic Trust Green Flag standard across all of their green spaces and assess the

quality and value of them all as set out in the recently revised PPG17. Their aim should be to build on their success in Britain in Bloom and gain Green Flag awards in all its main town parks.

## **10.2 KEY ISSUES**

10.2.1 We have identified a number of key issues for the future of open space, sport and recreation provision in Rugby, including:

- Involving Communities;
- Urban Parks and Gardens;
- Local Amenity Green space and Open Space on Housing Estates;
- Natural and Semi Natural Green Space Areas;
- Green Corridors and creating the links;
- Equipped play areas and Youth Provision;
- Sports Pitches and Multi Courts;
- Churchyards and Cemeteries;
- Allotments and Community Gardens;
- Reviewing Green Space Opportunities;
- Partnership Working with Schools and Education authorities;
- Green space management and maintenance; and
- Funding.

Each of these issues are taken in turn in detail below.

## **10.3 INVOLVING COMMUNITIES**

### Needs

10.3.1 As has been identified throughout the work in developing the Open Spaces Strategy, there is a need to develop better ways of involving local communities in green spaces management, maintenance and development. There are only four Friend's Groups established in Rugby in relation to parks and open spaces and there are clear benefits to developing groups to work with green space management.

- Bilton Greens;
- Hillmorton Green;



- Caldecott Park; and
- Millennium Green.

10.3.2 A key dimension of successful green space management is a willingness to engage local communities in the task, and to think creatively about means to make this happen. Community participation needs to happen within a framework which gives weight to different voices within the community, and that is not un-duly influenced by sectional interests. Involving the voluntary sector in urban green space management can tap an under-utilised resource. There is also a need to work with other partners with an interest in the management of green space, eg the Wildlife Trust, Housing Associations, Warwickshire County Council and Groundwork Coventry and Warwickshire.

#### Opportunities

10.3.3 With the ongoing development of the open spaces strategy and proposed restoration of Caldecott Park, there are clear immediate opportunities to involve communities in green spaces in Rugby.

10.3.4 The low “value” of many of the town’s green spaces however means that the involvement of local communities is essential in delivering a better valued and more diverse green space network in relation to management, maintenance, development and assisting in attracting funding to allow much of this to happen. One of the key issues identified during consultation was the need for a more diverse use of green space as many sites were considered high quality but low in contributing any real value to the local community.

### **10.4 URBAN PARKS AND GARDENS**

#### Needs

10.4.1 The quality of parks, gardens and recreation grounds in Rugby is very good but the overall value needs considerably improving with the average score currently between 11% and 75%. A revised Strategy should identify that urban parks and gardens should be a strategic priority and should be managed and maintained to a high standard to ensure all are high quality and high value. The successful management of Rugby’s green spaces depends upon a correct understanding of the nature and needs of different types of green spaces. Locally derived green space typologies are valuable to differentiate between green space types and their appropriate aspirations and management regimes.

10.4.2 A coherent management strategy is required to cope with the diversity of green spaces, and to integrate management regimes, preferably under the auspices of one organisation.

10.4.3 A clear distinction between ownership and management responsibilities for urban green space can help to establish a unified and integrated management regime.

#### Opportunities

10.4.4 A strong theme coming from consultation has been the need to diversify many green spaces which are currently underperforming. These sites should have a management plan or management brief for each one of them identified. This would give the following:

- A vision on how the site should develop;
- A prescriptive work programme for grounds staff to work from;
- A clear view of opportunities and constraints to maintenance and development;
- A collection of information – all in one place – pertaining to the site;
- Recognition of the various aspects, which come together to make the site what it is e.g. community use, nature conservation, heritage interest, recreational use. It is important to remember that each site and the community who use it has its own identity and needs and that management plans need to reflect this diversity;
- Strong guidelines for how each site can improve its wildlife value by incorporating habitat improvement plans where possible;
- Standards of maintenance; and
- Long-term development plans for the site.

10.4.5 There are opportunities as part of the drive to involve communities in developing Management Plans for the parks, gardens and recreation grounds within the Borough. To achieve these opportunities, there is a need to develop a “strategic green space network” which should identify the following:

- Urban Parks and Gardens hierarchy (Town and Neighbourhood parks);
- Principal natural and semi natural green space sites ;
- Country Parks;
- Strategic green corridors;
- Key Sports sites;

- Sites of regional importance; and
- Play and Youth Facilities.

10.4.6 The quality of all the strategic network sites should meet the quality standards requirements in all respects. The priorities should be to enhance the quality of the sites in the strategic network and also those sites that score above 50% for quality and value. They will be relatively cost effective to improve;

10.4.7 There is a particular need to increase the quality and value of those sites in the town of Rugby, as well as in the rural parts, in particular the recreation grounds. It is recommended that any development in the town as well as rural areas should focus on meeting the needs of young people and providing sports facilities alongside generating economic growth.

10.4.8 The Council continues to manage and improve open spaces and facilities proactively with limited resources. However, the Green Spaces Strategy should emphasise the need to continue to improve proactively at a more strategic level, concentrating on enhancing the value of its green space network. Community involvement in the strategic network of open spaces and in improving sites is critical. Although involving the community can require increased resources, these efforts should result in lower maintenance costs through an increase in local pride and less vandalism / abuse through peer pressure.

10.4.9 We suggest delivering this change through a series of more defined Action Plans with short, medium and long term targets. These should all be broadly achievable but many may be aspirational and should be aligned to the Vision created and the 10 principles proposed.

## **10.5 LOCAL AMENITY GREEN SPACE AND OPEN SPACE ON HOUSING ESTATES**

### Needs

10.5.1 Rugby has sufficient quantities of amenity green space in the town and most villages and where less accessible in certain localised areas, of other typologies of open space such as natural green space, parks, pitches or play areas provide sufficient green space.

### Opportunities

10.5.2 Local Amenity green space which is found in most residential areas should at least be managed and maintained to a standard where it is kept at least clean and safe

as these spaces are mostly on people's immediate doorsteps and therefore most visible.

10.5.3 However, despite the quantity of local amenity green space seemingly being sufficient within Rugby, there is seemingly a shift in national perception of local amenity green space and the role of housing providers, primarily Registered Social Landlords (RSL's). RSL's are now responsible for significant areas of green space nationally and in cases the amount of green space probably exceeds that of public parks.

10.5.4 A recent article in "Green Places" (June 2007) describes social housing green spaces as "the Cinderella of green space" and that "the spaces in and around social housing are largely poor.... A banal mosaic of rye grass deserts, punished shrubberies, tired lollipop trees, incessant railings and sweeping concrete vistas...".

10.5.5 For all the deprivations that public parks suffer, they are often nothing compared to the poverty of the spaces in and around much of the social housing. This is also the case in areas of Rugby. Although not to the extent of many of our inner city areas, much of the land in the town is reasonably well maintained but very low in value, offering nothing or little to the local community. RSL's recognise that landscape management is not their core business, and they rarely consider the consequences of policies and programmes that do not focus on housing provision.

10.5.6 With recent stock transfers, land is usually transferred with the stock, but without the staff skills and resources that previously managed this. Another key barrier has been the acute lack of information on the spaces social landlords are responsible for and they are often omitted from local authority open space strategies. We contacted all the RSL's who currently operate in Rugby and had a very limited response. Many of the issues raised by the likes of CABA Space and others are generic also to spaces of social housing.

- Significant legacy of poorly designed and under-managed spaces;
- Accumulative disinvestment over many decades;
- Competition for resources;
- Low aspirations in terms of design and use;
- High fragmentation;
- Ambiguous ownership for users, and tensions between private and communal needs;

- Existence of marked social territories;
- Increasing complexity of tenure;
- Competition for use (such as car parking, development);
- Absence of regulatory framework.

10.5.7 However, why are these spaces important? Many of these areas house people that are described as “disadvantaged”, with disproportionately high numbers of black and minority ethnic residents, single parents, long term unemployed, and those suffering physical and mental disabilities. 70% of social residents have incomes from the poorest two fifths of overall income distribution, and over 50% of working age residents are not in paid employment

10.5.8 Areas of housing are more likely to be poor environmental quality with public space deficiency. Research has shown there is a strong correlation between economic and environmental deprivation.

10.5.9 In Rugby, many of the estates have large areas of local amenity green space, with some good examples of “rye grass deserts”. Largely well maintained, as described previously, they offer little to local communities in the way of activity, biodiversity value or recreational value. A good example is on Nelson Way to the west of Rugby, a large open space, well maintained but lacking in any value to the local community. It has considerable potential with existing trees, varied topography and easily accessible from properties which overlook the green space. The improvement of such a space would make a considerable difference on “people’s doorstep”.

10.5.10 There has been a plethora of recent initiatives to encourage the development of local amenity and community spaces through initiatives such as Doorstep Greens, Millennium Greens and Neighbourhood Greens. There has also been some excellent work in areas like Sheffield, with the Green Estate’s Work on the Manor Estate as well as work in Knowsley where Landlife have transformed many green deserts and proposed work to be developed by RSL’s such as the Peabody Trust and Places for People. There are clearly opportunities in Rugby, in areas like Nelson Way to improve the appearance and value of green areas in housing. However, as previously discussed, the green space profession needs to assist RSL’s by:-

1. Getting to understand social landlords and how they operate (they know little about landscape design and management;

2. Ensuring sectoral language, information and guidance better reflect the spaces owned and managed by social landlords;
3. Engaging with social landlords on strategic green space policies and projects; and
4. Establishing grants and funding streams to encompass the quasi-public and communal spaces they manage.

10.5.11 We would recommend the Council involve Social Housing providers in Rugby in strategic development of open space and that certainly in any revisions / updating of the Open Space Strategy, RSL's are included. These include:-

- Leicester Housing Association;
- Mercian Housing Association;
- Orbit Housing Association;
- Sanctuary Housing Association;
- Touchstone Housing Association; and
- William Sutton Trust.

## **10.6 NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREEN SPACES**

### Needs

10.6.1 Rugby has a rich and varied landscape and contains 7 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 3 Local Nature Reserves, 2 Regionally Important Geological Sites and 14 sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. RBC's major challenge will be to accommodate housing growth, employment, community needs and infrastructure whilst delivering a high quality of life and minimising harm to its environmental assets. To assist the Council in this challenge all Rugby's nature conservation sites were audited and opportunities for enhancement and the extension of existing nature conservation sites were identified. A summary of the audit findings are provided below in Table 7. The full ecology report is located at Appendix 8.

### Survey Methodology

10.6.2 Each site was visited by an experienced ecologist (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008) and an assessment made on the habitats present, including noting areas of particular interest/value and identifying where management interventions or site extension could the nature conservation value of the site.

### Audit Results

10.6.3 The audit survey findings are detailed in Table 7.

Table 7 below provides the Site Number, Site Name, Ordnance Survey Grid Reference and Evaluation based upon Rugby Open Space Strategy, Assessment of Natural /Semi-natural Urban Greenspace (Entec, June 2003). The table also includes a brief Description of the site and comments on observations made during the audit and the potential for enhancing or extending the site where applicable. An evaluation column is included to give an indication on site status compared to the 2003 report (although it must be appreciated that the surveys were not necessarily comparable and the level of subjectivity that is inherent in such an evaluation) and a statement on whether it is considered if the site is declining or improving in its nature conservation value.

**Table 7: Nature Conservation Audit Results**

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
1	Great Central Walk/ Ashlawn Railway Cutting	SP 530 780	LNR, Ecosite (1/57 and 2/57) and pSINC	Various habitat types along its length including unimproved/semi-improved grassland, dense/continuous scrub and linear scrub.	<p>Managed to create an uneven-aged stand and structure of scrub on the embankments. Scrub should be managed to create an uneven-aged structure and managed grassland.</p> <p>The site includes carr woodland with areas of standing water (Scrub and Carr is a priority habitat in the Warwickshire Biodiversity Action Plan). The ecological value (i.e. species and habitats of value) of this habitat type at the site requires further information before management recommendations can be made, although selective thinning of the scrub would allow for development of the wetland flora.</p> <p>Badgers <i>Meles meles</i> noted as present.</p> <p>Extension of the site not practicable as a linear site with habitats generally confined within the linear area and that the site is also valued as a 'wildlife corridor' from the</p>	Very Good	Very Good

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					outskirts of Rugby through the urban centre.		
2	Great Central Walk Margin	SP 525 775		Various habitat types including scrub, semi-improved grassland and areas of acid/neutral flush.	<p>Site appears well-used by dog walkers and verges are likely to be nutrient-rich and species-poor. Scrub is relatively even-aged and management to create an uneven-aged structure would be beneficial. Scrub should be managed to create an uneven-aged structure and manage grassland – scrub interface by rotational cutting and increasing the area of the interface (Scrub Management Handbook page 5:41).</p> <p>Where the site borders amenity grassland, enhancements could be made by leaving a wider margin at the interface that is cut rotationally (Lowland Grassland Management Handbook page 14:13)</p>	Good	Average
3	Newbold Quarry Park	SP 493 270	LNR, Ecosite (8/47) and pSINC	Various habitat types including standing water, unimproved grassland and broad-leaved semi-natural woodland.	<p>Site is bordered by canal, allotments and housing and therefore extension to the site is not feasible, other than a disused playing field although unlikely to be significant benefit to this other than to provide a buffer to the areas of conservation value.</p> <p>The marginal vegetation around the lake is limited, possibly due to the steepness of the banks. Encouraging additional marginal and emergent vegetation, where practicable, would enhance the conservation value of the site. The grasslands on the steep slopes appear relatively</p>	Very Good	Very Good



Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					species-rich and include orchids – potential for management is limited by the steep slopes other than limited scrub management.		
4	Disused Railway (Rugby to Willey)	SP 495 770	Ecosite (88/47) and pSINC	Various habitat types including a small patch of broad-leaved woodland, unimproved/se mi-improved grassland and amenity grassland.	<p>The section of this disused railway line to the north of the canal is a broad area of rabbit-grazed grassland fringed with scrub. This area appears to be outside of the designated area, although it is not clear why as potentially provides a significant nature conservation resource as a wildlife corridor and scrub/grassland habitat. Management to increase the area of scrub and grass/scrub interface would be beneficial (based upon the assumption that the grassland is of limited value).</p> <p>South of the canal the site comprises a broad area of mown grassland with a narrow scrub fringe. An enhancement for invertebrates in particular would be to leave wider margins which are cut rotationally (Lowland Grassland Management Handbook page 14:13).</p> <p>To the south of this the site narrows considerably and comprises trees and scrub up to the path edge. Again rotational cutting of path borders would provide an ecological enhancement.</p> <p>The bridge/viaduct over the main road and river is vegetated and provides a valuable nature conservation</p>	Very Good	Good

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					<p>resource as a 'green-bridge' for the movement of species. Currently semi-improved grassland that could be enhanced as grassland by cutting annually or every other year and removal of arisings; alternatively allowing natural succession of scrub and tree growth could add value to the 'green-bridge/green corridor' function of the bridge.</p> <p>Access beyond the bridge was not possible.</p>		
5	Old Lime Works	SP 484 768	Ecosite (88/47) and pSINC	<p>Various habitats including broad-leaved semi-natural woodland, semi-improved grassland, scrub and tall ruderals. Supports a large population of glow worm <i>Lampyris noctiluca</i>.</p>	<p>The meadow in the south-east corner running down to the River Avon could be added to the site designation if sympathetically managed – allow a scrub fringe to develop with the boundary with the Old Lime Works site and grazing regime to be sympathetic to conservation objectives.</p> <p>No evidence of recent management. Manage the site as a mosaic of woodland, scrub, rough grassland and short grassland to enhance glow worm population and for other species. This will involve rotational cutting in autumn.</p> <p>Some management below power lines where trees have been cut.</p> <p>Old canal now derelict and potential for restoration appears negligible.</p>	Very Good	Very Good (declining)

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					Mature line of oaks <i>Quercus robur</i> from the church to the site provide potentially significant conservation features and should be considered for inclusion within the designated site.		
6	River Avon Corridor – Plantation, Semi-Natural Woodland and Semi-improved Grassland	SP 490 770	part of the River Avon Ecosite (10/47) and pSINC	Various habitat types adjacent to the River Avon including broad-leaved plantation, semi-natural woodland, semi-natural grassland and scrub.	Now partly cleared, presumably for development. The meadow of rank grassland has some large patches of encroaching scrub. Without management the conservation value of this area could be lost/reduced. Grassland appears to be treated as a 'wasteland' by locals and requires a community function. Recommend management of the grassland by mowing in autumn and removing cuttings. The grassland area slopes down to the river and could provide a valued adjunct to this habitat corridor.	Very Good	Average (declining)
7	River Avon Corridor – Plantation	SP 490 767	part of the River Avon Ecosite (10/47) and pSINC	Linear broad-leaved plantation fringing Avon right bank. Dominant tree species willow and poplar hybrid (stated as willow hybrids in	Ditches within site need maintaining in order to manage water table enhance the wetland habitat. Selective long-term removal of poplar hybrids to allow natural understorey and ground flora development, although care needs to be taken as also provide potential bat roosting habitat. Encourage willow growth along the river bank as otter habitat. Also: - retain fallen and standing dead wood; - Clear litter; - rotational pollarding of willow.	Very Good	Good

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
				Entec report).			
8	River Avon Corridor – Plantation 2	SP 490 769	part of the River Avon Ecosite (10/47) and pSINC	Broad-leaved plantation on the east side of the River Avon with poplar plantation (willow in Entec report) and tall ruderals.	A narrow strip of semi-natural vegetation bordered by school playing fields and the River Avon. Predominantly semi-mature poplar <i>Populus</i> sp. plantation with scrub willow <i>Salix</i> sp. and hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> . Selective thinning of poplars to give enhanced structure. Wetland habitat development/creation would be beneficial and potential to be used as educational purposes.	Very Good	Good
9	Brownsover Scrub	SP513 765		Dense scrub with watercourse running through and some semi-improved grassland.	Evidence of rotational pollarding of willow trees along the watercourse. Scrub should be managed to create an uneven-aged structure and manage grassland – scrub interface by rotational cutting and increasing the area of the interface (Scrub Management Handbook page 5:41). Retain willow trees along the watercourse (pollard) and replace as they decline and die.	Average	Average
10	Great Central Walk Woodland	SP 515 765	part of the River Avon Ecosite (10/47) and pSINC	Railway embankment and line of woodland, scrub and semi-improved grassland that passes over the River Avon	Habitat should be managed to retain the woodland, scrub, grassland mosaic. Scrub management to create an uneven-aged stand and enhance the grassland – scrub interface by rotational cutting and increasing the area of interface (Scrub Management Handbook page 5:41).  Management of the scrub on the embankments is limited due to steepness.	Very Good	Very Good

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					NOTE: Below the steep railway embankments is a large area of semi-improved grassland flanking the river with potential as a nature conservation resource. It is thought that these areas may already be Ecosites (Humpty Dumpty Field and Newton and Clifton Meadow) and more information is required to provide management recommendations, although due to the large area involved a grazing regime that was sympathetic to conservation objectives could provide an enhancement.		
11	Mill Gardens	SP 515 765	part of the River Avon Ecosite (10/47) and pSINC	Mixed area of habitats including unimproved/se mi-improved grassland, dense/continuous scrub, linear scrub and amenity grassland.	The area of unimproved/semi-improved grassland (which includes wet grassland species) comprises occasional scrub and this will continue due to lack of management. Evidence of inappropriate use – motorbikes. This area could be significantly enhanced by management through cutting annually in late summer/autumn and removal of cuttings, this could be focussed on areas where wet grassland species occur if not possible over whole area. Scrub management on the banks to the canal would be difficult due to access problems – allow to develop naturally.	Good	Good (declining)
12	Clifton Spinney	SP 532 765	Ecosite (23/57)	Broad-leaved woodland including mature beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> , with	The mature trees are of particular significance and should be managed for longevity (e.g. tree work for public safety or tree health reasons). Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. is encroaching onto the woodland flora, although some garden introductions are also apparent. An enhancement would be to remove the immature non-native species in	Good	Good

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
				yew <i>Taxus</i> sp. and holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> .	the shrub layer such as sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> and cherry laurel <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> and replace with species such as hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> and hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> . In addition, remove any garden introductions such as Spanish bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i> .		
13	Football Ground Grassland	SP 525 752			This site has been developed due to a recent extension of sports pitches.	Average	N/A
14	Abbots Farm	SP 528 750	Ecosite (31/57) and pSINC	Mixed area of habitats including unimproved/se mi-improved grassland, wetland, parkland trees and scattered scrub.	<p>It is noted from a board at the site that it is a community woodland site that has included tree planting and bluebell planting.</p> <p>To the north of the site adjacent to the railway and watercourse is an area of wetland with abundant sedges <i>Carex</i> sp. and rush <i>Juncus</i> sp., with a small area of open water. Some clearance of the vegetation would enhance the open water habitat. In addition, the cutting and removal of arisings in late summer/autumn (annually or every other year) of drier areas of the wetland will prevent encroachment by scrub and encourage species-richness.</p> <p>Many of the mature trees are poplar <i>Populus</i> sp. and when these senesce and die an enhancement would be to replace these with native species such as oak <i>Quercus robur</i> (there is evidence that this is being undertaken) to</p>	Very Good	Very Good

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					<p>maintain the parkland landscape.</p> <p>As the areas of even-aged tree planting are thinned there should be some underplanting to create a more uneven-aged stand.</p> <p>The site includes large areas of semi-improved grassland and this would be enhanced by late summer cutting and removal of cuttings – particularly in small areas with community involvement (there is evidence that this may already be the case).</p>		
15	Clifton Brook Grassland	SP 530 749	Ecosite (31/57) and pSINC	Area of unimproved and semi-improved grassland with tall ruderals and scrub	<p>The drier part of the site are rapidly becoming covered in scrub growth, including bramble and dog-rose <i>Rosa canina</i> with developing hawthorn and ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> saplings, due to lack of management. The north-west end of the site remains relatively wet with species such as meadowsweet <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> and marsh marigold <i>Caltha palustris</i> present.</p> <p>The ideal management for this site is to introduce grazing cattle (under a suitable conservation grazing regime) that would graze the wetland areas as well as the developing scrub. Otherwise an enhancement would be to cut the vegetation annually or every other year in late summer/autumn and remove the arisings (due to the size of the site this could be done rotationally). This site and the wetland on the opposite bank of the watercourse in</p>	Good	Good (declining)

Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
					Abbots Farm provide a linkage of flood meadow habitat.		
16	Clifton Brook Woodland	SP 530 748		Not clear from description in Entec report or plans which plot of land is site 16 and which is 17. The notes below cover RUG321 and 221.	Primarily scrub with tall ruderals and of limited ecological value, with poplars providing some structural variation. The site provides some additional habitat variety in the immediately local context as it is contiguous with Abbots Farm Ecosite and pSINC that does not include dense scrub habitat.  Management to enhance the scrub would be to cut rotationally to provide an uneven-age structure although the conservation value of the site is unlikely to be significantly enhanced in the short-term.	Average	Average
17	Hillmorton Scrub 2	SP 530 748		Scrub, woodland and rough grassland		Good	Average
18	Hillmorton Ballast Pits and Disused Railway Sidings	SP542 738	Ecosite (13/57) and pSINC	Area of mixed habitat types including scrub, unimproved/se mi-improved grassland and broad-leaved semi-natural woodland.	Site fenced and gates locked – access not possible. The known valued species at the site are the butterflies grizzled skipper <i>Pyrgus malvae</i> and green hairstreak <i>Callophrys rubi</i> and therefore management should concentrate on maintaining and enhancing the grassland and scrub habitats at the site.	Very Good	-
19	Cock	SP 490	LNR, Ecosite	Broad-leaved	Managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, with evidence of	Good	Good



Site No.	Site Name	OS Grid Ref.	Designation	Description	Comment	Evaluation June 2003	Evaluation
	Robin Wood	725	(75/47) and pSINC	woodland, standing water and grassland rides.	<p>active management of the woodland which is still relatively even-aged (the woodland is planted mostly in 1993 although some trees are much older). The management plan is likely to require thinning or coppicing of small areas/coups on rotational basis.</p> <p>There are two ponds at the site which comprise a proportion of marginal and aquatic vegetation. Management likely to include keeping shading levels and amount of open water to an acceptable level.</p> <p>No further management recommended. No obvious potential for extending the LNR as arable land, housing and roads on boundaries.</p>		(improving)

### Opportunities

10.6.4 Natural green spaces offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and to be close to nature. The nature conservation sites should be easily accessible to all residents. The development of a strategic network is therefore an essential part of improving access and opportunities to these areas. These sites should be protected from development where appropriate. The introduction of site specific management plans should be encouraged for all nature conservation sites outlined in Table 7 and Country Parks with the larger sites such as Draycote, Swift Valley and Newbold Quarry Park enhanced to Green Flag Standard.

10.6.5 We would wholly recommend the enhancement of many of the local recreation grounds e.g. Alwyn Road Rec, and local amenity open space within housing areas by improving local biodiversity, in consultation with local people, stakeholders and Social Landlords. As discussed, there are many good examples found where value has been increased by simply improving local biodiversity.

## **10.7 GREEN CORRIDORS AND CREATING THE LINKS**

### Needs

10.7.1 Green corridors are an important part of the green space network providing visual, wildlife and sustainable transport links between urban spaces and the countryside. They are especially a feature of the Borough, with its canal routes and disused railway lines, many of which are high quality and highly valued.

### Opportunities

10.7.2 As many of these are historically important, there are opportunities available for utilising many of these routes as “green links” and are important in the development of the strategic green space network. They are important visual links as well as wildlife corridors. Rugby have already developed a number of green links within the town, with publicised routes developed as leisure routes. The 2003 Open Space Strategy as well as the Local Plan identified the importance of Green Corridors, particularly the Oxford Canal corridor, the Avon Valley and the Great Central Walk. Consultation as part of the 2003 work as well as further consultation in 2008 highlighted the further work needed in improving green links.

10.7.3 There is no logic in developing provision standards for green corridors. Their importance is more in the linking of open spaces and in the creation of the strategic network across the Borough. There are a number of important corridors already established within the urban area but there is considerable potential to develop green

links across the urban area in particular, and improving wider links to the countryside around the town. We wholly endorse the recommendations made within the 2003 Open Space Strategy, in particular the working in partnership with the County Council and Sustrans in developing cycle routes with leisure off-highway routes to and through open spaces. The ongoing improvements of canal towpaths with British Waterways as well as bringing into use further disused railway lines such as the proposed route associated with the new bypass are all important. These routes however, need integrating into the wider green space network. The proposed strategic green space network maps are located in Appendix 11.

## **10.8 EQUIPPED PLAY AREAS AND YOUTH PROVISION**

### Needs

10.8.1 As a result of the lack of youth provision, teenagers tend to colonise play facilities intended for younger children and their quality suffers as a result. In surveys conducted, local people identified increasing youth provision as a priority. At the same time, there are issues in relation to the value rather than the quality of play facilities in many areas as well as accessibility.

### Opportunities

10.8.2 As part of the initiative to improve green space quality across the Borough, opportunities exist to improve the quality and accessibility of play areas and youth facilities. The re-development of youth and play facilities is an excellent way in which to empower a local community in which to get involved. The 2007 Rugby Play Strategy has highlighted many of the current issues related to play, indicating localised deficiencies. The Council are currently working towards many of the recommendations within this strategy as part of a recent review. However, a key requirement of many of the play facilities examined was despite the high quality of many play and teenage facilities, overall value could be enhanced by improving play value. Many sites were “ticking the box” and could be improved by more diverse ranges of play, whether improving the play space or by improving the design of the play area itself. Teenage facilities likewise were of good quality with some excellent multi use games areas incorporated, but likewise, a kick about area only provides limited use for a number of teenagers, whereas more integrated multi activity teenage sites would give far greater value to local young people. Such sites could include games court, basketball, seating, skateboarding, BMX (no facility exists in Rugby as yet for this activity – now an Olympic sport), as well as adventure play. Simply providing a MUGA or seating pod is not sufficient for a section of society that

others see as often being a problem. The skatepark facility at Ken Marriott whilst popular, is small and there is potential for a large facility.

## **10.9 SPORTS PITCHES AND MULTI – COURTS**

### Needs

10.9.1 The spread of pitches across the Borough is good to very good. There are some issues related to the quality of provision at some particular pitch sites, as well as changing facilities but the 2003 and 2008 audit highlighted most pitches as either good to very good quality.

### Opportunities

10.9.2 The 2001 Playing Pitch Study aimed to “ensure an adequate supply and distribution of playing fields to meet demand and to encourage participation in chosen sports”.

10.9.3 The need for improvements to pitch quality and changing pavilions at certain sites has been identified, both in 2003 and in 2008. It is important that the Council seek to develop a comprehensive Playing Pitch Strategy as highlighted in the 2003 Open Space Strategy and as part of this audit report. The feedback from clubs and sports organisations was very poor and requires a more concerted detailed piece of work to ascertain quality and usage. There is currently a perception that there is an over provision of sports pitches across the Borough, but more detailed analysis is required. If this is indeed the case, there could be opportunities for re-allocation of land to other uses which could bring about considerable improvements to key strategic sites.

10.9.4 In addition with the development of any new facilities to satisfy the demands of all sectors of football, any new pavilions supported by RBC should now be inclusive of the requirements of women’s football and provide segregated changing facilities and toilets.

## **10.10 CHURCHYARDS AND CEMETERIES**

### Needs

10.10.1 The quality of churchyards and cemeteries is very good with good overall provision. Churchyards are not provided in response to standards, but as an integral part of (mainly long established) churches or other places of worship. Some of those who visit them do so to tend a specific grave and if so distance is largely immaterial. Churchyards are nonetheless useful as places for quiet contemplation and often have nature conservation value.

### Opportunities

10.10.2 In areas where there are deficiencies of certain typologies of open space, churchyards and cemeteries are important in providing areas of natural green space or areas for gentle passive recreation, such as walking, sitting, fresh air or quiet contemplation.

## **10.11 ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS**

### Needs

10.11.1 The quality of allotments across the Borough is good. Access within allotments is often poor due to path networks, poor surfacing and steep gradients in some places. However, many sites have been improved over the years and as a result, tenancy rates are very high.

### Opportunities

10.11.2 The continued upgrading of sites is required with improved accessibility and the improved Grounds maintenance has seen higher “take up “ rates on most sites. The Council should encourage further partnerships on allotment sites through such initiatives as “Green Gym”, as well as develop partnerships with the PCT. Funding is also now available for Healthy Eating initiatives through the Big Lottery Fund.

## **10.12 REVIEWING GREEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES**

### Issues

10.12.1 Rugby overall has sufficient quantity of green spaces but there is a conflict between the strongly expressed desire for even better management and maintenance and what the Council can afford as well as increasing the diversity of many sites.

### Opportunities

10.12.2 There are opportunities to rationalise provision and possibly convert some spaces to other uses or dispose of some sites which currently offer little to local communities in particular some sports pitch sites. The Audit information identifies those spaces that are of least value to community or wildlife.

10.12.3 If the Council is able to find alternative uses for some sites but retain its present revenue budget for management and maintenance, it will be able to spend slightly more on each site it retains. However there will inevitably be strong opposition to any disposal of green spaces. It is imperative that further localised consultation is carried out as part of any rationalisation process.

## **10.13 REVIEWING GREEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES**

### Issues

10.13.1 Out of hours access to school facilities varies from one school to another across the Borough. Given the heightened security of recent years, many school grounds are now locked, while others still have open access but with little formal community use. Some schools however have been noted as having multi and dual use by the school as well as community use out of hours, particularly in the rural areas. Rugby School also encourages public use “out of school hours” and this is taken up on a pay as you play basis. Tennis is particularly well used in such a way. It is important to note however that any after school access could be withdrawn at any time. All school sites were also audited as part of the green space audit under PPG17 guidance and were found to be generally of high quality and of low to high value, depending on location and facilities available.

### Needs

10.13.2 As with community indoor sports facilities, there is a growing need to modernise school indoor facilities. At the same time, there is a need to promote better school club-community club links and pathways.

### Opportunities

10.13.3 RBC has the opportunity to work more closely with school governors to develop artificial turf pitches and community pitch sports clubs. Where a school has indoor facilities which are suitable for community use, there is an obvious opportunity to widen the concept of the community club.

10.13.4 For schools with current community use, there are opportunities to co-ordinate and promote these arrangements more effectively. An approach could be adopted using revenue-subsidised dry leisure facilities, such as sports halls, mainly as gateways to introduce adults and children to new sports experiences. Those who have an interest in a particular sport can then be referred to sports specific clubs, usually at school sites, geared up to welcome new members and meet their needs.

## **10.14 GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

### Issues

10.14.1 Local people have indicated that they would like to continue see their green spaces managed and maintained to a high standard. There are however pressures in many

areas, with new open spaces being introduced as part of recent developments e.g. Cawston and Brownsover Estates.

#### Needs

10.14.2 Improving management and maintenance is not simply a matter of doing things differently, but generally also requires additional resources.

10.14.3 This would require either an increase in the grounds maintenance budget or reducing the numbers of spaces to be managed and maintained by the Council while retaining its present revenue budget.

#### Opportunities

10.14.4 Some sites such as the several Recreation Grounds would benefit from being kept free of litter by a team of volunteers. However, there are obvious limits to the extent to which volunteers can deliver long term management and maintenance. Likewise, while wildflower meadows are welcome and contribute much to the nature conservation value of a site as well as providing maintenance saving, it would not be desirable to restructure all green spaces to wildflower meadows. The development of Management Plans, based on Green Flag criteria and CABE Space guidance, in partnership with the local community or Friends Groups, offers good opportunities to see the quality of many sites improve, by localised involvement and site specific management plans.

### **10.15 FUNDING**

10.15.1 This would require either an increase in the grounds maintenance budget or reducing the numbers of spaces to be managed and maintained by the Council while retaining its present revenue budget.

#### Issues

10.15.2 In recent years, maintenance resources have declined. Restricted resources have forced the Council to adopt a strategy of focusing on a few flagship sites, particularly Caldecott Park, the town centre sites and countryside sites. This approach of enhancing a few key sites has been successful, with many of the proposed town parks being subject to good quality enhancement and redevelopment programmes. However, the outcome is that the general quality of the rest of the green space network has either declined or remained as “status quo”. The 3 key areas have been identified where changes could be implemented:

1. Increasing the funding/resources available;

2. Altering the management and maintenance regimes; and
3. Prioritising fewer sites.

#### Needs

10.15.3 Given that there is little need for much in the way of new provision and that this should be a lower priority than enhancing existing provision, the main need is for the Council either to increase its revenue funding for green space maintenance or reduce the amount of green space it maintains.

#### Opportunities

10.15.4 Developer contributions from any future development proposals in the Borough may support further green space or facility enhancement or development but are likely to be limited to certain areas. However, there may be opportunities for “pooled” Section 106 contributions towards the strategic network which have “Borough” wide benefits. The Council should also maximise every opportunity in relation to grant funding to include the following:

- Heritage Lottery Fund;
- Landfill Tax Credit Scheme;
- Big Lottery Fund;
- Sport England;
- Arts Council;
- Groundwork UK;
- Department for Communities and Local Government;
- Department For Children, Schools and Families; and
- Natural England.

10.15.5 Planning agreements require developers to contribute towards green space provision through Section 106 agreements. It is an intention of PPG17 that developers’ contributions should increasingly be used to enhance the quality of existing green space that would be used by residents of a proposed development within existing urban areas.

10.15.6 The council should consider a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Planning Obligations. This would require developer contributions in the form of standard charges towards the cost of informal open space, play and sports pitch



facilities to address the cumulative impact of small schemes on the existing provision within the Borough. On-site provision and on-going maintenance is generally required for the larger schemes instead of the standard charge.

## **10.16 THE NEED FOR ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING PROVISION**

10.16.1 Not every proposed development will require additional provision. If the amount and quality of provision within the appropriate distance thresholds of the proposed development site will match or exceed the adopted provision standards when the development is complete, there is no need for either additional provision or the enhancement of any existing provision.

10.16.2 If either or both of these pre-conditions are not met, however, the Council will be justified in requiring the developer either to make on-site provision or contribute to the provision or enhancement of off-site provision.

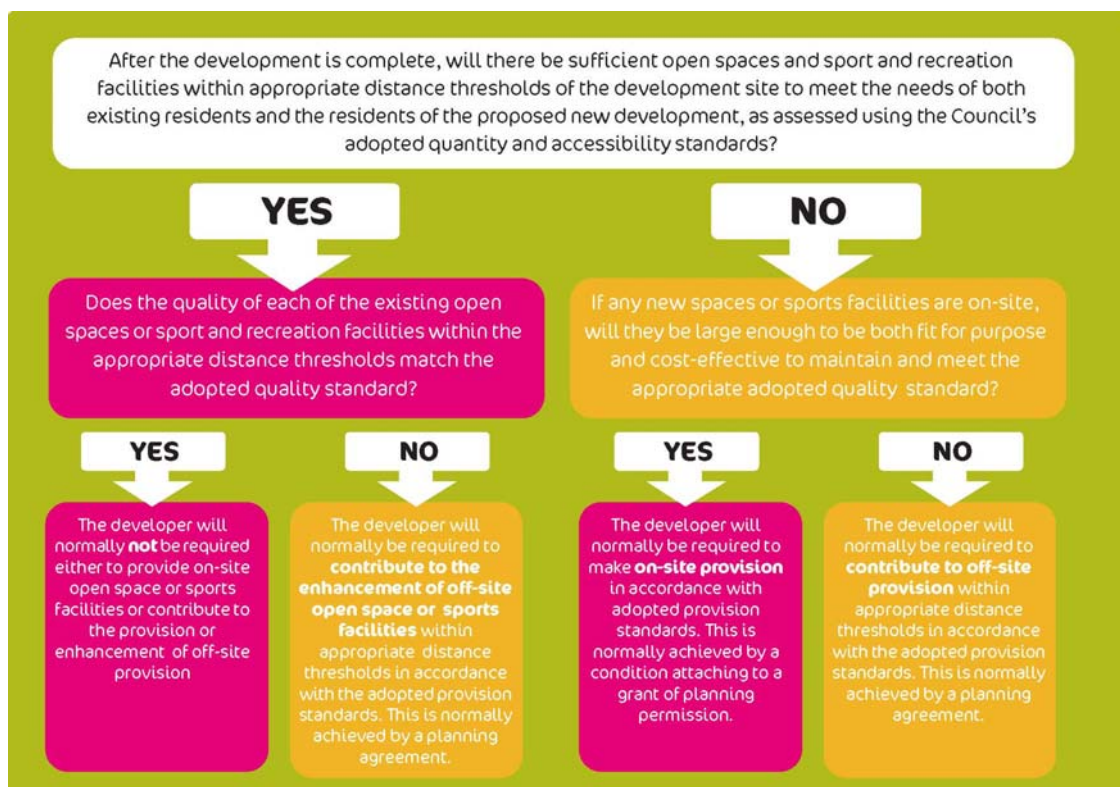
10.16.3 Before seeking contributions to off-site provision, the Council should ensure they are satisfied that they will be able to use them within the distance threshold of the proposed development site. The Council should also seek contributions to its strategic network of open spaces provided a "Borough wide" benefit can be proved such as towards Borough sports facilities, principal town parks such as Caldecott Park, Whitehall Rec, Ken Marriott Centre or any of the principal countryside sites.

## **10.17 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING PROVISION**

10.17.1 The need for the enhancement of existing provision arises when there will be a sufficient quantity of provision within the distance threshold of the development site after the development, but some elements of this provision fail to meet the adopted quality standard. The developer's contribution and/or commuted sum for each type of provision is then whichever is the lower of:

- The contribution calculated using the method prescribed in the PPG17 Guidance; and
- The capital cost or commuted sum per sq m of provision multiplied by the quantity of provision requiring enhancement.

10.17.2 The diagram below summarises a logical 'line of thinking' which RBC should use to apply our provision standards as part of the development control process:



10.17.3 The Council should seek developer contributions based on a Development Control model based on information available from the PPG17 audit, provision and quality standards for off site contributions based on the above model.

## 11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

11.1.1 This final Section brings together our strategic conclusions and recommendations.

#### Basic Policy Aspiration

- There should be a strategic network of Borough wide parks, sports and recreation grounds with countryside sites, complemented by neighbourhood and local play spaces serving specific areas of the Borough;
- Rugby should have at least one Green Flag Park and every neighbourhood should have at least a neighbourhood park;
- Every dwelling should be within the distance threshold of at least one site in each typology which meets the quality standards and is of high value; and
- Overall, the quantity of provision should at least match the quantity standard on a Borough wide basis, in both rural and urban areas. Where there is a shortfall, the Council should seek to provide new facilities in those areas with lowest provision.

### 11.2 DELIVERING CHANGE

11.2.1 As we have outlined, the Council can choose to continue to manage “the status quo” or to improve open spaces and facilities proactively.

11.2.2 Community involvement in the strategic network of open spaces and in improving sites is critical. Although involving the community can require increased resources, these efforts should result in lower maintenance costs through an increase in local pride and less vandalism/abuse through peer pressure.

### 11.3 THE STRATEGIC NETWORK LEVEL

11.3.1 We recommend that the Strategic Borough-wide network should be based on:

- **Town Parks** of Caldecott Park and Whitehall Recreation Ground (all Green Flag standard);
- **Neighbourhood parks** (urban area);
  - Dewar Grove Recreation Ground;
  - Richard Lovegrove Recreation Ground;
  - Addison Road Recreation Ground;
  - Frobisher Road Recreation Ground;

- New Bilton Recreation Ground;
- Brownsover Recreation Ground;
- Jubilee Gardens;
- Assehtons Recreation Ground;
- St Andrews Benn Millennium Green;
- Bilton Green;
- Sorrel Drive Amenity Space;
- Charwelton Drive Common;
- Alwyn Road Recreation Ground;
- Parkfield Road Recreation Ground;
- Ashlawn Road Recreation Ground;
- Featherbed Lane Recreation Ground;
- Avon Mill Recreation Ground;
- Whinfield Recreation Ground; and
- Newbold Quarry Recreation Ground.
- **Green Corridors**, in particular the Oxford Canal, Great Central Walk and former railway lines;
- **Countryside Sites** including all Country Parks;
- Coombe Country Park;
- Brandon Nature Reserve;
- Brandon Wood;
- Brinklow Castle;
- Frankton Wood;
- Newbold Quarry;
- Swift Valley Park;
- St Andrews Gardens;
- Great Central Walk;
- Cock Robin Wood;

- Edyvean SINC;
- Humpty Dumpty Field;
- Ryton Pools Country Park; and
- Draycote Water.
- **Sports facilities** at:
  - All Urban Recreation Grounds;
  - Ken Marriott Centre;
  - Webb Ellis Cricket Ground; and
  - All Rural Recreation Grounds
- **Artificial Turf Pitches**; and
- **Play and Youth Facilities**.

11.3.2 The quality of all the strategic network sites should meet the quality standards requirements in all respects. The proposed Strategic Network is located at Appendix 11.4.

#### **11.4 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROVISION LEVEL**

11.4.1 The spaces that the Council should upgrade to make High Quality / High Value are all included in the proposed strategic network.

#### **11.5 OPPORTUNITIES AND SITES FOR REVIEW**

11.5.1 The Council should review those spaces we have classed as being of genuinely low quality and low value, in the light of wider planning policies.