

# Blaby District Open Space Assessment



**2019**

Ecology | Green Space | Arboiculture | GIS

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# Blaby District Open Space Assessment

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## Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
<b>ANGSt</b>	Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
<b>BDC</b>	Blaby District Council
<b>CIL</b>	Community Infrastructure Levy
<b>FIT</b>	Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
<b>GI</b>	Green Infrastructure
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
<b>GSS</b>	Green Space Strategy
<b>IMD</b>	Index of Multiple Deprivation
<b>LAP</b>	Local Area for Play
<b>LEAP</b>	Local Equipped Area for Play
<b>LNR</b>	Local Nature Reserve
<b>LSOA</b>	Lower-layer Super Output Area
<b>MUGA</b>	Multi Use Games Area
<b>NEAP</b>	Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
<b>NEWP</b>	Natural Environment White Paper
<b>NGB</b>	National Governing Body
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>PPG17</b>	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
<b>PPS</b>	Playing Pitch Strategy
<b>PROW</b>	Public Right of Way
<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Planning Document

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This Open Space Assessment has been undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning to inform Blaby District Council's (BDC's) next Local Plan and emerging Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions. It will inform the Council's decision-making process for a minimum of 15 years.

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

- Blaby District Stakeholder Consultation Report (2019); and
- Blaby District Open Space Assessment (this report).

The NPPF recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. It requires local planning authorities to set out policies to help enable communities to access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies must be based on a thorough understanding of the local needs for such facilities and opportunities available for new provision.

The study has been carried out in-line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was updated in February 2019. The Open Space Assessment has primarily been affected by the omission of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) from the national planning policy framework. Whilst the government has not published anything specifically to replace this document (it does signpost the Sport England guidance for sports facilities assessments<sup>1</sup>) there is, however, still a clear reference made in the new guidance to the principles and ideology established within PPG17. As such the underlying principles of this study have been informed by the former guidance provided in '*Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*', and its Companion Guide '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities*', which is a tried and tested methodology and takes a consistent approach with many other local authorities.

### 1.2 The Local Plan Review

The current Blaby District Local Plan comprises of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted in February 2013) and Delivery Development Plan Document (adopted in February 2019). Combined, the two documents set out the spatial plan for the District up to 2029, along with any Neighbourhood Plans.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities>

The NPPF requires policies in local plans to be reviewed at least once every five years. This process ensures that local plans remain as up to date as possible, by taking into account changing circumstances, which may affect their area. The current Local Plan is being reviewed for the following reasons:

- To ensure that the Local Plan is up to date and looks ahead at least 15 years;
- To take account of new circumstances, such as updated population and household projections;
- The need to take account of and plan for the wider issues across the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area;
- To take account of the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (and associated Statements of Common Ground); and,
- To take account of revised national planning policy.

The new Local Plan will set out a blueprint for how the District will grow and change over the next 15 years and beyond. This is the first stage in the process of preparing the Plan.

At the time of preparing this report the council was seeking views of residents, businesses and other interested parties on the issues and options that should be addressed in the Plan and what it ought to contain.

The Open Space Assessment will be part of the overall evidence base to inform the ongoing development of the local plan.

## **1.3 Purpose of this Report**

### **1.3.1 Overall Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study is to provide a robust assessment of the quality of, and demand for, and accessibility of publicly accessible open space within the District. It will also consider the future requirements for open space and set out a framework for both on-site provision and off-site financial contributions from developers.

The study will be used to help inform the Council's new Local Plan and will support the emerging Supplementary Planning Document on Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions.

The assessment excludes playing pitches as these have been covered under a separate study.

### **1.3.2 Requirements of the study**

The required outputs of the study are as follows:

- Assess the quantity and quality of existing open spaces by typology on a parish-by-parish basis.
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- Set and apply District-wide provision standards to evaluate the quantity and accessibility of existing open spaces.
- Identify areas of surplus and deficit through engagement with key stakeholders (most notably parish councils) and consideration of likely future needs (including those resulting from residents of neighbouring local authorities).
- Utilise (polygon based) GIS Mapping to support the above outputs for each open space typology.
- Set out potential thresholds above which developers will be required to provide on-site provision of open space.
- Set out justified rates for off-site developer contributions where on-site provision is not possible (this should also include on-going maintenance costs) by typology.

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

The open space assessment follows the five key stages as summarised below:

- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
- Step 2 – Audit of Existing Open Space Assets
- Step 3 – Setting Local Standards
- Step 4 – Applying Local Standards
- Step 5 – Drafting Policy Recommendations

## **1.5 The Study Area**

### **1.5.1 Overview of the District**

Blaby District is located in the county of Leicestershire bordering the south west of the city of Leicester. The total area of the District is 13,000 ha containing a mixture of towns and villages. The northern part of the District forms part of the Leicester Urban Area and is urban in character whereas the south of the District is rural including a number of villages. The District is well connected with the M1 and M69 motorways running through it. Major cities such as Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, Coventry and Birmingham are all within easy reach, and also London is just a two-hour drive away. The District is an economically prosperous area with the key job sectors being professional and financial services, transport and logistics. It is also home to well-known businesses such as Next, Santander and Centrica.

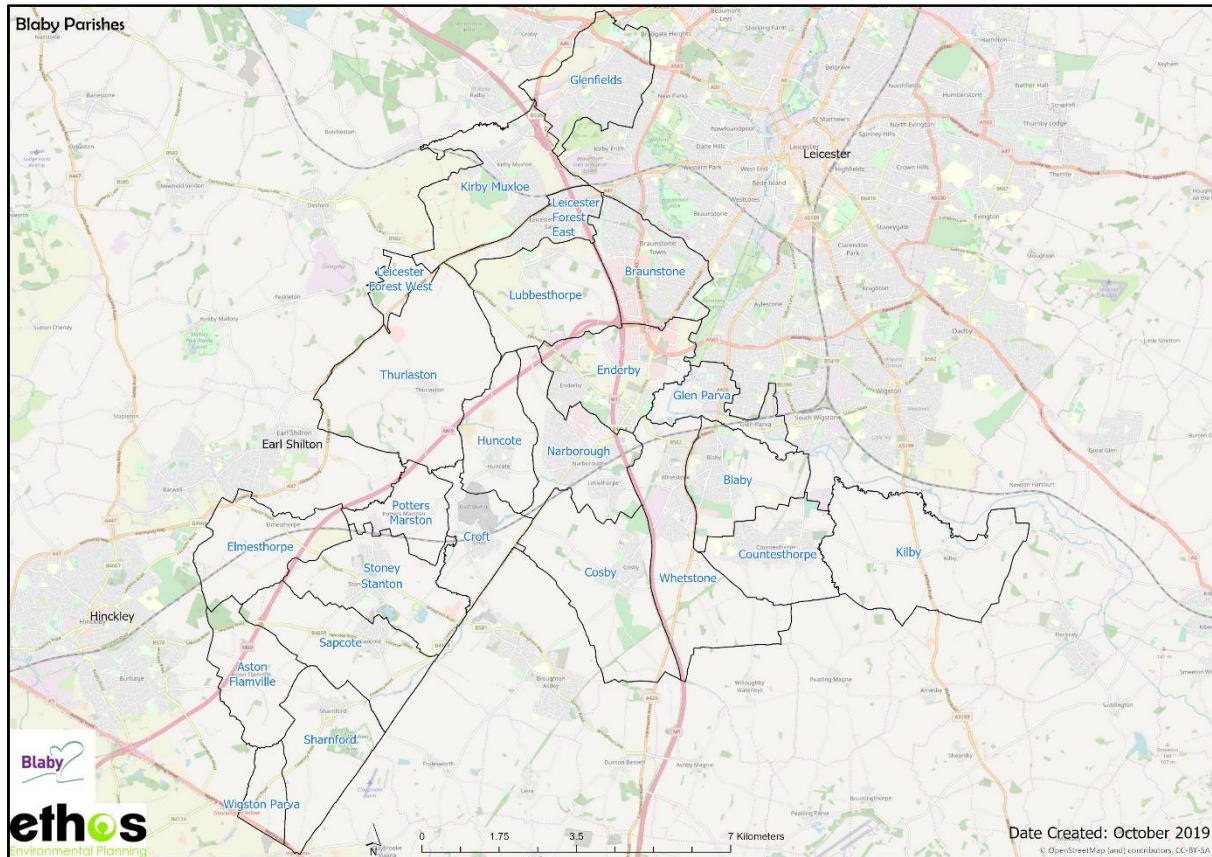
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### 1.5.2 Administrative Boundaries

In order to analyse the current provision and future requirements for open space across the district, parish boundaries have been used as the geographical areas (as shown in figure 1.1). This was agreed by the project steering group as the most effective way to analyse provision.

Of relevance to this study are the ONS 2017 mid-year population statistics, which have been used as the basis for much of the current and future assessment of need for open space.

Figure 1.1 Blaby Parish Boundaries



### 1.5.3 Population Statistics

The total population within the district is 100,246 (ONS 2017 mid-year estimate), and the breakdown by parish is shown in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Parish population statistics (ONS 2017 mid-year population estimate)

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Population</b>
Aston Flamville	312
Blaby	6,461
Braunstone	17,142
Cosby	3,446
Countesthorpe	7,364
Croft	1,648
Elmesthorpe	680
Enderby	6,809
Glen Parva	5,869
Glenfields	10,411
Huncote	2,017
Kilby	273
Kirby Muxloe	4,688
Leicester Forest East	7,230
Leicester Forest West	421
Lubbesthorpe	419
Narborough	8,713
Potters Marston	276
Sapcote	2,922
Sharnford	1,008
Stoney Stanton	4,122
Thurlaston	860
Whetstone	7,002
Wigston Parva	153
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,246</b>



## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

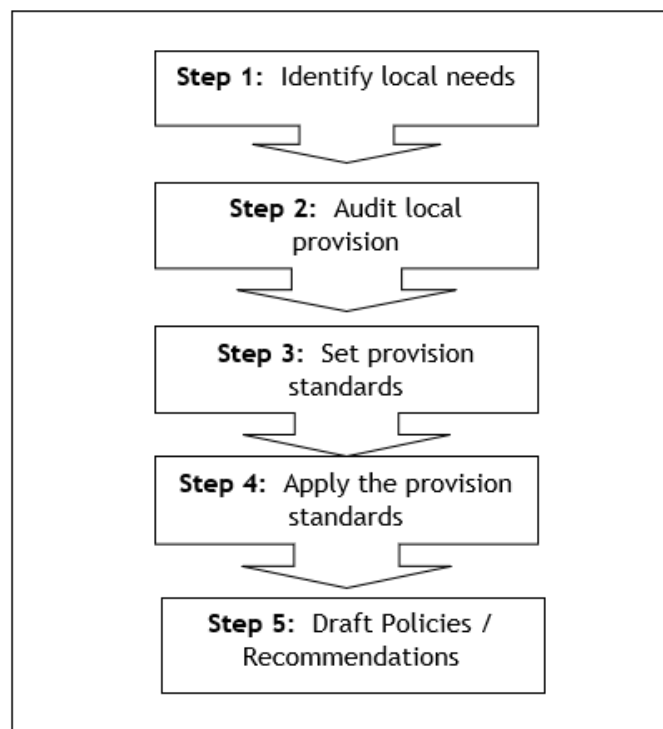
### 2.1 General

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

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

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

*Figure 2.1 Summary of methodology*



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

## 2.2 Identifying Local Needs (Step 1)

The Stakeholder Consultation Report (2019) examines local need for various types of open space, and outdoor recreation facilities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques as well as a detailed review of existing consultation data and other relevant documentation. The report details the stakeholder consultation and research process that has been undertaken as part of the study as well as the main findings. The findings from the Stakeholder Consultation Report are summarised in this document.

## 2.3 Audit of Existing Open Space Assets (Step 2)

### 2.3.1 Defining the scope of the audit

In order to build up an accurate picture of the current open space and play provision in Blaby, an initial desktop audit of the open space asset was carried out, this included:

- analysis of existing GIS data held by the council;
- desktop mapping of open space from aerial photography;
- questionnaires to town and parish councils;
- liaison with council officers.

Following this, site visits were undertaken by Ethos at 143 open spaces and 86 outdoor play spaces to assess the quality of open spaces. The quality audit drew on criteria set out in the 'Green Flag Award<sup>2</sup>'. The audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach (explained in more detail in section 7.4). However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit. Clearly, local communities may have aspirations which are not identified in the quality audit, but it is hoped that these can be explored further through site management plans and neighbourhood/parish plans as appropriate.

### 2.3.2 Approach to mapping

As part of the audit process, sites were mapped into their different functions using a multi-functional approach to mapping (as shown in figure 2.2). In order to calculate open space provision by parish, where open spaces cross parish boundaries, they have been split by the parish boundary.

Only open spaces within the district have been mapped i.e. although cross-border use of open space has been noted and considered (including within the Stakeholder Consultation Report 2019), open spaces falling outside of the district have not been mapped.

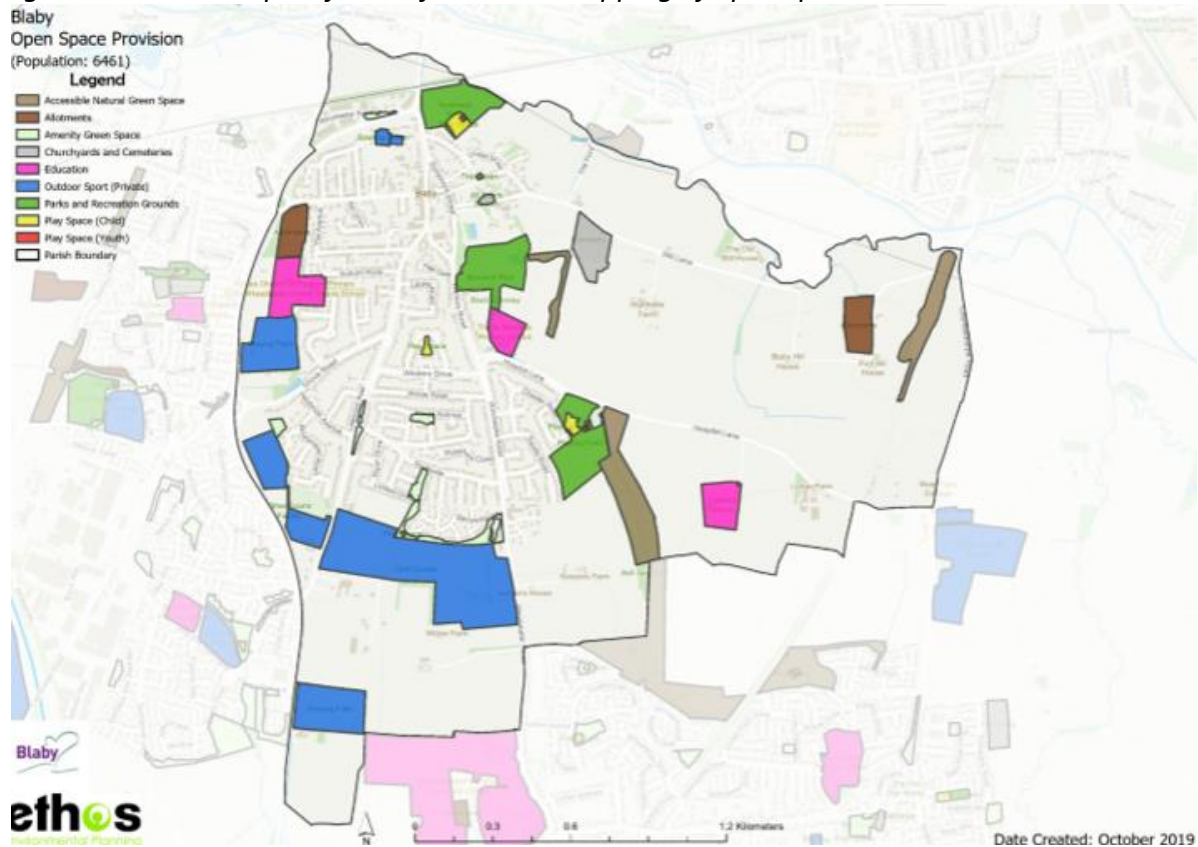
It should be noted that the typologies mapping is as accurate as possible (as of August 2019) following cross checking with the council's GIS layers, a detailed desktop mapping exercise,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/judges/judging-criteria>

consultation with town/parish councils and council officers, and site visits. The mapping was signed off by the council in August 2019.

**Figure 2.2** Example of multi-functional mapping of open space



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

Local provision standards have been set, with three components, embracing:

- quantity;
- accessibility;
- quality.

### **Quantity**

The GIS database and mapping has been used to assess the existing provision of open space across the study area. Open space provision maps by parish are provided at Appendix 1. The existing levels of provision are considered alongside findings of previous studies, the local needs assessment and consideration of existing and national standards or benchmarks. The key to developing robust local quantity standards is that they are locally derived, based on evidence and most importantly achievable. Typically, standards are expressed as hectares per 1000 people. The recommended standards are then used to assess the supply of each type of open space across the study area.

## **Access**

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

Drive-time standards have not been proposed as these are normally only appropriate for strategic sites such as sports hub sites. Drive-time standards generally do not work well for analysing access to local facilities/open space, as they do not necessarily show where small problematic gaps affecting access occur, and; in addition, the consultation has shown that the majority of households access open spaces on foot.

A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in this report, they are intended to be indicative, and more detailed maps by parish are provided at Appendix 2.

## **Quality**

Quality standards have been developed drawing on previous studies, national benchmarks and good practice, evidence from the needs assessment and the findings of the quality audits. The quality standards also include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future. Maps showing the results from the quality audits (by parish) are provided at Appendix 3.

## **2.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 5)**

This section outlines higher level strategic options which may be applicable at town, parish, and study area wide level. The strategic options address five key areas:

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

### 3.1 Introduction

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

It also provides important contextual information regarding health and deprivation for the district.

The policy overview includes analysis of the BDC's existing strategies and policies. It also includes a review of other strategies of relevance at national, regional and local levels and assesses their implications for the provision of open space, sport and recreation opportunities.

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

### 3.2 Strategic Context

#### 3.2.1 National Strategic Context

##### 3.2.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF must be adhered to in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF contains the following references that relate to green infrastructure and open spaces:

- **Para 7** - The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
  - **Para 96** - Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from
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the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision are needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

- **Para 97** - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
  - a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
  - b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
  - c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- **Para 98** - Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
- **Para 149** - Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- **Para 170** - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

### 3.2.1.2 Green Infrastructure

The concept of green (and blue) infrastructure (GI) is now firmly embedded in national policy with the NPPF requiring local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. It defines green infrastructure as *'a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities'*.

The importance and benefits of green and blue infrastructure are now widely recognised, in terms of climate change mitigation (e.g. surface water management, summer cooling/reducing heat stress, connected habitats for movement of species), biodiversity, health and wellbeing, improved air quality, amongst others.

The new Building with Nature Standards<sup>3</sup> define high quality green infrastructure at each stage of the development process, from planning and design, through to long-term management and maintenance. The standards enable nature-friendly features to be integrated throughout the development and are free to use and can assist with the planning

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/about>

and development of new places and communities. Developers can also apply to have their scheme assessed, and planners can apply to have their policy document accredited, by Building with Nature.

The District has a wide range of existing green infrastructure assets such as open spaces, parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, street trees, fields, hedgerows, treelines, lakes, ponds, meadows and grassland playing fields, as well as footpaths, cycleways and waterways. Although the analysis of GI is not itself covered by the remit of this study, open space forms part of the GI network and the assessment is mindful of the linkages with the concept of GI which looks beyond existing designations, seeking opportunities to increase function and connectivity of assets to maximise the benefits for both people and wildlife.

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

The white paper<sup>4</sup> recognises that a healthy natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. It sets out how the value of nature can be mainstreamed across our society by facilitating local action; strengthening the connections between people and nature; creating a green economy and showing leadership in the European Union and internationally.

It responds to the 2010 independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network, chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton, which identifies the need for more, better and bigger joined spaces for nature.

Vision: To be the first Government ever to return the environment in a better condition than it inherited it, over the course of a generation.

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

This biodiversity strategy for England builds on the Natural Environment White Paper and sets out the strategic direction for national biodiversity policy to implement international and EU commitments.

The vision for England is: 'By 2050 our land and seas will be rich in wildlife, our biodiversity will be valued, conserved, restored, managed sustainably and be more resilient and able to adapt to climate change, providing essential services and delivering benefits for everyone'.

The mission of this strategy is to 'halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people'. The strategy contains four outcomes to be achieved by the end of 2020. These are:

#### *Habitats and ecosystems on land (including freshwater environments)*

By 2020 we will have put in place measures so that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, further degradation has been halted and where possible, restoration is underway helping to

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>

deliver more resilient and coherent ecological networks as well as healthy and well-functioning ecosystems which can deliver multiple benefits for wildlife and people too.

#### Marine habitats, ecosystems and fisheries

By 2020 we will have put in place measures so that biodiversity is maintained, further degradation has been halted and where possible, restoration is underway, helping deliver good environmental status and our vision of clean, healthy, safe productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas.

#### Species

By 2020, we will see an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.

#### People

By 2020, significantly more people will be engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action.

### **3.2.1.5 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (January 2018)**

This 25 Year Environment Plan sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.

The 25-year goals are:

1. Clean air.
2. Clean and plentiful water.
3. Thriving plants and wildlife.
4. A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought.
5. Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently.
6. Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.

In addition, pressures on the environment will be managed by:

7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change.
8. Minimising waste.
9. Managing exposure to chemicals.
10. Enhancing biosecurity.

Actions/policies are identified around six key areas: Using and managing land sustainably; Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes; Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing; Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste; Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans; Protecting and improving the global environment.

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The Plan sits alongside two other important government strategies. The Industrial Strategy sets out how productivity will be boosted across the UK through five foundations – ideas, people, infrastructure, business, environment, and places. Clean Growth is one of the four Grand Challenges laid out in the strategy that will put the UK at the forefront of industries of the future, ensuring that it takes advantage of transformational global trends. The Clean Growth Strategy sets out the UK’s reaffirmed ambition to promote the ambitious economic and environmental policies to mitigate climate change and deliver clean, green growth.

Natural capital<sup>5</sup> is the cornerstone of the 25 Year Environment Plan for England.

### **3.2.1.6 Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation (December 2015)**

This cross-government strategy seeks to address flat-lining levels of sport participation and high levels of inactivity in this country. Through this strategy, government is redefining what success in sport means, with a new focus on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In future, funding decisions will be made on the basis of the outcomes that sport and physical activity can deliver.

It is the government’s ambition that all relevant departments work closer together to create a more physically active nation, where children and young people enjoy the best sporting opportunities available and people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the many benefits that sport and physical activity bring, at every stage in their lives.

The government is reaffirming its commitment to Olympic and Paralympic success but also extending that ambition to non-Olympic sports where it will support success through grassroots investment in those sports, and by sharing UK Sport’s knowledge and expertise. The strategy outlines what is expected of the sector to deliver this vision, and how the government will support it in getting there.

Public investment into community sport is to reach children as young as five as part of a ground-breaking new this new strategy. The move will see Sport England’s remit changed from investing in sport for those aged 14 and over to supporting people from five years old right through to pensioners, in a bid to create a more active nation.

Investment will be targeted at sport projects that have a meaningful, measurable impact on how they are improving people’s lives – from helping young people gain skills to get into work, to tackling social inclusion and improving physical and mental health.

Funding will also be targeted at groups who have low participation rates to encourage those who do not take part in sport and physical activity to get involved. This includes supporting women, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people. Sport England will set up a new fund in 2016 to get inactive people physically active and will support and measure participation in sport and wider physical activity going forward.

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<sup>5</sup> Natural capital refers to the Stock of natural resources, such as water, air, soil and biodiversity, from which people can or do benefit.

### **3.2.1.7 Sport England Strategy – ‘Towards an Active Nation’ (2016-2021)**

In response to the Government’s strategy, Sport England’s new strategy vision is that everyone in England, regardless of age, background or ability, feels able to take part in sport or activity. Sport England’s new vision and its supporting aims will therefore contribute to achieving the government's strategy. Key features of the new Strategy are:

- Dedicated funding to get children and young people active from the age of five, including a new fund for family based activities and offering training to at least two teachers in every secondary school in England to help them better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability.
- Working with the sport sector to put customers at the heart of everything they do and using the principles of behaviour change to inform their work.
- Piloting new ways of working locally by investing in up to 10 places in England – a mix of urban and rural areas.
- Investing up to £30m in a new volunteering strategy, enabling more people to get the benefits of volunteering and attracting a new, more diverse range of volunteers.
- Helping sport keep pace with the digital expectations of customers – making it as easy to book a badminton court as a hotel room.
- Working closely with governing bodies of sport and others who support people who already play regularly, to help them become more efficient, sustainable and diversify their sources of funding.

### **3.2.1.8 Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces (Fields in Trust (FIT) 2019)**

The Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces paper makes an economic evaluation of parks and green spaces in the UK as well as valuing improvements in health and wellbeing associated with their frequent use. FIT suggests this to be the first research study on parks and green spaces to use ‘welfare weighting methodology’, allowing for more informed evidence-based policy decisions.

It is the view of Fields in Trust that few public services have such a wide-ranging, positive impact on local communities as parks and green spaces on which to play. Unfortunately, such spaces tend to be valued within local budgets according to their maintenance costs rather than their true dividend to local communities which vastly exceeds such sums because of their multiple benefits. Parks and green spaces can:

- Contribute to a preventative health agenda
  - Reduce future Exchequer expenditure
  - Reduce health inequalities
  - Increase social cohesion and equality
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Although people who visit a park less often than once a month still value the existence of parks and green spaces, frequent park users state significantly higher Willingness to Pay values for parks and green spaces. Further analysis of the data also revealed significant differences in values depending upon a variety of factors including geographical location, size of park, income and ethnicity. When welfare weighting for income is applied the average Willingness to Pay for parks and green spaces increases significantly for Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) and lower socio-economic groups.

Whilst there are different drivers for using parks and green spaces across different user groups, the research survey showed clear social motivations for using these spaces across all settings. The report suggests that parks and green spaces are vital democratic spaces where people come together and interact and can play an important role in promoting social cohesion and integration.

The report found that parks and green spaces are clearly valued highly by communities and provide an enormous amount of quantifiable benefit to their local population. The data provided by the report on Total Economic Value (use and non-use) of parks and green spaces is demonstrable for the entire local population thus enabling local authorities for the first time to make a robust, evidence-led business case for the economic and wellbeing value of parks and green spaces to local communities. This research will enable a strategic approach to the provision of parks and green spaces by identifying areas where investment will have the most significant impact on individuals. It presents a new and compelling argument that, in a difficult economic climate, the provision of parks and green spaces should be prioritised in areas with lower socio-economic groups and a higher representation of BAME communities given the disproportionately high level of benefits that these groups derive from parks and green spaces.

The report identified the positive effects of park usage in respect of 'life satisfaction' including physical and mental health benefits that stem from park usage. Both wellbeing and self-reported general health were significantly higher for frequent park and green space users compared to non-users.

This research will enable a strategic approach to the provision of parks and green spaces by identifying areas where investment will have the most significant impact on individuals. It presents a new and compelling argument that, in a difficult economic climate, the provision of parks and green spaces should be prioritised in areas with lower socio-economic groups and a higher representation of BAME communities given the disproportionately high level of benefits that these groups derive from parks and green spaces.

In addition, the recent Fields in Trust Report, *Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces – Measuring their economic and wellbeing value to individuals (2018)*<sup>6</sup> provides a robust economic valuation of parks and green spaces in the UK as well as valuing improvements in health and wellbeing associated with their frequent use. This is the first research study on parks and green spaces to use welfare weighting methodology, allowing for more informed evidence-based policy decisions. The headline findings from this report are as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/research/Revaluing-Parks-and-Green-Spaces-Report.pdf>

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

### 3.2.2 Local and Regional Context

#### 3.2.2.1 The Blaby Plan 2018 – 2021

The Blaby Plan sets out the ambitions of the BDC up until 2021. These ambitions are set against the continued challenges of funding and resources. There are three main objectives; Blaby District...a place to live, a place to work and a place to visit.

The “A Place to Life” objective is to establish strong, healthy and safe neighbourhoods which are sustainable and reduce inequality amongst the most vulnerable. The aims are to:

- Design and deliver housing to meet the needs of our residents.
- Work well with partners to keep our communities safe.
- Support our residents to create healthy lifestyles.
- Create opportunities for community involvement.

The “A Place to Work” objective brings partners together to develop a modern skilled workforce to enable the local economy to thrive and grow. The aims are to:

- Support local businesses development and growth.
- Work with partners to deliver high quality, accessible job opportunities.
- Facilitate training and work experiences opportunities.
- Promote a healthy workforce and work places.

The “A Place to Visit” ensures that there are a variety of accessible attractions and facilities are available whilst maintain and developing green spaces and historical sites. The aims are to:

- Promote the area as a place in which to invest.

- Work with partners to promote Blaby

### **3.2.2.2 Blaby District Local Plan Core Strategy (2013)**

The Council's Core Strategy sets out the spatial plan for the District up to 2029. The Strategy sets out environmental, social and economic issues and what is proposed going forward in terms of new housing, jobs and infrastructure. The Core Strategy sets out a number of objectives including under the social objective relating to open spaces "To maximise sport and recreation opportunities".

A spatial strategy is set out about how the Council intends to address the key issues and objectives. This includes green infrastructure and how to improve provision and access to green spaces across the District.

Key existing local policies (currently being reviewed as part of the Local Plan Review) in relation to this study area:

#### **Policy CS14 – Green Infrastructure (GI)**

The Council aims to protect existing and provide new networks of multi-functional green spaces comprising of public and privately-owned land. Existing green infrastructure which has been identified as a priority for improvement includes:

- the River Soar and River Sence corridors and the Grand Union Canal.
- the Rothley Brook corridor.
- the network of Green Wedges that adjoin the urban areas.

Opportunities will also be explored at Bouskell Park along with key landscape features in the District including woodlands, ponds, rivers and streams. The Council recognises that it is important that the maintenance of GI is considered at the earliest opportunity and that the bodies and resources responsible for the long-term management and maintenance liabilities are identified.

The Council will also explore the use of the emerging Local Green Space designation in identifying, for special protection, green areas of particular importance to local communities, and apply this where appropriate through allocations, designations and development management.

#### **Policy CS15 – Open space, sport and recreation**

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The Council will seek to ensure that all residents have access to sufficient, high quality, accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities. The standards adopted were taken from the Open Space study 2015 (detailed in section 3.2.2.3 and 3.2.2.4 below).

The standards will ensure that development proposals will provide sufficient accessible open space, sport and recreation including taking into account loss of any existing facilities. New development proposals will be expected to provide new on-site provision or financial contributions to improve quality or access.

The Council supports the protection of existing open space and recreation facilities and where possible enhance them. If a new development is proposed on existing open space land should not be released until it is demonstrated that:

- i. it is surplus to requirements for its current play and open space function; and
- ii. it is not needed for another type of open space and recreation facility; or
- iii. alternative provision of equivalent quantity, quality and accessibility, or better, can be provided in the local area.

### **Policy CS16 – Green Wedges**

The Council acknowledges that green wedges are an important strategic area that have been part of Leicestershire planning policy for many years. These are designated in order to:

- Prevent the merging of settlements;
- Guide development form;
- Provide a green lung into the urban areas; and
- Provide a recreation resource

The need to retain Green Wedges will be balanced against the need for new development. The boundaries of the Green Wedges are formally reviewed within the allocations, designations and development management DPD. Opportunities for new Green Wedges will also be explored within this review.

Appropriate uses within the Green Wedges include agriculture, outdoor recreation, forestry, footpaths, bridleways, cycleways and burial grounds. These uses should retain the open and undeveloped character of the Green Wedges, retain and create green networks between the countryside and open spaces within the urban areas and retain and enhance public access to the Green Wedge in particular for recreation.

### **3.2.2.3 Blaby District Local Plan Delivery DPD (2019)**

The Delivery DPD forms the second part of the Council's adopted Local Plan. It builds on the Core Strategy's vision for the District, strategic objectives and strategic planning policies. The

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Delivery DPD includes an updated version of the Core Strategy policy CS15 Open Space, Sport and Recreation. The updated policy ensures to deliver the infrastructure, services and facilities required to meet the needs of the population of the District, including those arising from growth, and to make services accessible to all whilst also maximising sport and recreation opportunities.

In order to deliver this, the Council commissioned an updated assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities to recommend development standards these are as follows:

*Table 3.1 Existing local standards*

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Quantity (ha per 1,000 population)</b>	<b>Access Standard</b>
Parks and Gardens (for all parishes with a population of 6,000 or more)	0.23	16 minutes
Children and young people	0.06	13 minutes
Informal Open Space	1.00	10 minutes
Natural Green Space	2.60	20 minutes
Allotments and Community Gardens	0.25	18 minutes
Churchyards and Cemeteries	0.21	15 minutes

#### **3.2.2.4 Blaby District Green Space Strategy (2012)**

The Green Space Strategy was developed in 2012 to inform the Local Development Framework. The strategy informs planning policy and enables the Council to protect and enhance green space. The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Provide a shared vision for the future and ensure the linkages are evident.
- Provide a framework for parish/town councils and community groups.
- Help to identify improvements required and to set priorities.
- Help make the case for funding opportunities and planning obligations.
- Be responsive to the changing financial, planning and policy environment.
- Understand and manage public expectations in relation to green space issues.
- Improve access and usage.

The strategy identified various key themes that needed addressing across the green spaces and included protecting existing sites, developing multi-functional sites, increase play areas and facilities for young people, increase and improve rural provision and to utilise existing natural green space. To address these themes existing green space and new green space will be assessment to determine strategic value, the site will then be given ownership either by BDC, parish/town council or a management company. There will also be a similar process for assessing sites before they are disposed of to ensure that green spaces are safeguarded appropriately.

### 3.2.2.5 Leicestershire Together and One Leicester Sustainable Community Strategies

The Local Strategic Partnerships that cover Leicester (One Leicester) and Leicestershire (Leicestershire Together) brings together all organisations that deliver public services in the area. Each partnership produces a priority outcome framework, which sets out an agreed set of priorities that all partners agree to aim to achieve. Both partnerships have highlighted the importance of green spaces within the communities they respect.

The strategy listed 28 key priorities of which outcome 16 is directly link to open spaces:

***Outcome 16: People have better access to and enjoy, value and engage with our environmental and valued green spaces.***

- *An improved multifunctional green infrastructure network linking urban and rural areas.*
- *Improved access to our natural environmental, where possible by walking and cycling.*
- *Improved education which enables people to understand, enjoy and value the county's historical and natural environments.*
- *More volunteering opportunities to support the maintenance and promotion of Leicestershire's natural and historical environments, especially with children and young people.*

### 3.2.2.6 Space for Wildlife – The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 – 2026

Leicestershire and Rutland is one of the poorest counties in the UK for sites of recognised conservation value. The priority habitats within Leicestershire and Rutland are clustered in specific areas, mainly East Rutland and Charnwood Forest. The action plan specifies three main priorities:

- To promote the restoration, management and create of BAP priority habitats.
- To promote the creation of new wildlife habitat in the wider countryside.
- To survey, monitor and promote favourable management of existing good sites through the LWS system.

The Soar and Wreake Floodplain is identified as having high value for wildlife due to the quality of existing habitats, the concentration of important sites and the opportunities for habitat creation found within them, parts of this floodplain fall within the Blaby District.

### 3.2.2.7 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy

This strategy was undertaken in a response to unprecedented growth with the region (the region comprises of Leicestershire, Derby City and South Derbyshire, Nottingham City and Southern Nottinghamshire). The aim of the strategy was to establish a strategic GI framework where within a higher and local level GI strategies could be developed. There is a

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focus on land that needs to be safeguarded, managed or secured in positive ways to create a multi-functional network of green spaces and assets.

### **3.2.2.8 Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy (2006)**

The revised 2006 strategy has been adopted by all local authorities across Leicestershire and Rutland. The three main objectives for the strategy are:

1. To conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's landscapes.
2. To identify appropriate opportunities for new woodland planting to increase the woodland cover of the Strategy area. (This is a key priority for this county as it is one of the least wooded areas of England with only 3.3% woodland cover).
3. To encourage the sustainable management of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's existing woodland resources to produce timber and provide environmental and social benefits.

The strategy identifies 18 distinctive character areas and provide guidelines for conserving and enhancing these landscapes. It is identified that this could be challenging as most of the land in the counties is owned and managed by private individuals, therefore the strategy highlights the need for indirect influence and persuasion.

### **3.2.2.9 Stepping Stones Strategy**

The Stepping Stones Strategy was established in 1992 to assist with dealing with the pressures on the landscape within the "urban fringe" of Leicester. The strategy incorporates Leicestershire County Council, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, BDC and Harborough District Council. The principle role of this project/strategy was to act as "green infrastructure facilitator". One of key projects this strategy works on is to improve access to and the quality of Green Wedges.

## **3.3 Health and Deprivation Context**

### **3.3.1 Introduction**

Public Health England have published the 2018 Health Profile for BDC<sup>7</sup>. In summary, the health of people in Blaby is varied compared with the England average. In terms of adult life expectancy (for both men and women) the overall average lifespans are longer than the national averages. However, in some of the more economically

About 9.3% (1,610) of children live in low-income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average.

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<sup>7</sup> The source for this information was Public Health England's data analysis tools 'Fingertips'.

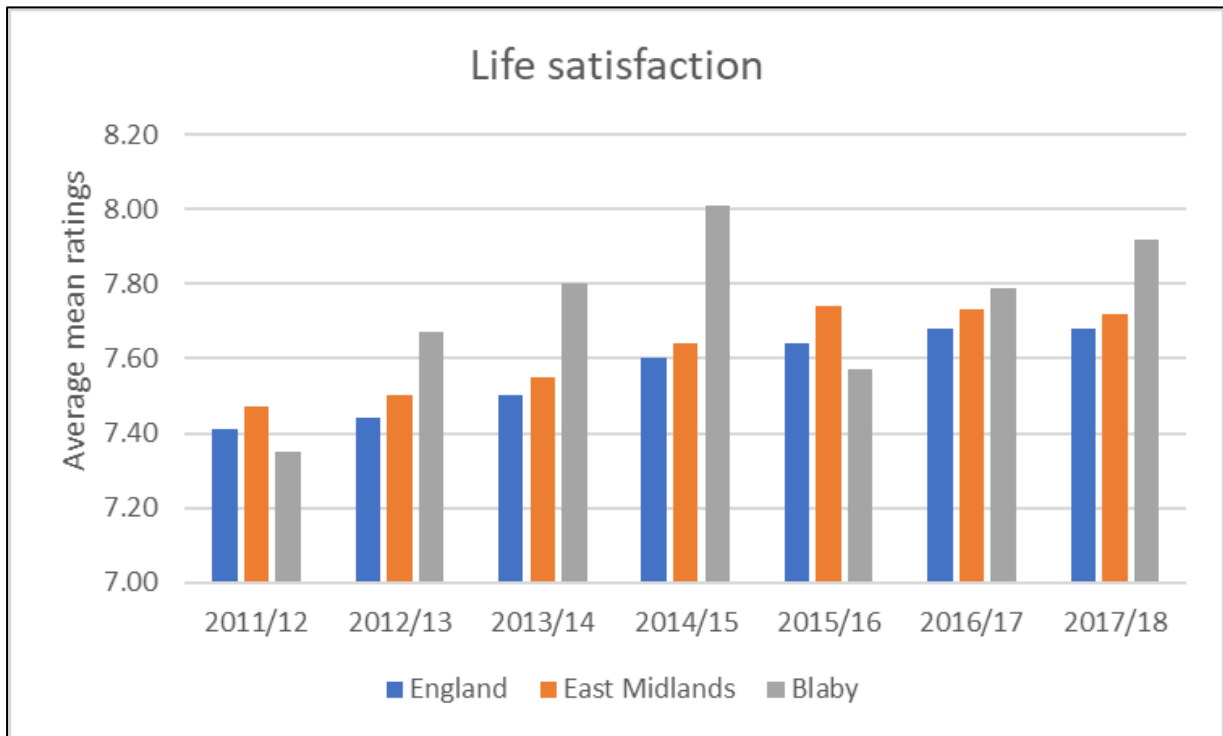
There are significant differences between adult and child health across the Blaby District. The diabetes diagnoses rate is higher than the England average along with the percentage physically active which is lower than average.

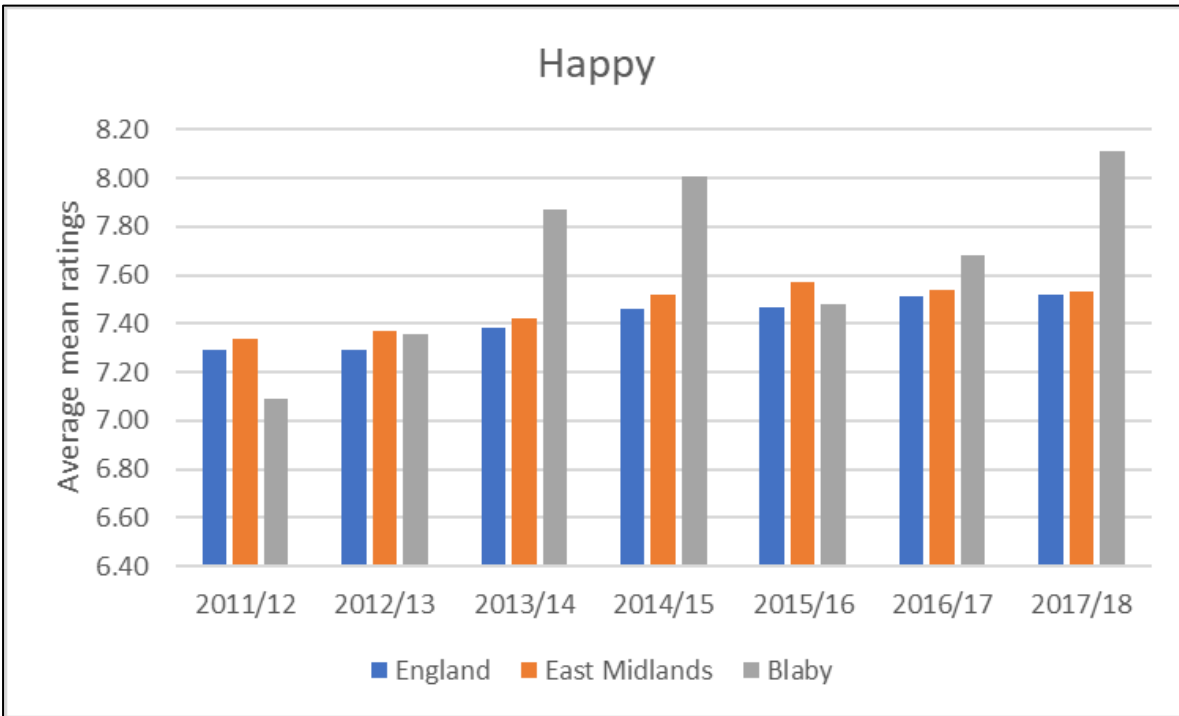
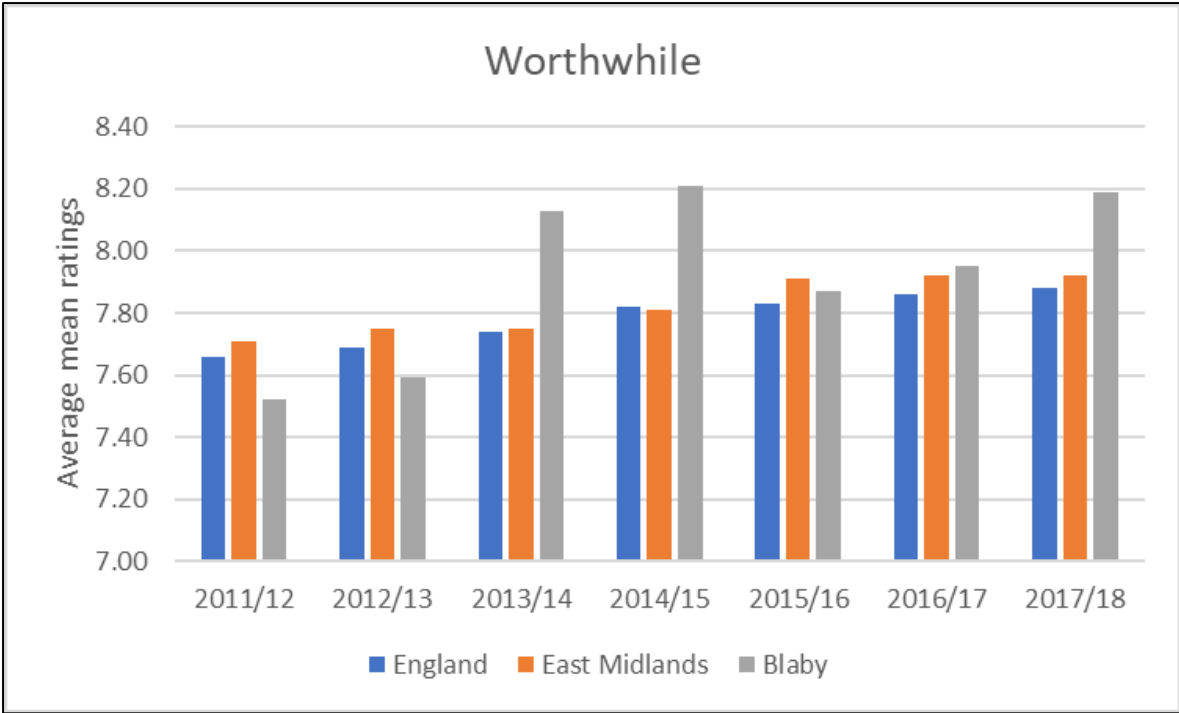
**3.3.2 Personal well-being in the UK: 2011/12 to 2017/18**

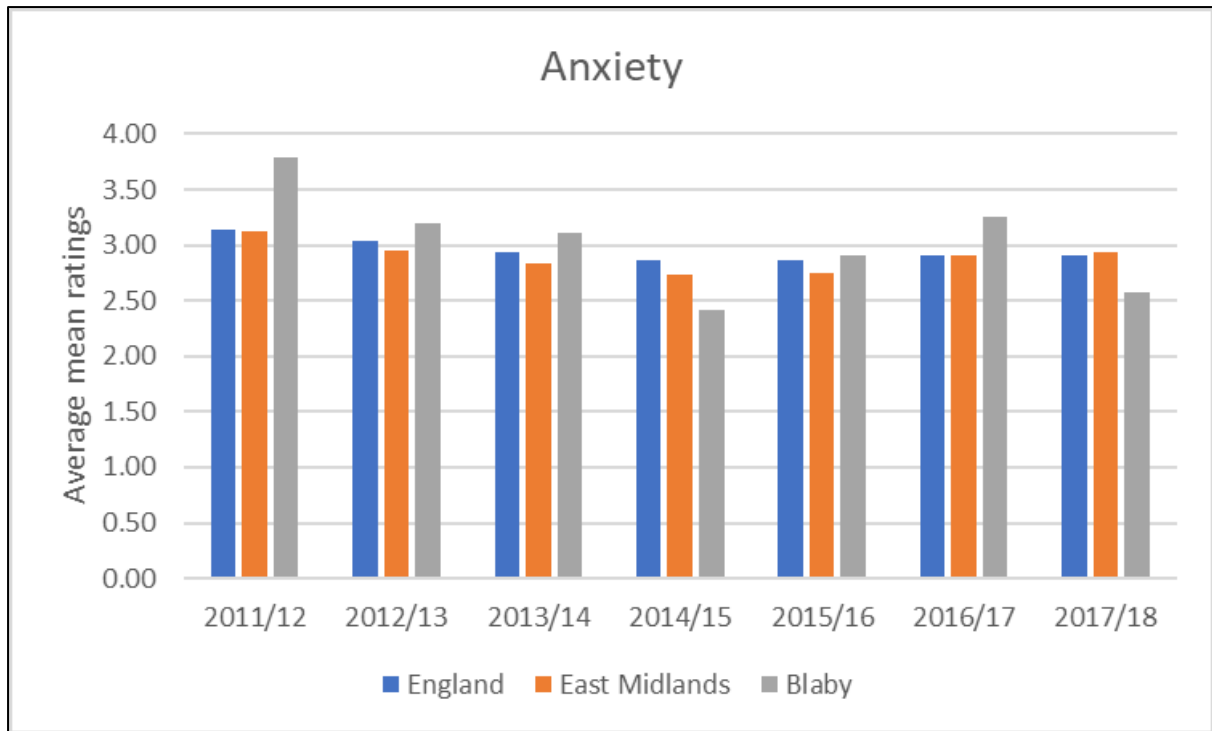
The Measuring National Wellbeing project led by the Office for National Statistics has led to the inclusion of four questions on subjective wellbeing in the Annual Population Surveys. Data collated for this on-going project are provided to local authority level, and the following charts indicate how Blaby District has performed against England and the East Midlands region averages in respect of four indicators: Life satisfaction; Worthwhile; Happy; and, Anxiety. The questions were as follows:

- Life Satisfaction:** Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Worthwhile:** Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- Happiness:** Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Anxiety:** On a scale where 0 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”, overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Figure(s)3.1: Personal well-being- Blaby District/East Midlands/England







The main observation to be made about the above charts are that:

- a) for 'Life Satisfaction'; 'Worthwhile'; and 'Happy', the scores for the District fluctuate over the year's measures, although they sometime compare very favourably with the regional and English comparisons; but,
- b) In terms of 'Anxiety' the comparable markers for this against those for England and the region are often unfavourable.

### 3.3.3 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Analysis

The Indices of Deprivation 2015 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation:

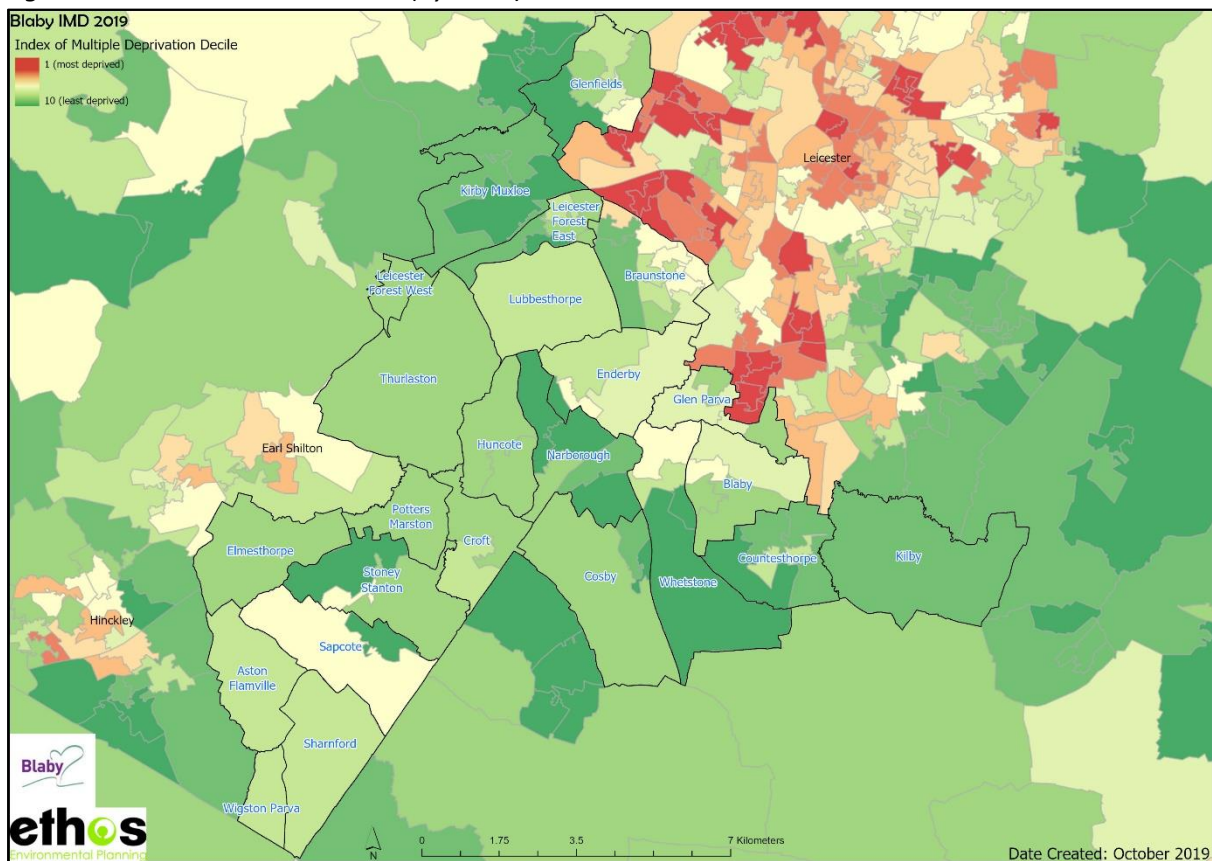
- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation

Each of these domains is based on a basket of indicators. As far as is possible, each indicator is based on data from the most recent time point available; in practice most indicators in the Indices of Deprivation 2015 relate to the tax year 2012/13.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.

Figure 3.2 below shows the IMD rank for each LSOA within the District, where 1 is most deprived and 10 is least deprived. As can be seen, levels of deprivation are generally very low across the district, with high levels of deprivation in Leicester which borders the eastern part of the district.

Figure 3.2 IMD ranks in BDC (by LSOA)



### 3.4 Conclusions – the benefits of open space and GI

The above review of existing policies and strategies serves to reinforce the importance and benefits of a healthy green space network. In general, these have been shown to include the following:

#### **Economic Benefits:**

- Provides an inspiring setting for economic growth and that will assist in attracting business and inward investment to the town.
- Increases property and land values
- Helps attract and retain people ensuring stable populations and labour supply
- Provides opportunities for education and training, including lifelong learning for adults
- Delivers urban and rural policy, renaissance and regeneration objectives through robust and cost-effective means
- Provides climate change mitigation and adaptation for example, flood alleviation and micro-climate attenuation
- Sustains environmental tourism providing employment opportunities and boosting local economies

#### **Social Benefits:**

- Facilitates community cohesion, helping to reach across traditional social barriers
- Enables essential contact between people and nature (locally and wider countryside)
- Provides opportunities to maintain or enhance people's physical health and mental well-being
- Helps protect and promote the district's cultural heritage
- Provides opportunities for reflection and a tranquil respite from the urban environment
- Provides opportunities to reinforce feelings of local pride and a sense of ownership and belonging

#### **Environmental Benefits:**

- Reinforces and enhances landscape character and local distinctiveness
  - Supports wildlife reservoirs and provides a refuge/ buffer from anthropogenic pressures (human disturbance, pollution, invasive/domestic species, etc.)
  - Supports environmental processes and natural resource remediation (air, soil and water)
  - Provides a framework and encouragement for sustainable development including the use of sustainable transport such as walking and cycling, sustainable urban drainage systems, whilst designing in sustainable urban ecology solutions
  - Protects and enhances the district's historic assets
  - Protects, restores & defragments habitats that support priority species currently threatened by land use/climate change.
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## 4.0 LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (STEP 1)

### 4.1 Introduction

The Stakeholder Consultation Report (2019) examines local need for a wide range of different types of open space and outdoor recreation facilities. It draws upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of consultation findings from relevant studies, questionnaire surveys and one to one stakeholder interviews. The work was undertaken during June and July 2019.

Questionnaire surveys were undertaken looking at the adequacy of current provision in terms of the quantity, quality and access of the various typologies of open space. The surveys were:

- A survey of town and parish councils;
- Ward members; and
- Strategic organisations.

The results of this consultation and other analyses have helped amongst other things to inform the content of the recommended local standards (section 6 of this report). It has also helped the study to understand local people's appreciation of open space and outdoor recreation facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which open space and outdoor recreation facilities are considered as part of the review of the local plan as well as in dealing with spatial planning applications.

This section summarises the key findings from The Stakeholder Consultation Report (2019) under three sections:

1. Public Health;
2. Neighbouring local authorities; town and parish councils;
3. Parks, green spaces, countryside, and rights of way

### 4.2 Neighbouring Local Authorities and Town/Parish Councils - Observations and key issues

#### Neighbouring Local Authorities – Key Findings

Section 3.1 of the consultation report briefly reviewed feedback from neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to the status of their open space strategies/associated studies and any cross-border issues of significance. The variety of documents and strategies in place (and their relevance to current planning policy) is considerable, embracing green infrastructure studies, open space strategies, recreation and play strategies.

The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived. It is also notable that many authorities are currently involved with commissioning new open space related studies or updating previous strategies that are out of date.

There are very few cross-border issues in relation to open space, with the majority of issues being related to sport provision especially the sharing of facilities and lack of football and cricket provision. This will be discussed in more detail within the separate PPS being conducted separately from this study.

Some neighbouring local authorities highlighted that there are some specific sites which lay on the border boundaries which are used by Blaby residents. It was also emphasised that green infrastructure should be reviewed at a County wide level rather than as individual authorities.

## **Town/Parish Councils**

### ***General Overview***

- 15 of the 16 town/parish councils who responded were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities.
- 11 of the 16 local councils who responded noted that there was a need for additional or improved open space, sport, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish.

### ***Common areas of concern***

For the parish councils, the areas of most common concern are:

- Need for increased quantity and quality of provision with parks.
- Improve quality of equipment in children's play areas.
- Need for facilities for teenagers and MUGAs.
- Access for disabled facilities across children's play area and parks and recreation grounds.

### ***Quality considerations***

The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community.
- They should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community.
- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained.

### ***Detailed responses on open space typologies***

Many of the town/parish councils provided detailed responses relating to aspects of quantity and quality of the various elements of open spaces surveyed.

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## 4.3 Parks, Green Space, Countryside and Rights of Way - Key Findings

### Overview

- The BDC's Corporate Plan highlights supporting healthy lifestyles amongst residents especially targeting those most vulnerable, as well as the development and protections of green spaces to make the District a place to visit.
- The BDC works in partnership with key organisations in relation to the management of open spaces including Natural England, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and the Canal and Rivers Trust.
- The Town and Parish Councils are the key managers of parks, recreation grounds and various open spaces across the District.
- Natural England stress the need to take into account the ANGst standard as a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space.
- The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard (WAS - endorsed by Natural England) provides guidance on access to Woodland, which should be taken into consideration.
- The importance of biodiversity, ecological networks and the health and wellbeing benefits associated with access to good quality open space were key issues highlighted by many stakeholders.

### Quantity

#### *Strategic organisations (including District Council officers, and policy documents)*

- Generally, most stakeholders noted that there wasn't a need for an increased amount of provision across the typologies except for the British Horse Society who noted a requirement for more bridleways.
- BDC officers emphasised that due to the significant growth in the area some areas of open space are being lost to new development.

### Quality

#### *Strategic organisations (including District Council officers, and policy documents)*

- The District has secured Green Flag status for A Place to Grow and Glen Parva and Glen Hill Local Nature Reserve in 2019.
- Strategic organisations note that there are still measures to be taken to improve the quality of green spaces. This was particularly highlighted by the Canal and Rivers Trust in relation to the quality of towpaths and biodiversity.

## 4.4 Concluding remarks

The Stakeholder consultation and desk-based research has highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the Open Space Assessment. Response levels to the parish councils survey, and from other stakeholders have been satisfactory but could have been greater. Reminders were sent to all stakeholders to chase responses and a large amount of desk-based research has

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been undertaken to ensure that a wide and diverse range of views have influenced the findings of the study.

There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local need and aspiration from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable, providing a strong evidence base to be combined with the detailed facilities audit and analysis.

The findings and evidence highlighted in the Stakeholder Consultation report will feed into:

- the development of open space policy statements; and
  - the recommended standards for typologies of open spaces (quantity, quality and access elements).
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## 5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

### 5.1 General approach

This section sets out the proposed typologies which will have standards developed or have been included within the quantitative or access analysis. The typologies of open space have drawn on guidance provided within PPG17, and through discussions with the project Steering Group. The agreed list of typologies are seen to be locally derived and appropriate for the type and range of open spaces that exist within the district.

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

The following typologies have been used:

Table 5.1 BDC open space typologies

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards <sup>8</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allotments</li> <li>• Amenity Green Space (&gt;0.15ha)</li> <li>• Park and Recreation Grounds:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parks and Recreation Grounds</li> <li>- Outdoor Sports Space (Fixed)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Play Space (Children)</li> <li>• Play Space (Youth)</li> <li>• Accessible Natural Green Space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education sites</li> <li>• Churchyard and Cemeteries</li> <li>• Outdoor Sports Space (Private)</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections

## Open Space Typologies with Standards

### 5.1.1 Allotments

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

The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term ‘allotment garden’ as:

***“an allotment not exceeding 40 poles<sup>9</sup> in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family”***

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

### 5.1.2 Amenity Green Space



The category is considered to include those spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function such as a park, public playing field or recreation ground; nor managed as a natural or semi-natural habitat. These areas of open space will be of varied size, but are likely to share the following characteristics:

- Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.

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<sup>9</sup> 40 Poles equals 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metres. A Pole can also be known as a Rod or Perch.

- Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass.
- Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points (unlike parks).
- They may have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
- They may occasionally have other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as play equipment, informal football, ball courts or informal football e.g. small village 'playing fields' adjoining village halls).

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

Amenity green spaces smaller than 0.15 ha are not be included within the analysis for this typology, as it is considered that these sites will have limited recreation function and therefore should not count towards open space provision, although the visual amenity and biodiversity value of these smaller areas is recognised.

### 5.1.3 Park and Recreation Grounds



This typology brings together the function of Parks and Recreation Grounds and Outdoor Sports Space as identified in the former PPG17 typology. The distinction between the two typologies in the study area is blurred, with very few formal gardens and many parks and/or outdoor sports space having multi-functions used for both informal and formal recreation. The consultation undertaken indicated that people refer to their local park or rec, and communities do not make a distinction between outdoor sports space and parks and recreation grounds. Therefore, for the study an overarching typology for Park and Recreation Grounds has been used.

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

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

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

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

Those outdoor sports grounds which are privately managed and have some level of public access (e.g. private sports grounds that can be used for dog walking) have been mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private) and are included within the access analysis along with the Park and Recreation Ground typology. Those facilities that have strictly no public access (and are only available to clubs and members) are still mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private) but have been excluded from the access analysis.

The Parks and Recreation Grounds typology comprises the general open space surrounding play areas, sports facilities etc. used for general recreation and includes those areas laid out as pitches (although the pitches themselves have not been mapped) which are accessible i.e. they can be walked over/used informally. Pitches which have no access e.g. they are fenced off and/or only open to members of clubs have been mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private) and are not included within the quantity analysis for parks and recreation grounds.

The quantity analysis for Parks and Recreation Grounds also includes fixed outdoor sports space (comprising all other non-pitch based provision including tennis courts, outdoor gyms and bowling greens) which are publicly accessible/available to book. Although these spaces have not been mapped separately, a photographic record of each key feature within the park is provided. Those facilities that are managed by a club and are not freely accessible are mapped as Outdoor Sport (Private) and are not included within the quantity analysis.

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

Individual playing pitches (e.g. football, rugby) and fixed outdoor sports facilities (e.g. tennis courts, bowling greens) are not separately mapped as the assessment of these facilities is included within the separate Playing Pitch Strategy.

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The recommended standards for this open space type are intended to provide sufficient space for sports facilities, pitches and ancillary space e.g. footpaths, landscaping etc. The emerging Playing Pitch Strategy should be referred to for evidence relating to recommendations for playing pitch requirements and their provision. The quantity standard is designed to be flexible so that the Council can make the case for what type of open space/facilities are required, this would be justified on the analysis of particular local circumstances and on a case-by-case basis.

#### 5.1.4 Play Space (Children and Youth)



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

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

However, there are a number of recognised types of play area including Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs), Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs), school playgrounds, informal ball courts, and 'hang out' areas.

The study has recorded the following:

- **Play Space (Children)** – equipped areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to around 12 years of age.
- **Play Space (Youth)** i.e. Teenage Facilities – comprises informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 16/17 age group, and which might include facilities like skateboard, parks, basketball courts, BMX ramps and 'free access' MUGAs.

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

### 5.1.5 Accessible Natural Green Space



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

The nature of the geography of Blaby means there are large tracts of open countryside, much of this is private land used for farming, however, there is significant access to the countryside provided through the rights of way network. It is not the intention of this study to survey and map all these areas, but to focus on sites where there are definitive boundaries to areas of natural green space which have some form of public access e.g. Local Nature Reserves. In some cases, access may not be fully clear, however, there is evidence of some level of informal use and access.

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

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



Green corridors such as canal towpaths (and the canals themselves) provide important access recreation and biodiversity opportunities. Green corridors have not been included as part of this study.

The local consultation and research elsewhere (Natural England<sup>10</sup>) have identified the value attached to natural spaces for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of ‘closeness to nature’ with its attendant benefits for people is something this is all too easily lost in urban areas. Natural green spaces can make important contributions towards local biodiversity action plan targets and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.

Natural green spaces smaller than 0.15ha are not included within the analysis for this typology, as it is considered that these sites will have limited recreation function and therefore should not count towards open space provision, although the visual amenity and biodiversity value of these smaller spaces is recognised.

## **Open Space Typologies with no Standards**

### **5.1.6 Churchyards and cemeteries**

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

### **5.1.7 Education**

Many schools and colleges have open space and sports facilities within their grounds. This may range from small playgrounds to large playing fields with several sports pitches. More often than not, public access to these spaces is restricted and, in many cases, forbidden. Nevertheless, many of the sports facilities are used by local people on both an informal and formal basis.

Sports clubs may have local informal arrangements with a school to use its pitches, and in some cases more formal ‘dual-use’ agreements may be in place. School grounds can also contribute towards the green infrastructure and biodiversity of an area.

Quantity and access standards are not been proposed for education sites. This is because they are not openly accessible to the public; and, whilst important to the local community, there is less opportunity for the BDC to influence their provision and management.

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<sup>10</sup> Natural England have published a variety of health and the natural environment publications at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/127020>

Furthermore, community access to education sites will be assessed within the separate Playing Pitch Strategy.

### 5.1.8 Outdoor Sport (Private)

Outdoor sports spaces which are privately managed have varying levels of public access (e.g. private sports grounds), have also been recorded and mapped where known. For each site we have noted whether there is access for informal recreation such as dog walking, and these spaces will be included in the access analysis along with parks and recreation grounds. Private sport space makes up an important part of outdoor sports provision across the District and forms an important part of the community facilities.

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

No quantity or access standards for provision has been set, as it is outside the scope of this study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision. The separate playing pitch strategy covers this typology in more detail.

## 5.2 Existing provision of open space

The existing provision of open space is based on the desktop mapping and site surveys undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning which included:

- analysis of existing GIS data held by BDC and from other sources such as the Ordnance Survey Greenspace layer;
- desktop mapping of open space from aerial photography;
- questionnaires to town and parish councils;
- liaison with council officers; and
- site visits to check accessibility, boundaries, typologies and complete quality audits.

### 5.2.1 Provision across the District

The Table below provides an overview of the number and the minimum, maximum and average size of each open space by typology.

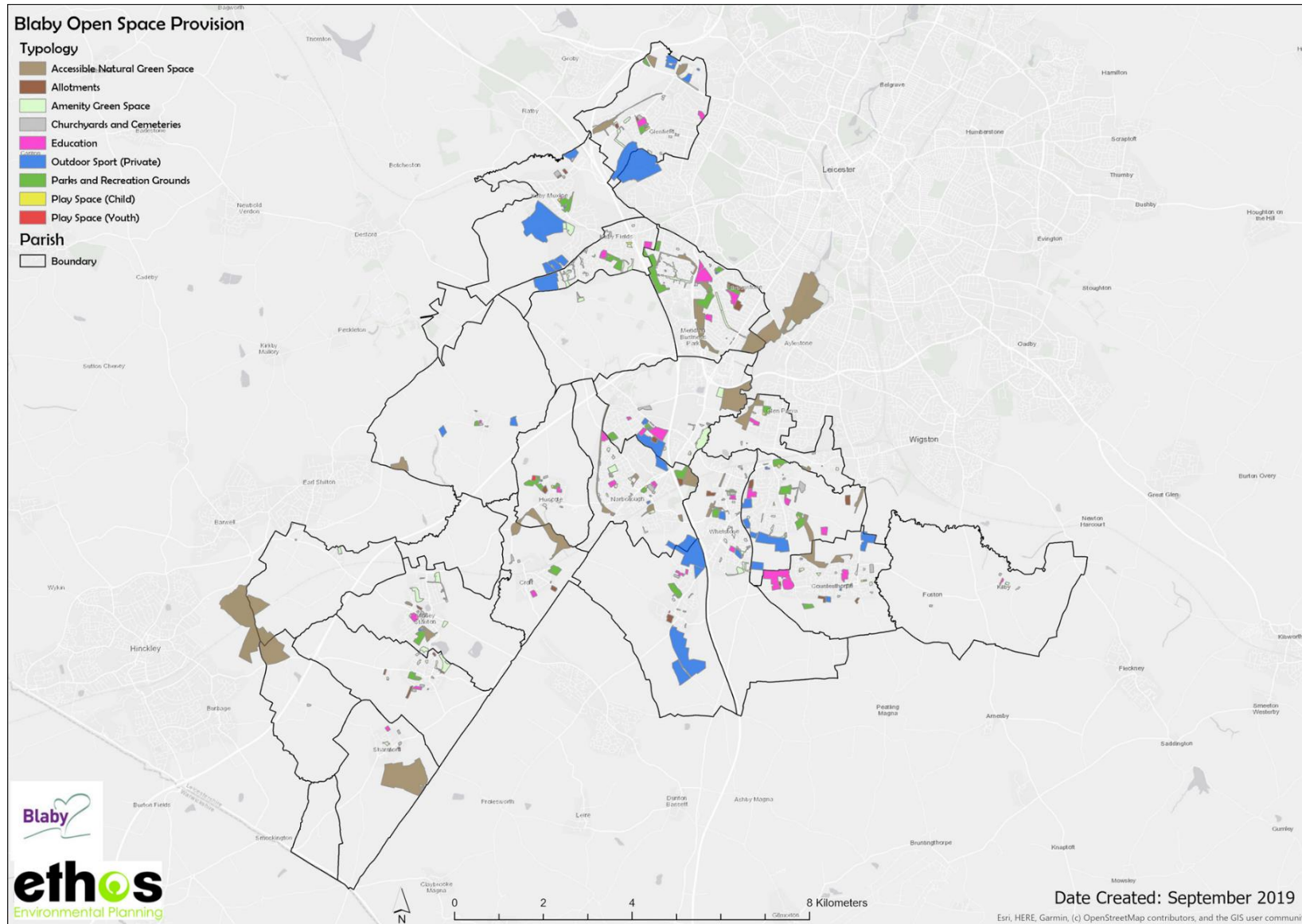
Table 5.2 District-wide open space provision

Typology	Number of Sites	Minimum Size (ha)	Maximum Size (ha)	Average Size (ha)
Accessible Natural Greenspace	36	0.32	111	11.88
Allotments	27	0.06	2.85	1.07
Amenity Greenspace	130	0.03	8.25	0.7
Cemeteries and Churchyards	34	0.1	2.52	0.59
Education	32	0.1	19.87	2.7
Outdoor Sport (Private)	31	0.07	8.02	2.11

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Number of Sites</b>	<b>Minimum Size (ha)</b>	<b>Maximum Size (ha)</b>	<b>Average Size (ha)</b>
Park and Recreation Grounds	31	0.04	14.32	3.25
Play (Child)	61	0	0.51	0.11
Play (Youth)	25	0.01	1.08	0.08

Figure 5.1 below shows the overall provision of the different typologies of open space covered by this study across the district. It is intended to be indicative, and more detailed maps by parish are provided at Appendix 1. It is accompanied by summary tables showing provision (ha and ha per 1000 population) by parish and study area. In the pages following the map and summary tables there are more detailed profiles for each typology of open space.

Figure 5.1 Open space provision across the Study Area



Date Created: September 2019  
Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community



Parish	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Cemeteries and Churchyards	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Population (ONS 2017 mid year estimates)
Sapcote	2.96	6.19	3.06	0.15	0.03	0	1.22	1.18	0	2922
Sharnford	0.4	0.65	0.35	0.29	0.01	56.21	0.79	0.87	0	1008
Stoney Stanton	0.63	11.41	4.94	0.23	0.09	5.07	1.15	2.52	0.39	4122
Thurlaston	0.12	0	0.93	0.12	0.02	6.78	0.52	0.28	5.07	860
Whetstone	2.24	8.81	3.64	0.29	0.03	3.55	1.34	2.48	4.45	7002
Wigston Parva	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	153
<b>District Total</b>	<b>28.79</b>	<b>90.58</b>	<b>100.70</b>	<b>6.54</b>	<b>1.97</b>	<b>289.21</b>	<b>20.17</b>	<b>86.38</b>	<b>64.90</b>	<b>100246</b>

Table 5.4 Existing provision of open space (ha/1000 population) in parishes

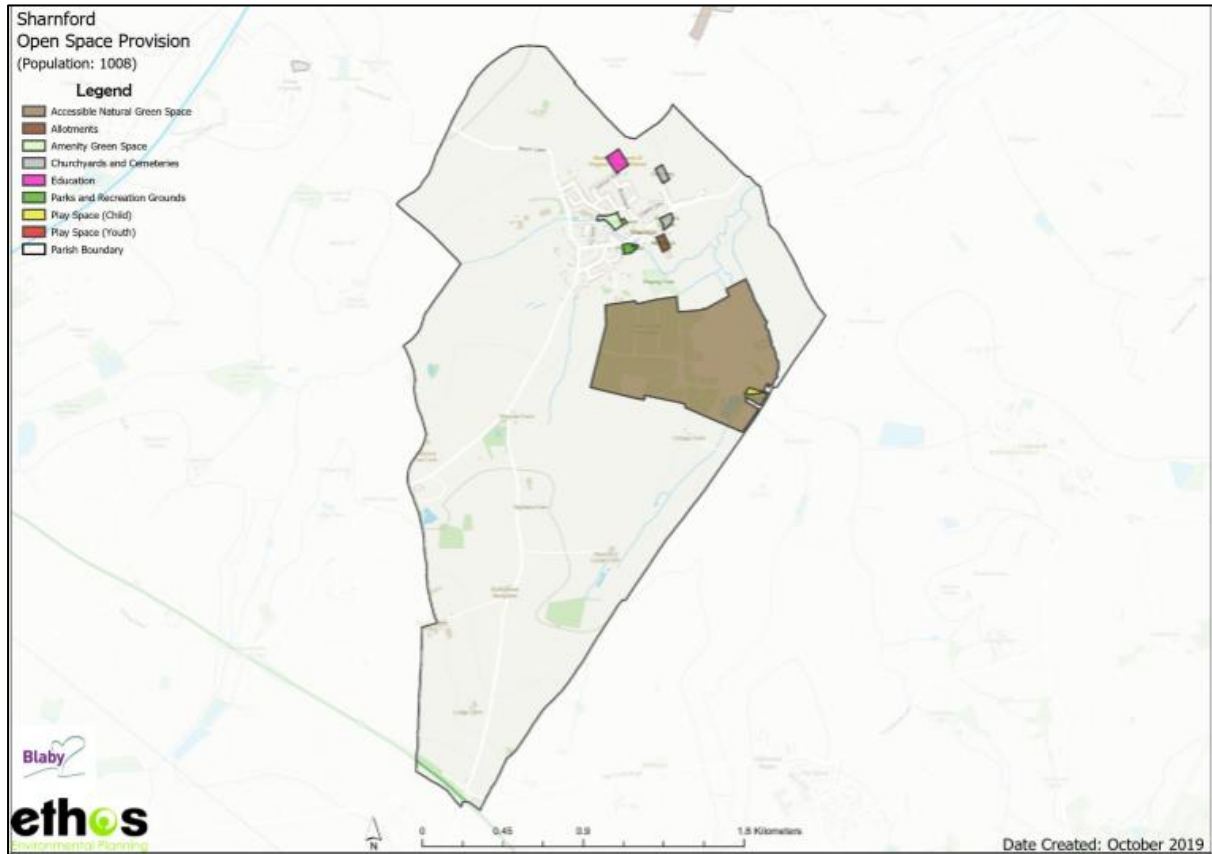
Parish	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Greenspace	Cemeteries and Churchyards	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Population (ONS 2017 mid year estimates)
Aston Flamville	0	0	0	0	0	82.92	1.31	0	0	312
Blaby	0.64	0.43	2.05	0.17	0.01	1.53	0.42	1.17	2.05	6461
Braunstone	0.33	0.59	1.64	0.03	0.01	2.47	0	0.94	0.01	17142
Cosby	0.59	0.2	1.42	0.05	0	0	0.29	0.53	0.97	3446
Countesthorpe	0.33	0.48	0.32	0.05	0	1.72	0.23	3.15	1.36	7364
Croft	0.79	0	2.61	0.03	0.04	12.04	0.72	0.89	0	1648
Elmesthorpe	0	1.78	0	0.03	0	29.6	0.18	0	0	680
Enderby	0.21	1.87	0.58	0.05	0	4.1	0.28	1.45	0.26	6809
Glen Parva	0	0.18	0.47	0.08	0.01	2.31	0	0.35	0	5869
Glenfield	0.12	0.62	0.36	0.04	0.02	1.57	0.08	0.47	0.8	10411
Huncote	0.69	0.47	3.15	0.16	0.54	3.36	0.32	0.59	0.07	2017
Kilby	0	2.38	0	0.07	0	0	2.09	2.01	0	273
Kirby Muxloe	0.25	0.96	1.28	0.06	0.02	0	0.32	0.11	3.74	4688
Leicester Forest East	0	1.31	0.87	0.1	0	0	0.08	0.64	0	7230

Parish	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Greenspace	Cemeteries and Churchyards	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Population (ONS 2017 mid year estimates)
Leicester Forest West	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	421
Lubbesthorpe	0	4.15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	419
Narborough	0.19	0.88	0.67	0.07	0	2.56	0.22	0.59	0.05	8713
Potters Marston	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	276
Sapcote	1.01	2.12	1.05	0.05	0.01	0	0.42	0.4	0	2922
Sharnford	0.4	0.64	0.35	0.29	0.01	55.76	0.78	0.86	0	1008
Stoney Stanton	0.15	2.77	1.2	0.06	0.02	1.23	0.28	0.61	0.09	4122
Thurlaston	0.14	0	1.08	0.14	0.02	7.88	0.6	0.33	5.9	860
Whetstone	0.32	1.26	0.52	0.04	0	0.51	0.19	0.35	0.64	7002
Wigston Parva	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	153
<b>District Total</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>100246</b>

**Maps showing provision by parish**

**Appendix 1** provides a map for each of the parishes within the district showing the provision of open space. An example map is shown in Figure 5.2.

*Figure 5.2 Example map showing existing provision of open space by parish (Appendix 1)*





## 6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

### 6.1 Introduction

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

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

- **Quantity standards:** These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity, consideration of existing local and national standards and benchmarks and evidence gathered from the local needs assessment. It is important that quantity standards are locally derived and are realistic and achievable. The recommended standards need to be robust, evidence based and deliverable through new development and future mechanisms of contributions through on-site or off-site provision.
- **Accessibility standards:** These reflect the needs of all potential users including those with physical or sensory disabilities, young and older people alike. Spaces likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and to have safe access. Other facilities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent, for example country parks, can be further away. Consideration is also given to existing local or national standards and benchmarks.
- **Quality standards:** The standards for each form of provision are derived from the quality audit, existing good practice and from the views of the community and those that use the spaces. Again, quality standards should be achievable and reflect the priorities that emerge through consultation.

### 6.2 The principles behind applying the standards

The efficacy of standards will depend heavily on the way that they are applied. Here are some important and interrelated principles:

- An inability to provide sufficient quantity might be at least partly compensated for through better quality and access. Investment in the quality and robustness of open space can also often improve the 'carrying capacity' of open spaces and therefore offset some shortcomings in quantitative provision.
  - New and improved open space should be designed and provided to benefit both people and the local/wider environment. Wherever possible it should heighten residents' overall appreciation, understanding of, and respect for that environment.
-

- Standards will need to be applied to a variety of circumstances, and flexibility of interpretation is the key to success. A pragmatic approach will be essential given the range of circumstances in which they will be used.
- The standards that have been set are for **minimum guidance levels of provision**. So, just because geographical areas may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards does not mean there is a surplus, as all such provision may be well used. It is also important to note that the quantity, accessibility and quality standards need to be considered together – they should not be considered in isolation. For example, even if there may be sufficient supply of a particular open space typology against the quantity standard, there may still be gaps in access, or the existing provision may be poor quality/not fit for purpose – and therefore there would still be shortfalls against the standards.

The new standards of provision are detailed below.

### 6.3 Allotments

Table 6.1 Summary of quantity and access standard

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.30 ha/1000 population	720 metres (15 minutes' walk-time)

#### **Existing national or local standards**

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

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

The Blaby Open Space Assessment (2015) suggested a figure of 0.25ha/1000 persons for allotments and community gardens, with the whole population to have access within 18 minutes travel time.

#### **Quantity standard for allotments**

The quantity standard (0.3ha/1000) is in line with the current overall average level of provision across the study area (0.29ha/1000) and is slightly higher than the existing (2015) standard (0.25ha/1000).

The quantity standard also reflects value of allotments (and other open spaces) in providing access to outdoor physical activity and associated benefits for health and wellbeing, both

physical and mental, especially as the propensity for higher density new housing with smaller gardens is likely to increase demand. Town/parish councils provided mixed responses regarding the use/demand for allotments, with some areas meeting demand and other areas with long waiting lists. Therefore, a quantity standard in line with existing levels of provision is considered appropriate.

### ***Access standard for allotments***

The existing (2015) access standard was set at 18 minutes travel time. It is considered that the availability of allotments is more important than having them very close by, nevertheless, this access standard does seem rather high. Access standards for this typology in neighbouring local authorities are varied: Charnwood - 15 minutes walk-time, Harborough - 10mins drive, Hinkley and Bosworth - 500m or 10 minutes walk-time, Oadby and Wigston - 480m straight-line or 10 minutes walk-time, Leicester - 1000m. Considering this, and our experience from other open space studies, an access standard of 15 minutes walk-time (720m) is justified.

### ***Quality standards for allotments***

Allotment sites were not subject to quality audits as part of this study, this was agreed by the project group as the majority of allotments are locked/not accessible.

However, a number of general recommendations are made in relation to quality, which should include the following:

- Well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard.
  - A sunny, open aspect preferably on a southern facing slope.
  - Limited overhang from trees and buildings either bounding or within the site.
  - Adequate lockable storage facilities, and a good water supply within easy walking distance of individual plots.
  - Provision for composting facilities.
  - Secure boundary fencing.
  - Good access within the site both for pedestrians and vehicles.
  - Good vehicular access into the site and adequate parking and manoeuvring space.
  - Disabled access.
  - Toilets.
  - Notice boards.
-

## 6.4 Amenity Green Space

Table 6.2 Summary of quantity and access standard

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.0 ha/1000 population	480m straight line or 10 minutes' walk-time

### ***Existing national or local standards***

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

The Blaby Open Space Assessment (2015) set a standard of 1.0 ha/1000 population, with an access standard of 10 minutes travel time.

### ***Quantity standard for amenity green space***

The standard proposed is in line with the overall current average level of provision (0.9ha/1000 population) across the study area. Although provision varies greatly by parish, a quantity standard based on the average level of provision across the study area is considered to be a reasonable figure to use, as some of the parishes with larger areas of provision are balanced by those with no provision. Although the proposed standard is higher than that in the FIT guidance (0.6ha/1000), this higher level is justified within the study area based on the current levels of provision and the NPPF also highlights the need for locally derived standards.

The minimum size of a space that will be considered acceptable and count towards open space provision is recommended to be 0.15 ha in size (about the size of a mini football pitch). This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. Any spaces below this size will be acceptable in terms of their visual amenity but would not count towards the required level of provision.

When delivering new provision, consideration should be given to combining this with the natural green space standard (i.e. a combined standard of 2.00 ha/1000) in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces, in accordance with the NPPF and Lawton Report.

### ***Access standard for amenity green space***

The access standard reflects their essentially local role and is in line with the FIT recommended benchmark (480m) and the existing (2015) standard.

### ***Quality standards for amenity green space***

The survey of local/parish councils suggested the key priorities for quality in regard to open spaces were that "they should be easy to get to for all members of the community, "they

should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community”, and “they should be safe and secure for those using them”.

It will be important to ensure that new provision is planned, designed and well-managed and is multi-functional (e.g. offering wildlife habitats, flood management opportunities, providing informal recreation opportunities etc), so it becomes an important and valued local resource.

It is therefore recommended that, in addition to the minimum size threshold identified above (0.15ha), all amenity green space should be subject to landscape design, in pursuit of the following quality objectives:

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

## 6.4 Park and Recreation Grounds

Table 6.3 Summary of quantity and access standard

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.0 ha/1000 population	720m straight-line or 15 minutes' walk-time  For parishes with less than 500 people, the access standard could be met by either a park or an amenity green space.

### **Existing national or local standards**

The Fields in Trust (FIT) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens, with a walking distance guideline of 710m. In addition to this they also recommend the following standards:

- Playing pitches: 1.20ha/1000 population with a walking distance of 1,200m
- All outdoor sports: 1.6ha/1000 population with a walking distance of 1,200m
- Equipped/designated play areas: 0.25ha/1000 population, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- Other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks): 0.30ha/1000 population and a walking distance of 700m.

The Blaby District Open Space Assessment (2015) recommended a standard for parks and gardens of 0.23 ha/1000 population (for all parishes with a population of 6,000 or more). The whole urban population to have access within 16 minutes travel time. This standard was based on the average level of provision (ha per 1000) across the study area, but only 7 parks

and gardens had been recorded as park of the previous study, compared to 31 within this Study.

### ***Quantity standard of park and recreation grounds***

Parks and recreation grounds and facilities for teenagers were highlighted by parish councils as two types of provision where there is requirement for more.

However, the recommended quantity standard is set in line with the average level of provision across the study area (1.0ha /1000 population), taking account of the previous Core Strategy policy requirement (of 0.8ha/1000 population) and FIT guidelines, and the need for qualitative improvements to parks and recreation grounds (also highlighted as a need by parish councils), which could also improve the capacity of existing sites.

This standard is designed to accommodate the provision of pitches and fixed sports facilities, although the emerging PPS will provide the detail around these requirements.

### ***Access standard for park and recreation grounds***

The access standard strikes a balance between keeping such spaces relatively local, recognising that the availability of parks is more important than having them very close by, and it is in accordance with the FIT guidelines. It is slightly less than the existing (2015) standard (16 minutes travel time).

In rural areas (parishes with less than 500 people), the access and/or quantity standard could be met by either a park and recreation ground or an amenity green space.

### ***Quality standards for park and recreation grounds***

The key priorities for quality in regard to open spaces were that “they should be easy to get to for all members of the community, “they should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community”, and “they should be safe and secure for those using them”.

Quality was also highlighted as one of the most important issues in the District especially improving the quality of provision in parks and the quality of equipment in children’s play areas.

National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the ‘Green Flag’ quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces. For outdoor sports space, Sport England have produced a wealth of useful documents outlining the quality standards for facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, MUGAS and tennis courts plus associated ancillary facilities. The Rugby Football Union have provided guidance on the quality and standard of provision of facilities for rugby, and the England and Wales Cricket Board have provided guidance for cricket facilities. The FA’s Local Football Facilities Plan also provides guidance on the quality standards for football facilities within the District. It is recommended that the guidance provided in these documents is adopted by the Council, and that all new and improved provision seeks to meet these guidelines.

## 6.5 Play Space (children and youth)

Table 6.4 Summary of quantity and access standards

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Children's Play Space (minimum size 0.01ha)	0.07ha/1000 population	480m straight-line or 10 minutes walk-time
Youth Play Space	0.07ha/1000 population	720m straight-line or 15 minutes walk-time

### Existing National and Local Policies

The FIT guidance 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' recommends provision of 0.25ha/1000 population of equipped/designated play areas, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). The guidance does not specifically cover the needs of most teenagers.

The previous FIT guidance (The Six Acre Standard) recommended provision of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people for children's play of which around 0.3 hectares should be equipped provision. These standards had been criticised because they are often seen as undeliverable, and can result in a proliferation of play areas that can be difficult to maintain, as well as setting unrealistic aspirations in urban areas where insufficient land is available to provide facilities, especially higher density development on brownfield sites. The level recommended within the new guidance (0.25 ha/1000 population), although lower than previously, is still considered to be high.

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

#### Playable space (LAP type - need not be equipped)

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

#### Equipped play area (LEAP type)

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

#### Teen Play including a MUGA (NEAP type)

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

The Blaby District Open Space Assessment (2015) set the standard for children's and young people's play space as 0.06 ha/1000 population and the whole population to have access of an equipped play area within 13 minutes travel time.

### ***Quantity standards for play***

The proposed quantity standard for children's play is recommended to be in line with the existing level of provision across the study area (0.07ha/1000 population). The town/parish council survey highlighted that the priority for children's play spaces are improvements to quality rather than quantity, and therefore a quantity standard in line with existing provision levels is justified. This recommended standard is higher than the existing (2015) standard (which was 0.06ha/1000 for both children's and youth play spaces combined), but is lower than the FIT guidance, which is not considered to be very achievable or deliverable. The minimum size acceptable for a children's play space is 0.01ha.

It should be reiterated that these are minimum standards for equipped provision and do not include the need for surrounding playable space as recommended by FIT and Play England. i.e. this surrounding playable space will need to be provided in addition to the quantity standard.

The proposed quantity standard for youth play space is set higher than the existing levels of provision across the study area (0.02ha/1000), considering the results from the town/parish consultation, which highlights a need for more provision (as well as quality improvements to existing provision).

### ***Access standards for play***

The access standards reflects the reliance of children and youth on walking to their local spaces (although youth can walk further) and is also in accordance with the FIT guidelines.

### ***Quality standards for play***

Quality was highlighted by local councils as one of the most important issues across the District especially improving the quality of provision in parks and the quality of equipment in children's play areas, as was the improvement of provision for young people.

It is expected that the design of play would take a landscape design approach (designed to fit its surroundings and enhance the local environment), incorporating play into the overall landscape masterplan for new development, and could include natural play e.g. grassy mounds, planting, logs, and boulders can all help to make a more attractive and playable



setting for equipment, and planting can also help attract birds and other wildlife to literally bring the play space alive. In densely populated urban areas with little or no natural or green space, this more natural approach can help soften the urban landscape.

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

Play England are keen to see a range of play spaces in all urban environments:

- A Door-step spaces close to home
- B Local play spaces – larger areas within easy walking distance
- C Neighbourhood spaces for play – larger spaces within walking distance
- D Destination/family sites – accessible by bicycle, public transport and with car parking.

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

Disability access is also an important issue for Play England and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS<sup>11</sup> publication; '*Inclusion by Design*' as an SPD. Their most recent guidance document, '*Better Places to Play through Planning*' gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space and is considered as a background context for the standards suggested in this study.

## 6.6 Natural Green Space

Table 6.5 Proposed quantity and access standard

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.0ha/1000 population	720m straight-line or 15 minutes' walk-time
	ANGSt standards for sites above 20ha in size

### **Existing National and Local standards**

Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt):

<sup>11</sup> KIDS, is a charity which in its 40 years, has pioneered a number of approaches and programmes for disabled children and young people. KIDS was established in 1970 and in 2003, KIDS merged with KIDSACTIVE, previously known as the Handicapped Adventure Play Association.

ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live should have accessible natural greenspace:

- Of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometre of home;
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of 1 hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.

The Blaby PPG17 Assessment (2015) recommended a quantity standard 2.60ha/1000 for natural green space, and that these should be accessible to the whole population within a travel time of 20 minutes.

### ***Quantity standards for natural green space***

The importance of natural green spaces is recognised not only in their contribution to recreation and health and wellbeing, but also importantly in terms of Green Infrastructure and nature conservation/biodiversity.

The proposed quantity standard is lower than the overall average for the study area (2.89ha/1000), which is not considered to be achievable in terms of new provision, as the figures include large/strategic natural green spaces. However, when considering the provision or more localised natural green space only (i.e. removing large/strategic sites above 10ha), the average level of provision across the study area is 1.0ha/1000 population. This is considered to be realistic and achievable in terms of new provision and will ensure that natural green space is provided in areas of most need. In terms of analysing existing provision, the ANGSt standards will be applied to analyse access to large/strategic sites, in addition to a locally derived access standard (see below), to identify where the key gaps in access to provision are.

As already mentioned under the quantity standard for amenity green space, when delivering new provision, consideration should be given to combining this with the amenity green space standard (i.e. a combined standard of 2.00 ha/1000 population in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces, in accordance with the NPPF and Lawton Report.

### ***Access standards for natural green space***

The access standard reflects the FIT guidelines, recognising that in general people are willing to travel further to access these types of spaces (although it is acknowledged that drive-time may be appropriate for very rural areas). The Natural England ANGSt standards will be applied for natural green spaces 20ha or above in size, to identify any key gaps in access to larger/strategic accessible natural green space.

### ***Quality standards for natural green space***

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

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

- Changing the management of marginal space on playing fields and parks to enhance biodiversity.
- Encouraging living green roofs as part of new development/ redevelopment.
- Encouraging the creation of mixed species hedgerows.
- Additional use of long grass management regimes.
- Improvements to watercourses and water bodies.
- Innovative use of new drainage schemes / Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), where such schemes would be appropriate for use and potential adoption as community/public open space.
- Use of native trees and plants with biodiversity value in high quality soft landscaping of new developments.

The above in any event should objectives to pursue and encourage at all times.

Protecting, creating, enhancing and retrofitting natural and semi-natural features in urban environments is a cost-effective and win-win approach to delivering positive outcomes for people and wildlife. The new **Building with Nature**<sup>12</sup> benchmark quality standards for the design and delivery of GI should be endorsed and advocated by the Council and included within their GI policy where possible.

## 6.7 Summary of open space standards

Table 6.6 Summary of open space standards

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments	0.30 ha/1000 population	720 metres (15 minutes' walk-time)
Amenity Green Space (sites >0.15 ha)	1.0 ha/1000 population	480m straight-line or 10 minutes' walk-time

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/about>

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Park and Recreation Grounds (public provision only)	1.0 ha/1000 population	720m straight-line or 15 minutes' walk-time  For parishes with less than 500 people, the access standard could be met by either a park or an amenity green space.
Children's Play Space (minimum size 0.01ha)	0.07ha/1000 population	480m straight-line or 10 minutes walk-time
Youth Play Space	0.07ha/1000 population	720m straight-line or 15 minutes walk-time
Natural Green Space	1.0ha/1000 population	720m straight-line or 15 minutes' walk-time  ANGSt standards for sites above 20ha in size
<b>Total for new provision</b>	<b>3.44 ha/1000 population</b>	

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be required **in addition** to the open space standards in Table 6.6 above<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> The Council is unlikely to adopt SuDS as Open Space. They would either be offered to a Parish Council or maintained through a Management Company.

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## 7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

### 7.1 Introduction

This part of the report uses the recommended standards to analyse provision across the study area. This section includes:

#### ***Quantity analysis***

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

The quantity assessment looks at the existing levels of provision, then uses the recommended standard to assess the required level of provision. From this a calculation is made of the supply, which will either be sufficient or insufficient. Within this section, levels of provision are provided by parish. Open space provision maps by parish are also provided at Appendix 1.

#### ***Access analysis***

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

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

#### ***Quality analysis***

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

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## 7.2 Application of quantity standards

### 7.2.1 Current supply against the Blaby standards

The table below shows the existing supply (in hectares) of open space for each typology for each of the wards, and also at the district level. The supply is calculated using the population figures (using 2017 ONS mid year population estimates) for each parish, and the quantity of open space compared to what the requirements for open space are against the recommended standards<sup>14</sup>.

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

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

For those very rural parish (with less than 500 population), the cells in the table below have been greyed out to indicate where it wouldn't necessarily be expected that the quantity standard for certain typologies is met i.e. allotments, parks and recreation grounds and youth play space. For some of the smallest parishes, it would not necessarily be expected that any of the open space typologies below are provided, however some of these still have good provision e.g. there is good provision of accessible natural green space in Aston Flamville and amenity green space in Kilby and Lubbethorpe.

Table 7.1 Supply (ha) of open space by parish (with district totals)

Parish	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Greenspace
Aston Flamville	-0.09	-0.31	-0.31	-0.02	-0.02	25.56
Blaby	2.20	-3.68	6.78	0.62	-0.38	3.41
Braunstone	0.54	-7.01	10.99	-0.62	-0.96	25.16
Cosby	1.00	-2.76	1.45	-0.06	-0.23	-3.45
Countesthorpe	0.20	-3.85	-5.01	-0.12	-0.50	5.31
Croft	0.82	-1.65	2.65	-0.07	-0.06	18.20
Elmesthorpe	-0.20	0.53	-0.68	-0.03	-0.05	19.45
Enderby	-0.59	5.93	-2.89	-0.13	-0.45	21.09
Glen Parva	-1.76	-4.80	-3.13	0.04	-0.38	7.68
Glenfields	-1.87	-3.92	-6.61	-0.31	-0.57	5.95
Huncote	0.78	-1.08	4.33	0.19	0.94	4.76

<sup>14</sup> For example, in Blaby parish the population is 6461. The existing quantity of allotments within this parish is 4.14ha, and the required provision (using the standard of 0.30 ha per 1000 population) is 1.94ha. Therefore, the resultant supply is 2.20 ha i.e. there is sufficient supply against the quantity standard for allotments within this parish.

Parish	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (Child)	Play (Youth)	Accessible Natural Greenspace
Kilby	-0.08	0.38	-0.27	0.00	-0.02	-0.27
Kirby Muxloe	-0.26	-0.19	1.29	-0.03	-0.25	-4.69
Leicester Forest East	-2.17	2.21	-0.96	0.18	-0.51	-7.23
Leicester Forest West	-0.13	-0.42	-0.42	-0.03	-0.03	-0.42
Lubbesthorpe	-0.13	1.32	-0.42	-0.03	-0.03	-0.42
Narborough	-0.98	-1.08	-2.91	-0.01	-0.60	13.61
Potters Marston	-0.08	-0.28	-0.28	-0.02	-0.02	-0.28
Sapcote	2.08	3.27	0.14	-0.05	-0.17	-2.92
Sharnford	0.10	-0.36	-0.66	0.22	-0.06	55.20
Stoney Stanton	-0.61	7.29	0.82	-0.06	-0.20	0.95
Thurlaston	-0.14	-0.86	0.07	0.06	-0.04	5.92
Whetstone	0.14	1.81	-3.36	-0.20	-0.46	-3.45
Wigston Parva	-0.05	-0.15	-0.15	-0.01	-0.01	-0.15
<b>District</b>	<b>-1.28</b>	<b>-9.67</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>-0.48</b>	<b>-5.05</b>	<b>188.96</b>

Table 7.1 shows that provision varies across parishes and typologies, with some meeting the standards and some falling below. For example, there is insufficient youth provision across all parishes with the exception of Huncote. This will be an important consideration when determining the need for on-site open space as part of new development/allocated sites, alongside the accessibility analysis and quality audits.

As already mentioned, it is important that the supply figures are not considered in isolation, as the access and quality results are also equally important. For example, in the parish of Sharnford, although there are shortfalls in the supply of amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and youth play space, there is provision of all these types of open space, with good access but potential to improve quality the quality of sites. There is also the provision of Fosse Meadows Country Park, which is a very high quality, large natural green space, with a diversity of habitats, and facilities including paths and good quality trails, an excellent quality children's play area, bird hides etc. Therefore, there is unlikely to be a need to meet the quantitative shortfalls in amenity green space and parks and recreation grounds, however the quality of these facilities could be improved, and there may also be potential to improve access to Fosse Meadows. The only youth provision within the parish is small half MUGA within Leicester Road Recreation Ground, and there is potential to upgrade and/or expand this provision to reduce the quantitative shortfall.

Just because the supply of the accessible natural green space exceeds the minimum quantity standard in many parishes, this does not mean that these spaces can be considered as surplus to requirement, as in addition to the consideration of the quality and accessibility to these spaces, their importance in terms of contributing to green infrastructure, and biodiversity etc. is recognised.

## 7.2.2 Future supply and need for open space

At the time of preparing this report, BDC was not in a position to determine the projected level of housing growth to be accommodated within the District and therefore within the emerging new local plan. As housing growth is a key determinant of population growth and change, this report cannot therefore identify how much additional open space will be required over coming years to provide for the needs of residents in new housing through the application of the proposed standards.

However, the following is an example of how the proposed standards could be applied to a notional District-wide allocation of 10,000 dwelling- assuming an average household size of 2.3 persons, leading to an estimated population arising from new development of 23,000.

Table 7.2 Example: District-wide open space requirements for a notional allocation of 10,000 dwellings

Typology	Required standard for new provision (Ha/1000 population)	Requirement for 23,000 people (Hectares)
Allotments	0.3 ha	6.9 ha
Amenity Green Space/Natural Green Space	1.0 ha	23 ha
Parks and Recreation Grounds	1.0 ha	23 ha
Play Space (Children)	0.07 ha	1.61 ha
Play Space (Youth)	0.07 ha	1.61 ha
Natural Green Space	1.0 ha	23 ha
<b>Total</b>		<b>79.12 ha</b>

### Example scenarios of applying of open space standards to housing developments

It should be noted that Green Infrastructure (GI) protection and enhancement will be required as part of all developments, irrespective of the open space requirements e.g. even if a site does not require open space provision on site, the development layout plan will need to demonstrate that existing GI assets within the site are being retained and enhanced e.g. the protection and enhancement of hedgerows.

Open space provision should be designed to contribute to the protection and enhancement of GI e.g. through providing connected corridors and habitats for wildlife and climate change adaptation etc., balanced with access and recreational opportunities for people. The Building with Nature Standards (see section 3.2.1.2) could be advocated by the Council.



Table 7.3 Example scenarios for applying standards

Development type	Population (assumes 2.3 persons per household)	Requirements generated by proposed quantity standards	Potential solutions
Infill/windfall site housing development of 10 dwellings	23 persons	No on-site open space provision. Contributions to new/improved provision in vicinity.	Housing developments (up to 19 dwellings) will be expected to contribute towards provision off-site (see section 8.7 for costings for developer contributions).
A housing site of 50 mixed-style/size dwellings	115 persons	<p>Using the guide in the table above, a development of this size would be expected to provide an area of amenity green space and a small children's play area on site.</p> <p>Using the proposed standards, a development of this size would require the minimum sizes for amenity green space and children's play space to be applied, as the open space requirements generated from the population increase fall just under the minimum sizes i.e. a 0.15ha amenity green space and a 0.01ha children's play space (plus surrounding buffer/playable space).</p>	<p>An area of this size could offer a small attractive multi-functional local space.</p> <p>Although the play space may be small in size, It is the quality/design of a play space is just as (if not more) important than the size, and therefore we want to try and move developers away from the traditional approach of fenced play areas and get them thinking more about the play value/design and integrating into the site surrounding (in accordance with Play England advice).</p> <p>If site limitations/viability do not permit on-site provision (or on-site provision is not required due to sufficient provision/access within the vicinity) of amenity green space and children's play space, then contributions would be used towards new or improved provision elsewhere within easy reach.</p> <p>Allotment, park and recreation ground, youth play space and natural green space provision would need to be pooled towards new or</p>

Development type	Population (assumes 2.3 persons per household)	Requirements generated by proposed quantity standards	Potential solutions
			improved provision elsewhere within easy reach.
A housing site of 100 mixed-style/size dwellings	230 persons	<p>Using the guide in the table above, a development of this size would be expected to provide an area of amenity green space, a children's play area and a natural green space on site.</p> <p>Using the proposed standards, this would generate a minimum requirement for 0.23ha (2300 sqm) of amenity green space, 0.016ha (160sqm) of children's play space (plus surrounding buffer/playable space) and 0.23ha (2300 sqm) of natural green space.</p>	<p>An area of this size could offer an attractive multi-functional space. Consideration should be given to combining the amenity green space and natural green space standard, in order to provide a larger, more biodiverse space (in accordance with the Lawton Report – bigger, better, more joined up).</p> <p>The contribution towards allotments, parks and recreation grounds and youth play space would be pooled/invested in off-site provision elsewhere within easy reach.</p> <p>If site limitations/viability do not permit on site provision (or on-site provision is not required due to sufficient provision/access within the vicinity) of amenity green space, natural green space and children's play space, then contributions would be used towards new or improved provision elsewhere within easy reach.</p>
A housing site of 200 mixed style/size dwellings	460 persons	Using the guide in the table above, generally a development of this size would be expected to provide all types of open space on site covered by the standards, and	Consideration should be given to combining the amenity green space and natural green space standard, in order to provide a larger, more biodiverse space.

Development type	Population (assumes 2.3 persons per household)	Requirements generated by proposed quantity standards	Potential solutions
		<p>in the following minimum quantities:</p> <p>Allotments: 0.14ha (1400 sqm)            Amenity green space: 0.46ha (4600 sqm)            Parks and recreation grounds: 0.46ha (4600 sqm)            Children's play space: 0.032ha (320sqm)            Youth play space: 0.032ha (320sqm)            Accessible Natural Green Space: 0.46ha (4600 sqm)</p>	<p>The children's play space standard results in a LEAP type sized play space. The youth provision standard would result in something like a half MUGA or small skate area for example.</p> <p>If it is not viable to provide all open space on site, then contributions would be used towards new or improved provision elsewhere within easy reach. If there is already good access (against the standards) to certain open space typologies within the vicinity, then contributions to improve the quality/capacity of these existing open spaces could be sought.</p>
A housing site of 500 mixed style/size dwellings	1,150 persons	<p>Using the guide in the table above, a development of this size would be expected to provide all typologies of open space on site, in the following minimum quantities:</p> <p>Allotments: 0.345ha (3450 sqm)            Amenity green space: 1.15ha (11,500 sqm)            Parks and recreation grounds: 1.15ha (11,500 sqm)            Children's play space: 0.08ha (800 sqm)</p>	<p>Consideration should be given to combining the amenity green space and natural green space standard, in order to provide a larger, more biodiverse space.</p> <p>There may also be the need to consider looking at splitting provision for large development sites, e.g. providing two separate amenity green spaces (that are connected with wildlife/access corridors – which may come out of the natural green space requirement/standard), in order to ensure that the</p>

Development type	Population (assumes 2.3 persons per household)	Requirements generated by proposed quantity standards	Potential solutions
		Youth play space: 0.08ha (800sqm) Accessible Natural Green Space: 1.15ha (11,500 sqm)	accessibility standards are met.  If the space does not exist to provide all open space on-site, then contributions would be used towards new or improved provision elsewhere within easy reach. If there is already good access (against the standards) to certain open space typologies within the vicinity, then contributions to improve the quality/capacity of these existing open spaces would be sought.

### 7.3 Application of access standards

This section provides an overview of access to different types of open space typologies across the Study Area, using the access standards summarised in Table 6.6. The maps are intended to provide an overview and are for illustrative purposes only. More detailed maps by parish are provided for each typology within Appendix 2 (see example at Figure 7.1).

The maps show the walk-time buffers for each open space typology and are created using QGIS and the OSM Tools plugin which relies on the openstreetmap paths and street network to accurately map realistic potential walking routes. The buffers are based on a walk-time of 5 kilometres/3.1 miles an hour<sup>15</sup>.

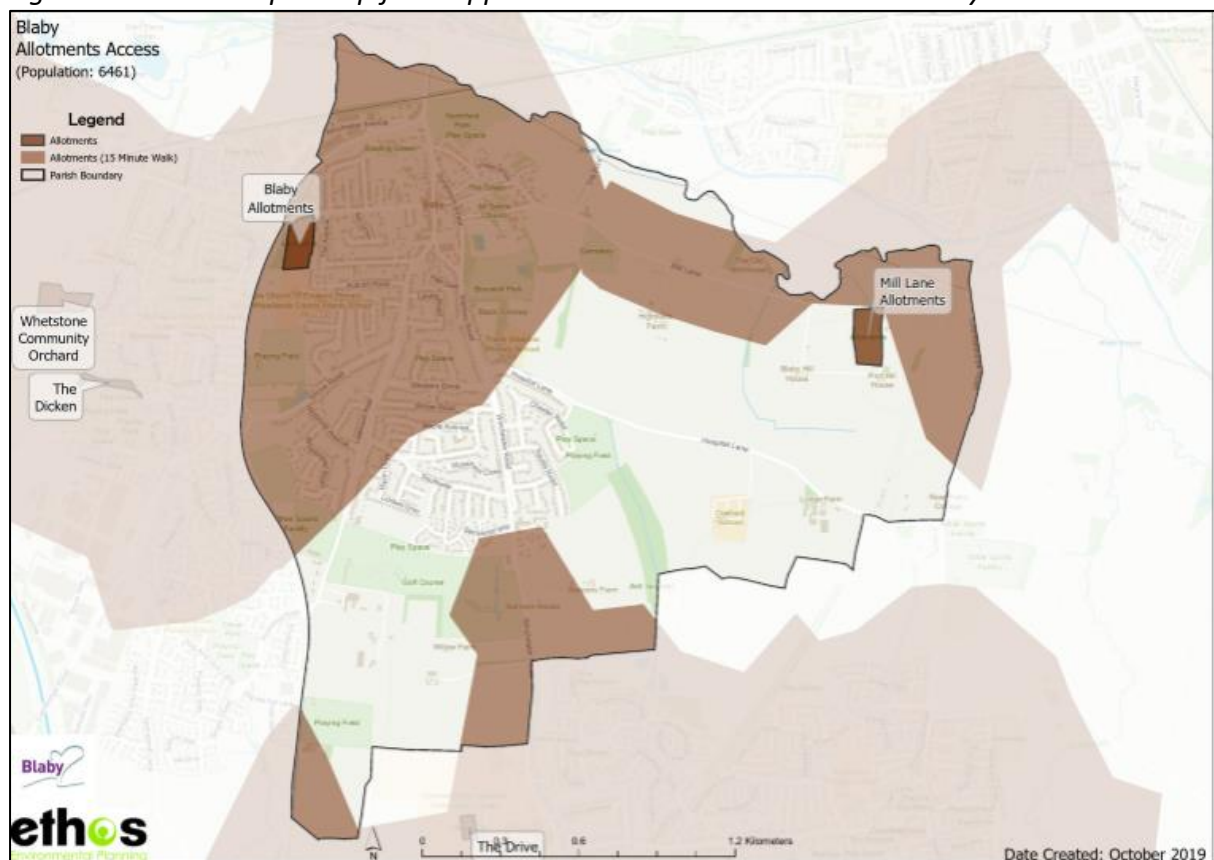
The table below shows how walk-time relates to straight-line distances and pedestrian route distances. The straight-line walking distances do not take into account roads or barriers to access and so the actual route walked (the pedestrian route) is generally further i.e. straight-line distances are around 60% of actual distances. The more basic straight-line buffer access analysis approach has been used for the ANGSt standards, as this approach is more appropriate for larger sites.

<sup>15</sup> This is in line with the British Heart Foundation state as an average walking pace on country and forestry footpaths: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/training-zone/walking-training-zone/walking-faqs>

Table 7.5 Standard walk-times and distances

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

Figure 7.1 Example map from appendix 2: access to allotments in Blaby



### 7.3.1 Access to open space across the District

Figure 7.2 Access to allotments (15 minutes' walk-time buffer)

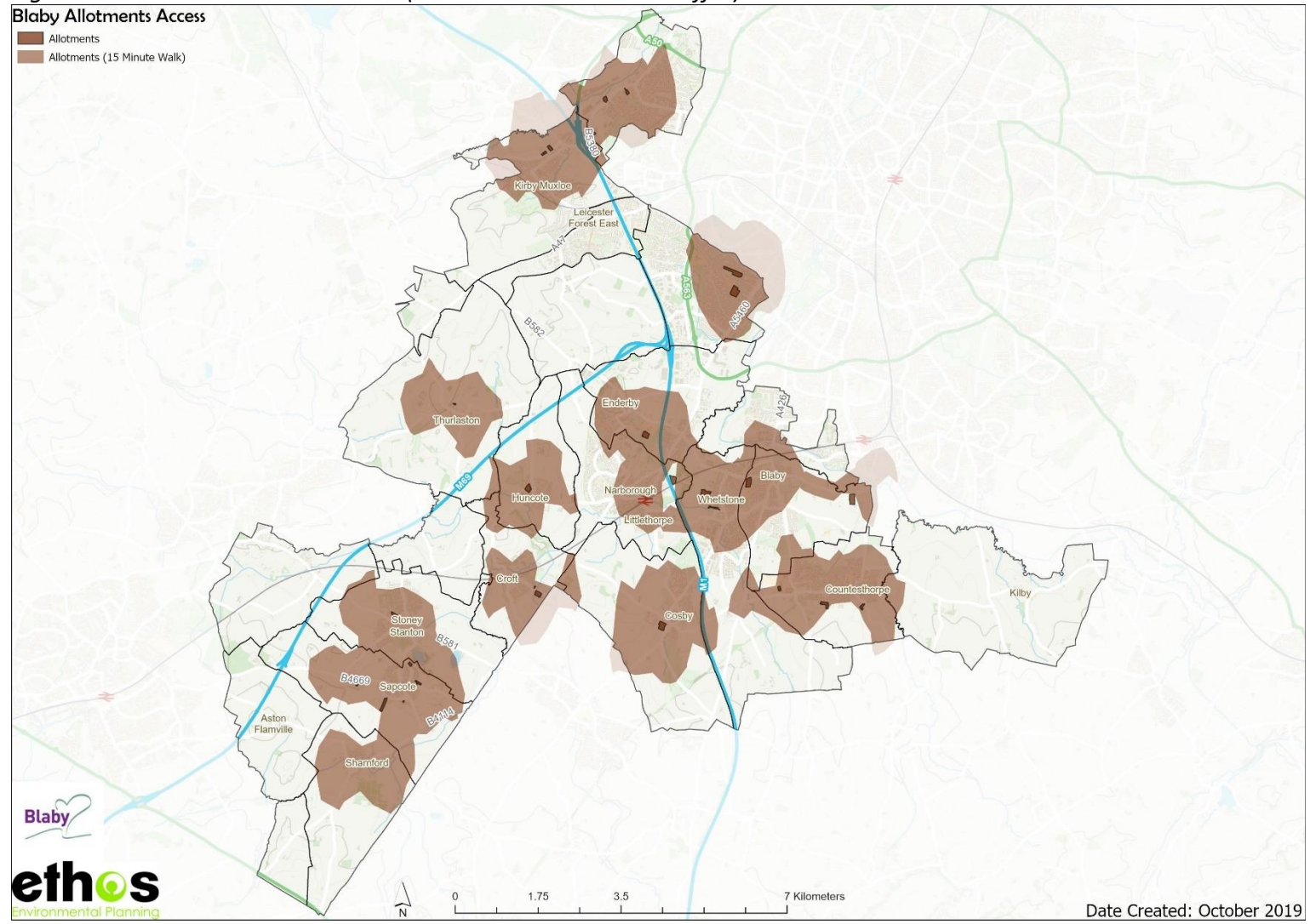




Figure 7.3 Access to amenity green space above 0.15ha in size (10 minutes' walk-time buffer)

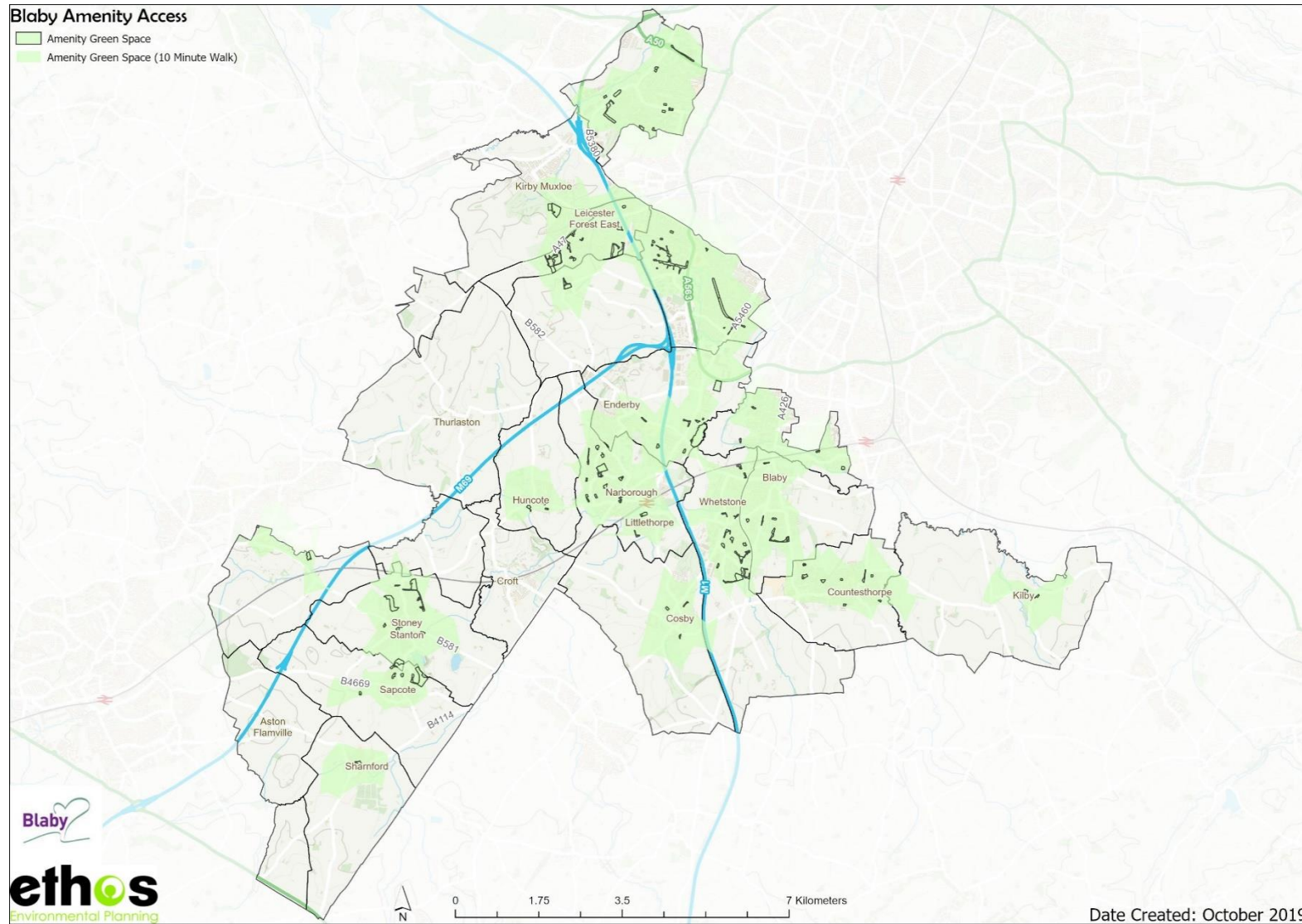


Figure 7.4 Access to parks and recreation (15 minutes' walk-time buffer)

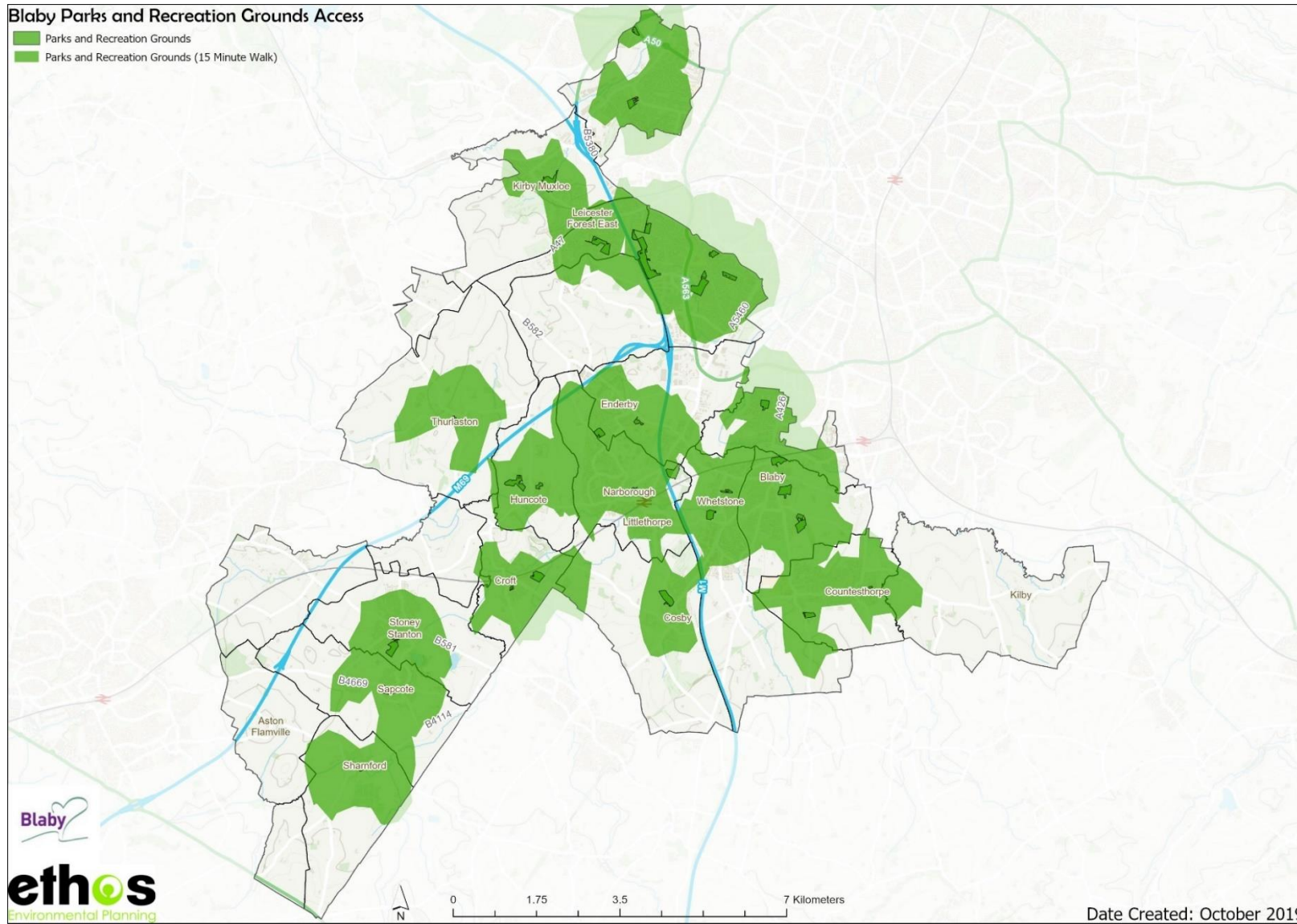




Figure 7.5 Access to Outdoor Sport (Private) (15 minutes walk-time buffer)

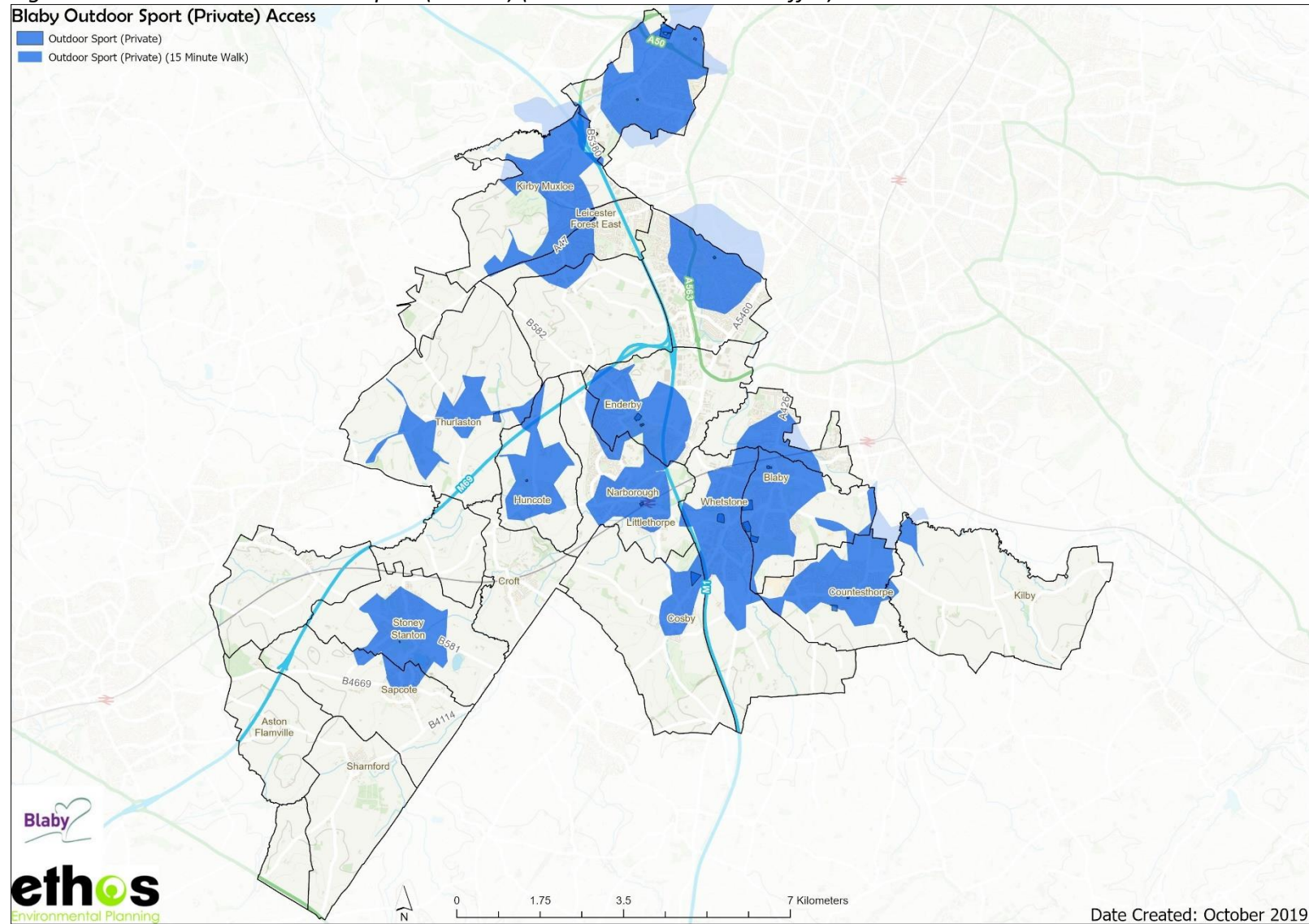


Figure 7.6 Access to children's play space (10 minutes walk-time buffer)

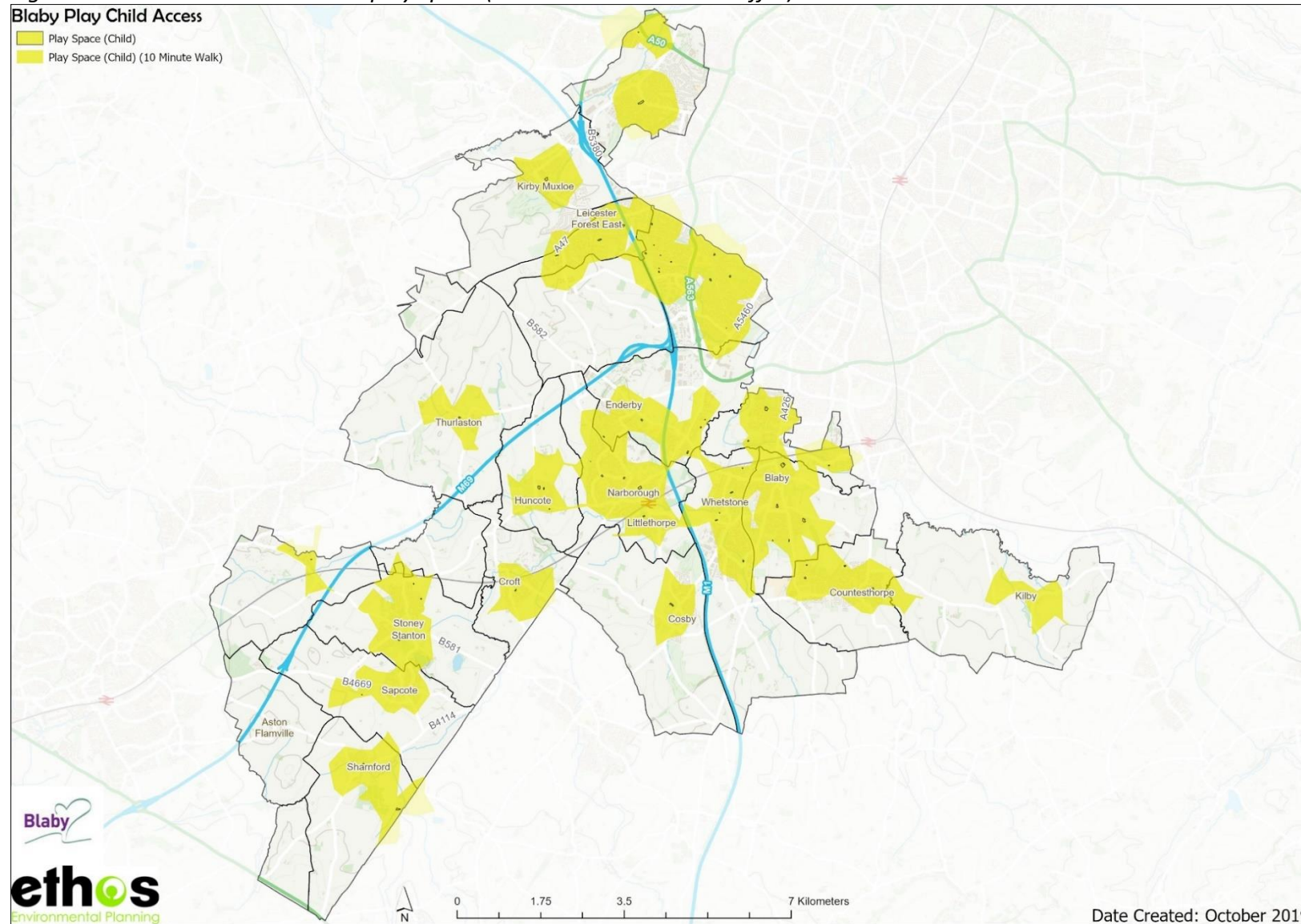




Figure 7.7 Access to youth play space (15 minutes walk-time buffer)

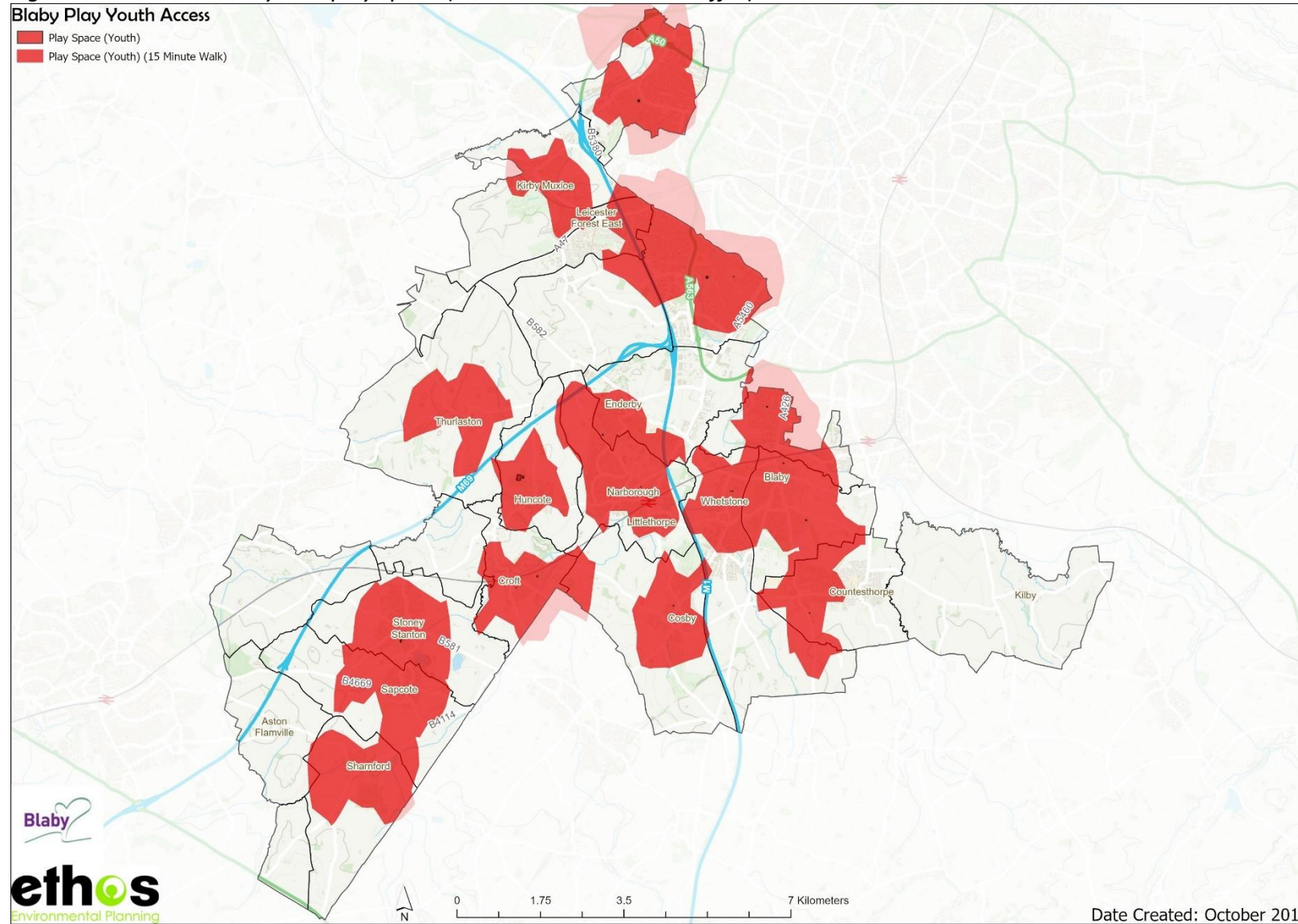


Figure 7.8 Access to natural green space (720m straight line)

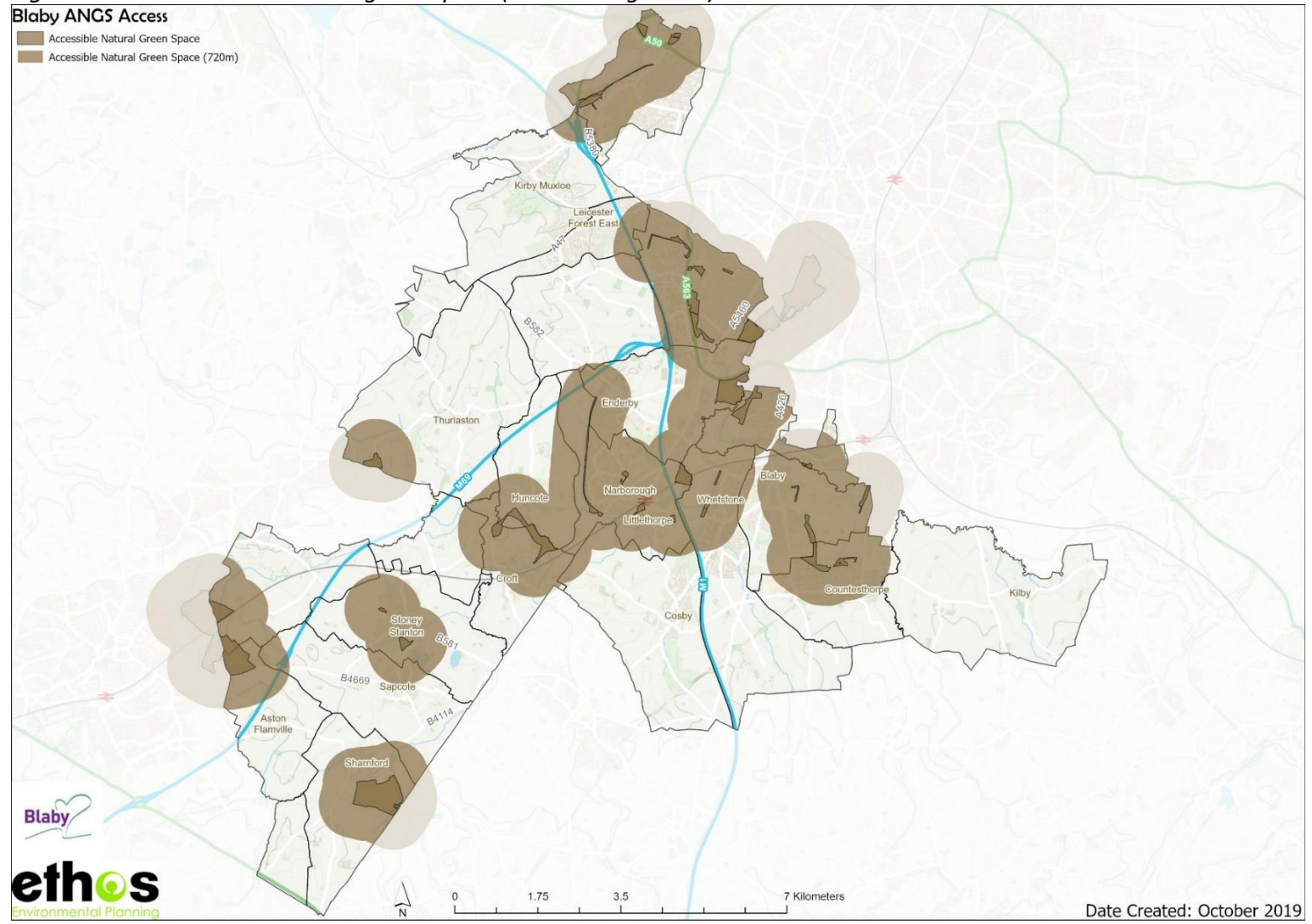


Table 7.6 Summary of access to open space across the District

Typology	Key access issues
Allotments	Large gaps in access in Leicester Forest East and Braunstone, also gaps in Glenfields, Glen Parva and Narborough.
Amenity Green Space	Generally good access across the District, although there are some large gaps in access in Kirby Muxloe and Croft.
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Generally very good access across the District, with only very small gaps in access in Elmesthorpe and Glen Parva, and in some of the very rural parishes with less than 500 population <sup>16</sup> .
Play Space (Children)	Generally good access across the District, with the largest gap in access in Glenfields.
Play Space (Youth)	Generally good access across the District, however there are some large gaps in access in Leicester Forest East and Countesthorpe, with smaller gaps in Glen Parva and Whetstone.
Natural Green Space	Against the 720m access standard there are some large gaps in access in Glenfields, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, Cosby and Whetstone. Access to Natural Green Space against the Natural England ANGSt standards is considered in the section below.

### 7.3.2 Application of Natural England ANGSt standards

This section looks at access to natural/semi-natural green space within the District through the application of the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt). As already mentioned under section 5.1.5, this typology only includes those natural green spaces which have public access (and not countryside areas where the only access is via the Public Right of Way network).

ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live should have accessible natural greenspace:

- Of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometre of home;
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of 1 hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.

<sup>16</sup> There is also generally good access to Outdoor Sport (Private) which has public access e.g. for dog walking.



Figure 7.9 Access to 2ha+ sites within 300m

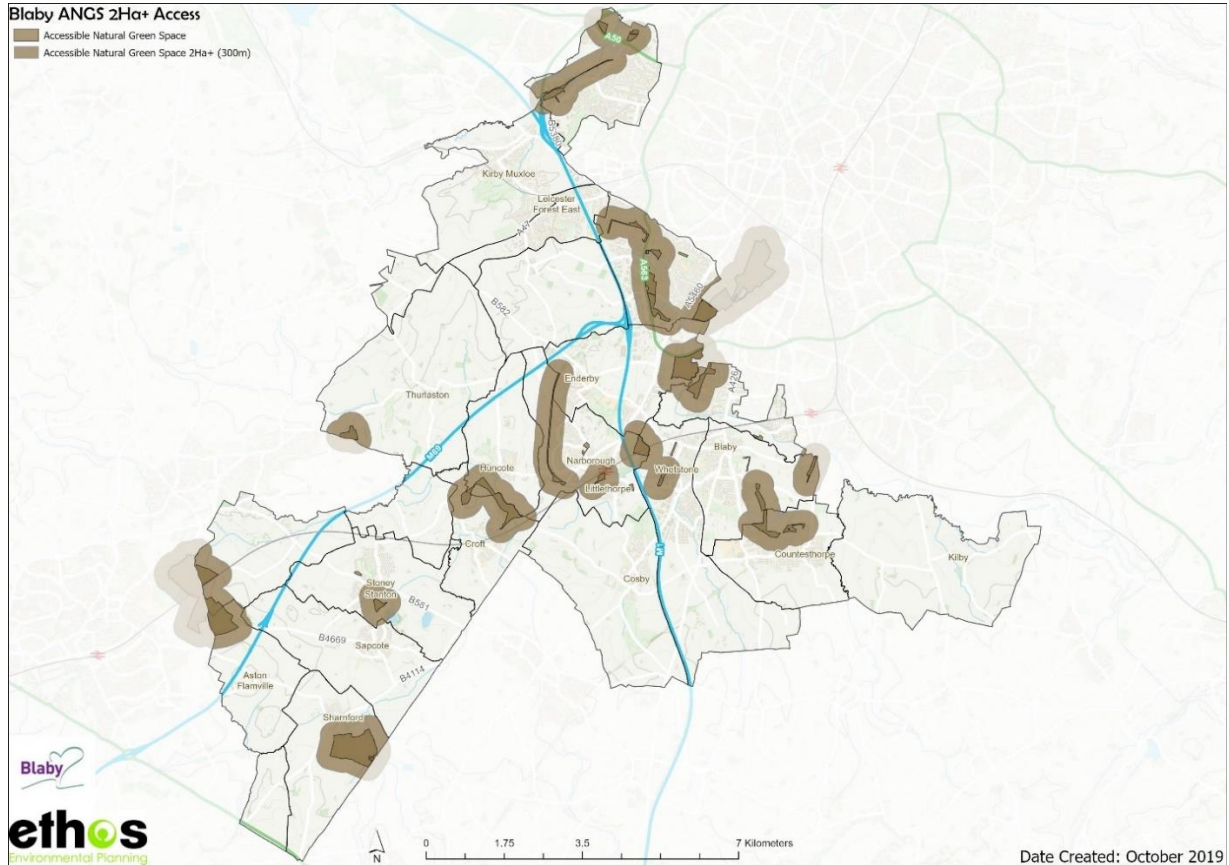


Figure 7.10 Access to 20ha + sites within 2km

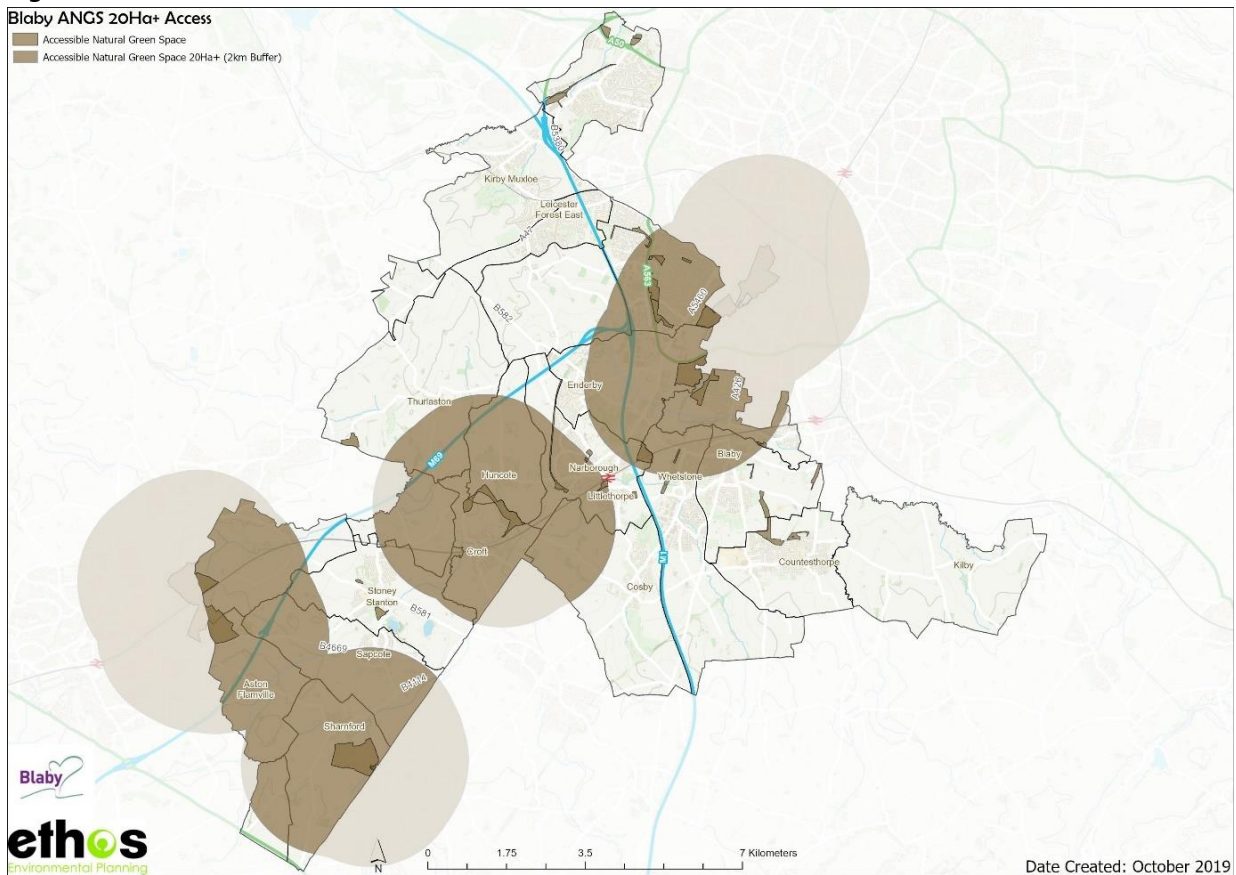


Figure 7.11 Access to 100ha+ sites within 5km

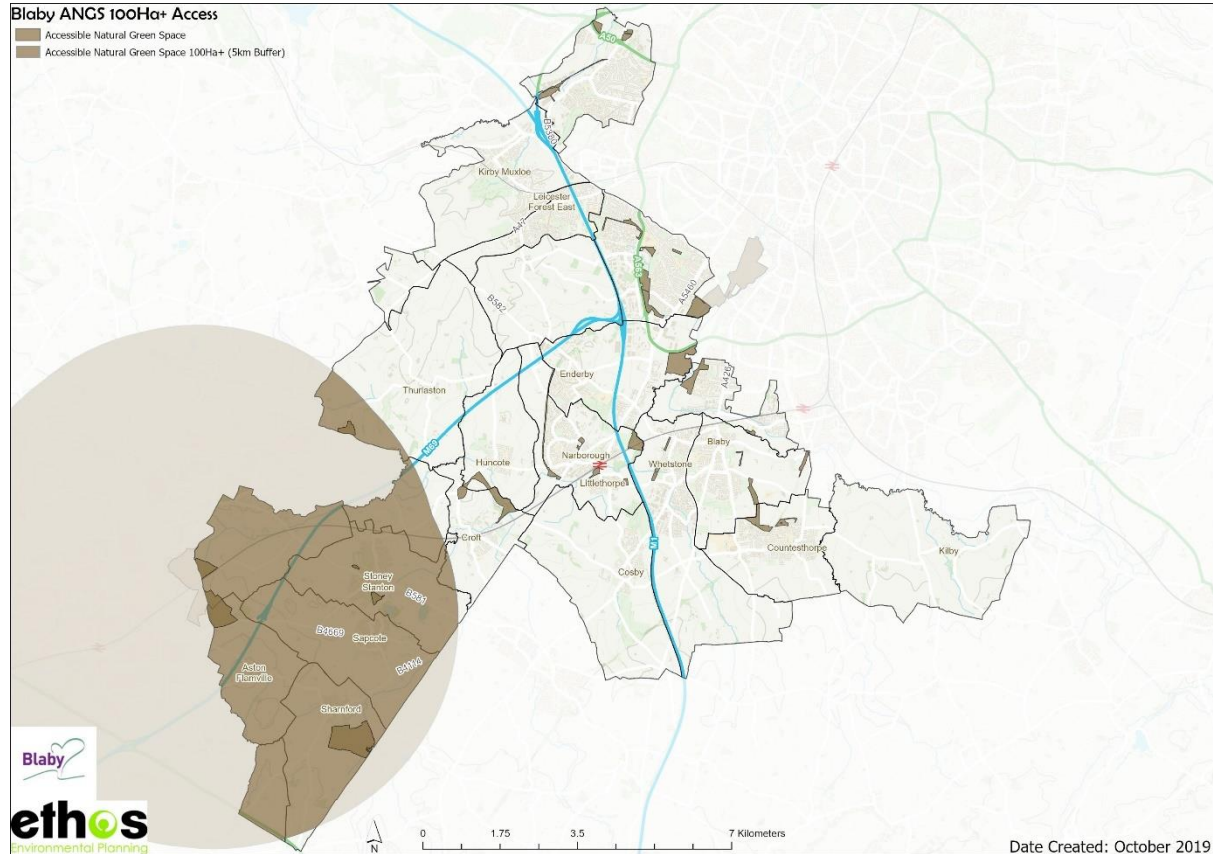


Table 7.7 Summary of access analysis against ANGSt standards

ANGST Standard	Key access Issues
at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home	There are large gaps in access against this standard across the District, notably within Glenfields, Kirby Muxloe, Leicesters Forest East, Braunstone, Blaby, Countesthorpe, Whetstone, Cosby, Narborough and Stoney Stanton.
one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home	Large gaps in access across the majority of the District, with the exception of the south west part of the District – Potters Marston, Stoney Stanton, Elmesthorpe, Sapcote, Aston Flamville, Sharnford and Wigston Parva.
one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home	There are no 500ha sites within the District.
a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNR) per thousand population.	Glen Parva is the main LNR within the District, and Burbage Common (to the South West of Blaby) also crosses into the District.

## **7.4 Application of quality standards**

### **7.4.1 Quality of open space – consultation key findings**

Town and Parish councils were asked to highlight what they thought, in general, were high priorities as regards qualitative factors of recreational open spaces. The quality factors most commonly deemed to be of a high priority as regards recreational public open spaces are that:

- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community.
- They should be multi-functional providing for all sectors of the community.
- They should be safe and secure for those using them.
- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained.

Other aspects of quality specifically highlighted and related comments were:

- They should be easy to get around by all members of the community.
- They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- There should be the ability to separate ball sports from casual walking, safe and protected sensory/accessible areas.
- There should be a variety of activities available non-prescribed means on a site.

For Town/Parish councils in the Blaby District the most important issues in relation to quality are:

- Improve quality of provision within parks.
- Improve quality of equipment in children's play areas.
- Access for disabled facilities across children's play area and parks and recreation grounds.

Strategic organisations also noted that there are still measures to be taken to improve the quality of green spaces. This was particularly highlighted by the Canal and Rivers Trust in relation to the quality of towpaths and biodiversity.

The full detail, including suggestions for quality improvements to open spaces provided by Town/Parish Councils, Ward Members and other key stakeholders is included within the Blaby Stakeholder Consultation Report (2019).

### **7.4.2 Quality of open space – audit methodology**

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

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It was not possible to survey all sites due to access restrictions, namely private sports grounds/open space and education sites. These will be assessed through the Playing Pitch Strategy for the District. Other sites were also excluded due to limitations of resources, these included allotments, small amenity green spaces (<0.15 ha in size, which have little or no recreational value) and churchyards and cemeteries. This has meant that the quality audits have focused on the key open spaces and play areas.

Sites were visited, and a photographic record made of key features, along with a description of the site and recommendations for improvements. An assessment of the quality of the open space was undertaken using the following criteria, which is based on the Green Flag Award criteria:

1. Welcoming
2. Good and Safe Access
3. Community Involvement
4. Safe Equipment & Facilities
5. Appropriate Provision of Facilities
6. Quality/Management of Facilities and Infrastructure
7. Personal Security on Site
8. Dog Fouling
9. Litter and Waste Management
10. Grounds/Habitat Management

Children's play space and youth play space was also audited separately using the above criteria.

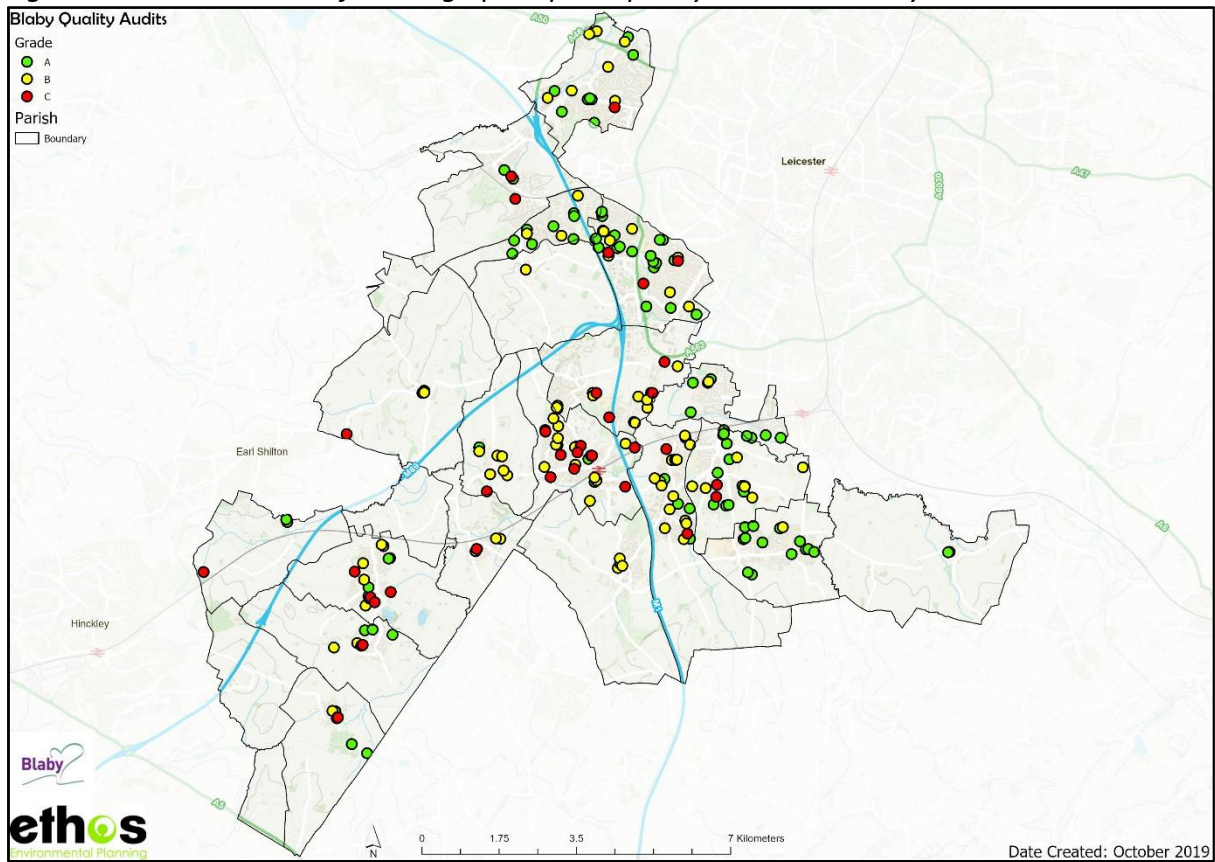
For each of the criteria a score of between 1 -10 is given, where 1 is very poor and 10 is very good. The scores for each site are added together and the mean calculated based on how many criteria were scored (e.g. If 'Community involvement' is given N/A for a site, the total will be divided by 9). This mean is then multiplied by 10 to produce the final score from which sites are grouped into 4 categories – excellent (A) (those sites with a score of between 80 and 100), good (B) (those sites with a score of between 70 and 80), average (C) (those sites with a score of between 40 and 70) or poor (D) (those sites with a score of between 10 and 40).

### **7.4.3 Quality of open space – audit findings**

The quality audit was undertaken at 143 open spaces and 86 outdoor children and youth play spaces across the District. Figure 7.12 below provides an overview of the quality audit results across the Study Area. As can be seen, the majority of open spaces were assessed as being of either excellent or good quality. No sites were assessed as being of poor quality.

The details of the quality audits are contained within the GIS database provided to the Council. In addition, for each of the parishes within the District, a map showing the results of the quality audit has been produced, showing the sites which scored excellent, good, average or poor quality (see Appendix 3).

Figure 7.12 Overview of existing open space quality across the study area



## **8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

### **8.1 Strategic Options**

#### **8.1.1 Introduction**

The strategic options address five key areas:

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

#### **8.1.2 Delivering Strategic Options**

The NPPF was first published in 2012 and has since been principally updated in July 2018, with further updates following in February 2019. The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Open spaces (provision, protection, enhancement) and their associated intrinsic benefits are key components of all three of the objectives.

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

Although local communities (e.g. parish/town councils or neighbourhood forums) are able to define their own priorities within neighbourhood plans, the information provided within this study will provide a robust evidence base to inform the review of the local plan and any decisions related to the provision of open space.

The following sections consider the key issues for open space in the study area, and the recommendations that emerge need to be taken in context with the Localism Act and

consider how they can fit into local decision making. The following sections serve to highlight issues, but do not necessarily resolve how they may be delivered.

The information provided within this study will also form the basis for potential future strategies and any open space policies adopted by BDC.

## 8.2 Existing provision to be protected

The starting point of any policy adopted by BDC should be that all open space should be afforded protection unless it can be proved it is not required. Even where open spaces are in sufficient supply within a parish, this does not necessarily mean there is a 'surplus' in provision of open space, as additional factors such as the supply of other typologies of open space, the quality of open space and access to existing open space/where new development is planned or the connectivity of fragmented sites (Lawton Review – More, Bigger, Better and Joined up) needs to be taken into account (as explained further in the sections below).

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

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

The quantity analysis, summarised in Table 7.1 (section 7.2) shows that in every parish, there is a deficiency in at least one typology of open space. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

<b>Open Space Policy Direction (protecting open space):</b>	
<b>OS1</b>	The distribution of open space varies across the study area, however, there are identified shortages of at least one typology of open space in all parishes. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there is an existing shortfall of supply.
<b>OS2</b>	Sites which are critical to avoiding deficiencies, or making existing deficiencies worse, in quality, quantity or accessibility should be protected unless suitable alternative provision can be provided which would compensate for any deficiencies caused.
<b>OS3</b>	Sites which have significant green infrastructure, nature conservation/biodiversity, historical or cultural value should be afforded protection, even if there is an identified surplus in quality, quantity or accessibility in that local area.

The importance of privately managed spaces (e.g. sports grounds) as a community facility has been highlighted in this study, although these spaces are not afforded protection through policy recommended as part of this study, as they are not covered by standards. The Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (being produced for BDC at the time of preparing this report) should provide the basis for policy relating to these spaces.

### 8.3 Existing provision to be enhanced

In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision but no accessibility issues then increasing the capacity of existing provision may be considered. Alternatively, in areas where facilities or spaces do not meet the relevant quality standards, qualitative enhancements will be required.

This includes those spaces or facilities which:

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

Those sites which require enhancement are identified within the quality audit that was undertaken. Some of the key observations related to site enhancement include:

1. The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as Parks and Recreation Grounds and Play Space.
2. The need for additional and improved facilities for young people.
3. The role of private sports spaces to some local communities and the need to provide opportunity for investment.
4. The need to ensure high quality open spaces are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
5. The importance of rights of way and natural green space within the study area, and the need to maintain, manage and enhance provision for biodiversity.
6. The role of open space in contributing to wider initiatives and strategies.
7. Extending and enhancing the network of green infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

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

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<b>Open Space Policy Direction (enhancing open space):</b>	
<b>OS5</b>	Where new housing development is proposed, should provision not be able to be provided on site/is not practicable on site, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the parish or neighbouring parish where the development is located. Priority should be given to those sites identified as poor or average as detailed in the GIS database and the maps at Appendix 3.
<b>OS6</b>	Any potential future open space strategies and/or neighbourhood plans should consider the opportunities for creating, protecting and enhancing a Green Infrastructure network. BDC could advocate the Building with Nature Standards as part of any GI Policy.
<b>OS7</b>	The findings of the assessment make recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the study area. However, a long-term strategy and action/implementation plan for achieving improvements to open space and the wider components of GI may be beneficial and could be delivered through a GI/Green Space Strategy.
<b>OS8</b>	The highest priorities for quality improvements identified in the Town and Parish Council Survey were improvements to parks and recreation grounds and children's play areas, including improving disabled access.
<b>OS9</b>	Management plans (if not already established) should be developed for the main parks and open spaces. These priorities could also be considered in neighbourhood plans and by the local community.

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

In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or sport and recreation facility, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users or use land which is not suitable for another purpose. This needs to be determined at a local level, considering the quality, quantity and access to facilities at a Neighbourhood level and in some cases across the Study Area.

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

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

Each plan should apply the standards and be in accordance with the strategic policies set out in the adopted Local Plan (as informed by this study) and seek to ensure that where significant investment is anticipated for green spaces that this is prioritised and realised with the help of key stakeholders and communities.

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

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

An example of determining the potential opportunities for re-location or re-designation of open space is provided below for Sharnford, considering the quantity, accessibility and quality of open space within the parish. This is purely an example/recommendation but could be used to guide BDC in applying similar solutions to other parishes as required.

*Table 8.1 Opportunities for 're-designating open space'*

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Existing open space provision</b>	<b>Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space</b>
Sharnford	<p>Sufficient Supply of allotments, children's play space and accessible natural green space. Shortfalls in the supply of amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and youth play space.</p> <p>There is good access to all typologies of open space, and potential to improve some of the open spaces.</p>	<p>As there is good access to all typologies of open space within the parish, and the quantitative shortfalls in provision of parks and recreation grounds and amenity can space are in the context of the provision of an excellent quality, large accessible natural green space (Fosse Meadows Country Park), the priorities are not for additional provision of amenity green space and parks and recreation grounds, but to improve the quality of these existing sites. There may also be potential to improve/expand the youth play space (half MUGA) within Leicester Road Recreation Ground.</p>

## 8.5 Identification of areas for new provision

New provision will be required where there is a new development and a planned increase in population, and/or an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists. Section 7 outlines the existing situation with regards to supply and access to open space. As previously discussed, neighbourhood plans would provide a good mechanism to determine exactly where new provision is required, however, this study can be used as the basis for decision making, as follows:

### **Quantity**

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

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

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

### **Access**

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

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

### **Delivering new provision**

There are a number of opportunities for delivering new facilities through new development – developer contributions and to a lesser extent through capital and grant funding.

#### *New development, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and developer contributions*

Blaby does not currently have CIL in place.

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The Blaby District Council Planning Obligations and Developer Contributions SPD outlines the Council's strategy for securing relevant developer contributions (in the form of section 106 planning obligations) in relation to new development. Contributions are typically secured against residential development but can also be required for non residential development if it would have an impact on the area. This Open Space Assessment will help inform an update of the SPD.

On site provision of open space is required for or developments of 25 or more dwellings. However, if on site open space is not provided, the District Council will seek a financial contribution which will be put towards the provision of off site facilities elsewhere. For developments of 1 – 24 dwellings the District Council will not require a developer to provide on site open space, but will secure a financial contribution, as shown below, per dwelling towards the improvement, enhancement and development of open space and recreational facilities.

As part of this assessment, new costings for open space provision have been provided in Section 8.7, which the Council may wish to adopt in an update SPD.

New development will be required to provide on-site open space in line with the standards outlined in this study. Whilst not all developments will be of a size that will generate the requirement for on-site open space (see Table 8.5), when considering future housing numbers for Blaby, there will be many that will. This study should be used to make local decisions about where and when new on-site provision will be required.

Figure 8.1 shows an example flow chart/decision making process to help developers/council officers determine the need for on or off-site provision of open space. This is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case by case basis using the standards and assessment within this study. Where possible, this should be determined through pre-application discussions with the applicable council.

### *Capital and grant funding*

Although the availability of capital and grant funding has diminished in recent years, nevertheless funding does become available for providing facilities for open space, sport and recreation. National and governing bodies for individual sports should be consulted where new infrastructure is required, such as changing rooms and sports pitches. Environmental grants and stewardship schemes are available for managing natural green space. As neighbourhood plans are developed and open space priorities are established within these, funding requirements will be identified and delivery through grant funding could be considered.

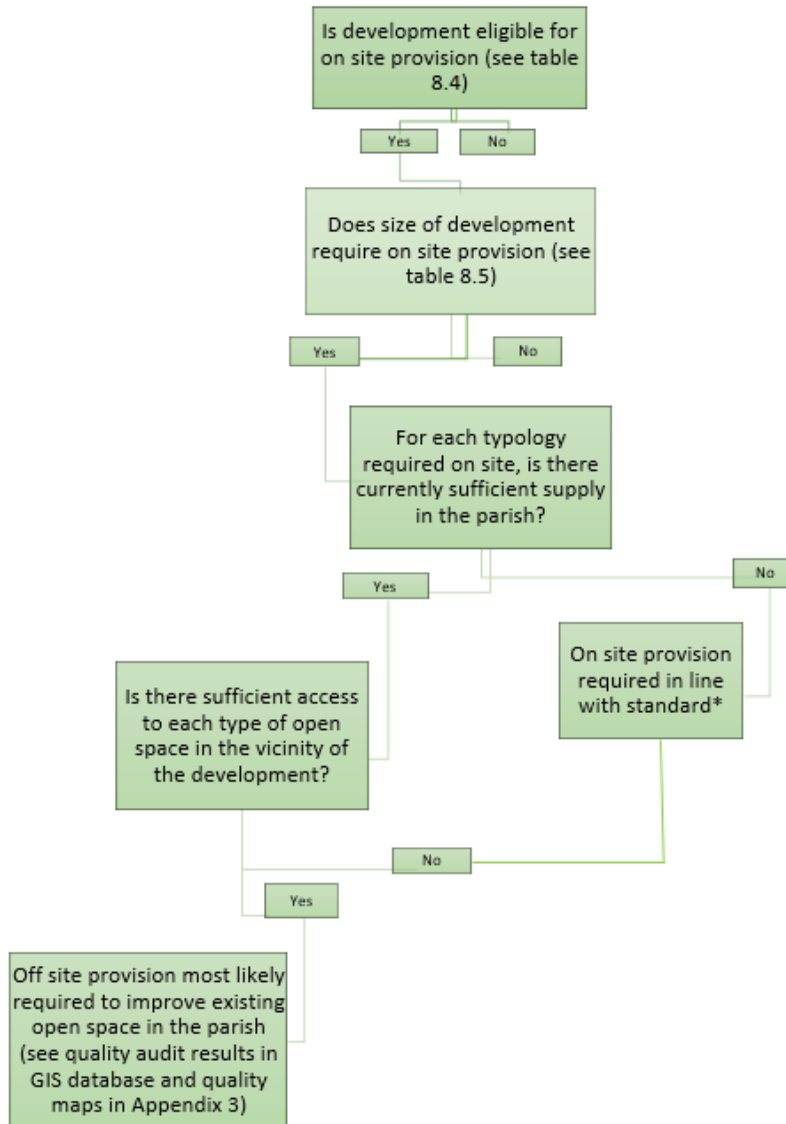
### *Requirements for open space from new housing*

Section 7.2.1 outlines the variation in supply of different typologies of open space across wards. As identified, every parish has a shortfall in at least one typology of open space, therefore, the starting point for new housing (of a certain size – see Table 8.5 for

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recommended thresholds) is to assume that some form of on-site open space provision would be required.

Figure 8.1 Decision making process for on-site provision of open space, or off-site contributions to enhance existing open space



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

**Open Space Policy Direction (new provision of open space):****OS10**

New provision of open space will be required as part of new development (in accordance with the flow chart at Figure 8.1<sup>17</sup>). Where on-site provision is required, it should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards.

Where on-site provision is deemed impractical, or not required e.g. for small sites, consideration will be given to opportunities for off-site provision and/or improvements, including through S106 contributions<sup>18</sup>.

Improvements to existing open space will be considered first in the ward within which the development is located, then in open spaces in neighbouring parishes. open spaces requiring improvements will be identified using the results from the quality audits (those sites which were assessed as being of poor or average quality being the highest priority) and also from site management plans and the council's own knowledge of their sites.

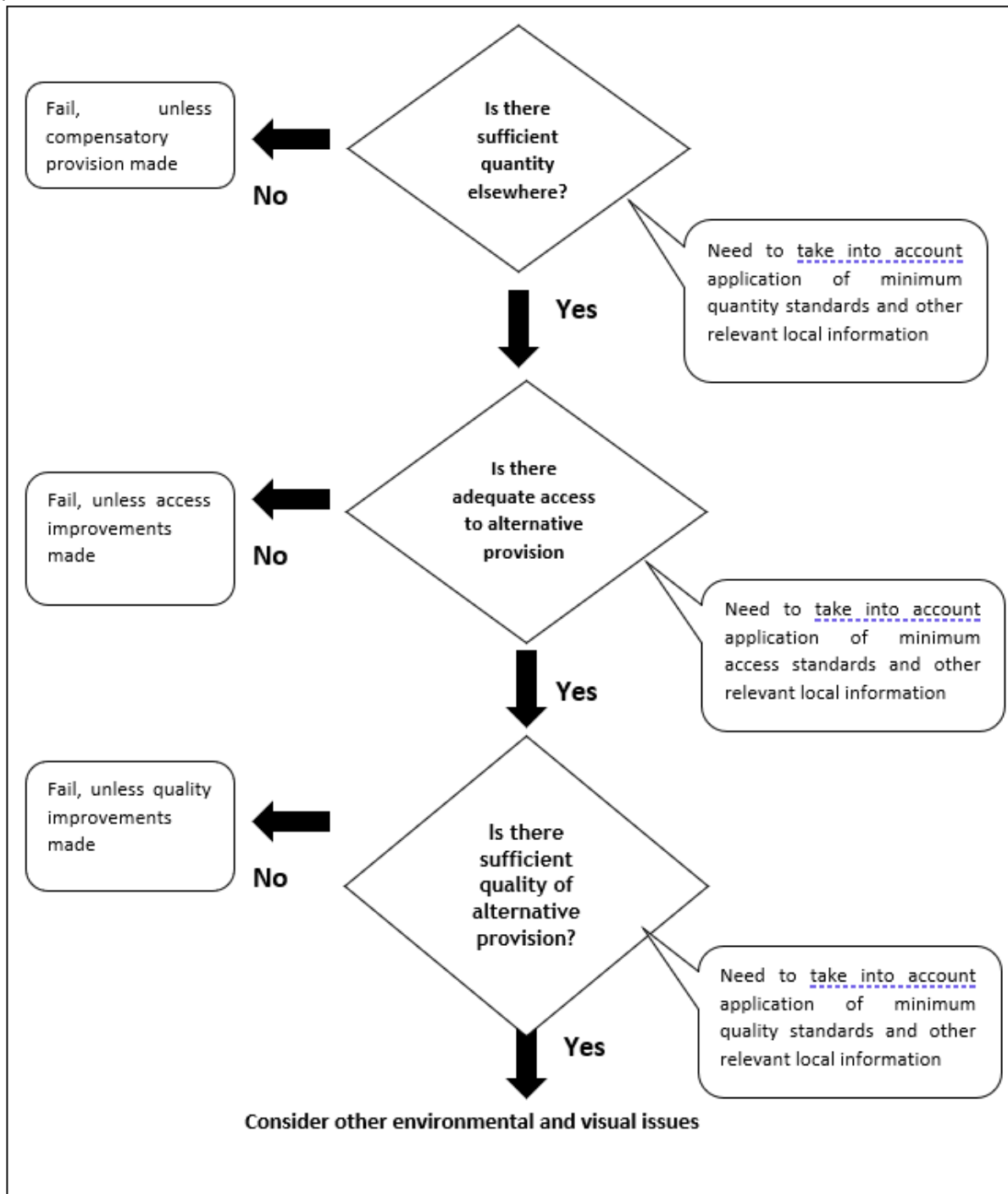
## 8.6 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

In addition to the strategic options outlined above, consideration should also be given to facilities that are surplus to requirement. There are important issues to resolve in terms of getting the correct balance of open space across the study area before any disposal can be contemplated. Whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in several areas, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that the proposed standards are for *minimum* levels of provision. Particularly in relation to Natural Green Space, where the supply exceeds the quantity standard, this does not mean it is surplus to requirement as the site may form an important part of the GI network and have biodiversity value. Factors to be taken into account before any decision to release open space for alternative uses can be taken include:

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

Figure 8.2 and the associated paragraphs below suggests an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development/alternative use of an open space can be seriously contemplated.

Figure 8.2 Outline decision making process in relation to sanctioning (re)development of open space



A hypothetical example of how this might be applied is as follows as related to an area of informal/amenity space.

**Q.** Is there sufficient quantity?

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

**Q.** Is there sufficient access to other opportunities?

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

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

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

Even if these three tests are passed there may be other reasons for the site to remain as open space. For example, it may have value as a natural habitat or for views offerh considerations are important, but beyond the scop

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

**Q.** Is there sufficient quantity?

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

**Q. Is there adequate access to alternative provision?**

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

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

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

The quality audit provided as part of this study provides a useful framework for identifying and prioritising open spaces that require improvements as identified at the time of the assessment. Those open spaces which have existing quality scores of C or D (moderate/poor), and 'potential' scores of A, B or C have the highest potential for improvement. If existing open spaces in the vicinity of new development are of poor/moderate quality, then funding for their improvement (e.g. access improvements, signage, improvements to facilities and/or habitats – as recommended in the quality audit database provided to BDC) would need to be secured before any 'surplus' in a particular open space typology could be considered.

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

## 8.7 Developer Contributions

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

### 8.7.1 Developer Contributions and CIL

This section sets out higher level strategic recommendations and recommends an approach to developer contributions which can be used to inform policy for both on-site and off-site contributions.

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

In order to calculate developer contributions for facilities, a methodology has been adopted which calculates how much it would cost BDC to provide them. These costs have been calculated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's<sup>17</sup>. A summary of the costs are outlined in Table 8.2 below. These are guidance costs (at the time of writing this report), which may be adopted by BDC, however up-to-date costings may also be considered from other sources and may include indexation to cover inflation.

Contributions towards the provision or improvement of open space are calculated using the capital cost of provision. The same charges apply to both provision of new facilities and the upgrading/improvement of existing facilities, which more often than not includes new provision. Contribution per person is therefore taken to be a reasonable measure of that impact, irrespective of whether new provision or improvement of existing facilities is required. The calculated costs have drawn on the standards of provision summarised in Table 6.6. These are estimated costs that will be reviewed by the council.

Table 8.2 *Costs for providing open space*

Typology	Standard (m <sup>2</sup> ) per person	Cost of provision	Cost of provision
		Cost / m <sup>2</sup>	Contribution per person
Allotments	3	£22.34	£67.02
Parks and Recreation grounds	10	£92.94	£929.40
Play Space (Children)	0.7	£168.76	£118.13
Play Space (Youth)	0.7	£168.76	£118.13
Amenity green space	10	£20.24	£202.40
Natural green space	10	£20.24	£202.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>34.4</b>		<b>£1637.48</b>

<sup>17</sup> Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2017

Table 8.2 shows that it costs £1637.48 per person to provide new open space to meet the BDC standard for open space in full<sup>18</sup>. These calculations may be used to calculate developer contributions for on-site provision and where required for off site contributions. Costs should be updated at least annually to account for inflation based on the Bank of England inflation rate.

## 2) **Maintenance Contributions for on-site provision**

Where new open space is provided, the developer would be expected to provide the open space and either maintain the open space through a management company, or if, the site is to be adopted by the Local Authority, then maintenance fees of at least 20 years will be included in the Section 106 legal agreement. If the open space is maintained by a Management Company then the open space should also meet accessibility standards and be publicly accessible in perpetuity. It is expected that a management plan for the open space would be submitted and approved by the council as a planning condition or part of the legal agreement. Details of how the Management Company will be established and managed, and the provisions put in place should the management company fail etc. would also need to be approved by the council.

In the event that the open space would be adopted by the council/parish council, they may be willing to accept a commuted sum and make arrangements for management of the open space. The amount payable for the commuted sum will be calculated using the figures in Table 8.3. These figures do not include professional fees, monitoring, inspection costs, set up costs and admin etc.

*Table 8.3 Maintenance costs for open space*

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Cost/sq m per annum</b>
Play Space (Children's and Youth Provision)	£4.59
Parks and Recreation Grounds	£4.59
Amenity and Natural Green Space	£0.62
Allotments	£0.13

The figures in Table 8.3 provide guidance on how much it costs to maintain open space per metre squared. The costs have been provided from maintenance costs estimated by Ethos Environmental Planning. An inflation rate based on the Bank of England inflation rate should be applied.

## 2) **Eligible types of development for on-site provision**

Table 8.4 acts as a guide showing the types of housing that could be considered eligible for making contributions towards open space to meet the needs of future occupants.

<sup>18</sup> These costs do not include land costs or professional fees such as contract administration, maintenance and handover. The cost of provision for parks and recreation grounds does not include the cost of providing playing pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis or bowls, which are additional costs and would need to be agreed in addition to the open space costs. Costs of a range of types of facilities are set out in Sport England's Kitbag Facility Costs: <https://www.sportengland.org/media/13346/facility-costs-q2-18.pdf>



Table 8.4 Eligible types of residential development

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Housing for the active elderly	Permanent mobile homes
Play Space	✓	×	✓
Outdoor Sports Space	✓	✓	✓
Parks and Gardens	✓	✓	✓
Amenity Open Space	✓	✓	✓
Natural Green Space	✓	✓	✓
Allotments	✓	✓	✓

#### 4) Thresholds for provision

The required open space, sport and recreation facilities should in the first instance be provided on-site, with off-site provision/contributions only to be considered where on-site provision is not possible/practicable. Where facilities are to be provided on-site, the BDC will expect the developer to provide the land for the facility and either:

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

The decision on whether facility provision is to be on-site, off-site or both depends on the following considerations<sup>19</sup>:

- The scale of the proposed development and site area;
- The suitability of a site reflecting, for example, its topography or flood risk;
- The existing provision of facilities within the neighbourhood and/or the sub area;
- Other sites in the neighbourhood where additional provision is proposed; and
- Existing access to facilities within the parish/neighbourhood.
- Additional natural capital benefits and the ecosystem services it provides to people such as air quality regulation and climate regulation.

Table 8.5 provides a guide to assess which scales development sites generate a need for facilities in the categories listed to be provided on-site. The flow chart at Figure 8.1 should also be referred to, as it shows how the quantity, accessibility and quality analysis needs to be taken into account e.g. if a development is of a size that generates the need for on-site provision of open space, if there is sufficient provision (quantity and access) of an open space typology within the vicinity, then consideration will be given to improving existing facilities as an alternative to new on-site provision.

The minimum size of amenity green space considered acceptable as part of new development on-site is 0.15ha. Therefore, developments that require on-site provision, but which would result in less than 0.15ha of amenity green space against the standard, would still be expected

<sup>19</sup> Also see flow chart at Figure 8.1

to provide for a minimum of 0.15ha on-site (depending on site circumstances and context), in order to avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces with limited recreational value.

While Table 8.5 acts as a useful guide to the recommended types of provision in relation to the size of a scheme, each proposal will still be considered on a site by site basis, with on-site provision always to be considered as the first solution.

*Table 8.5 Requirement for open space, sport and recreation facilities*

<b>Type of Provision</b>	<b>1-19 dwellings</b>	<b>20-49 dwellings</b>	<b>50-99 dwellings</b>	<b>100 – 199 dwellings</b>	<b>200+ dwellings</b>
Allotments	X	X	X	X	✓
Amenity Green Space	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parks and Recreation Grounds	X	X	X	X	✓
Play Space (Children)	X	X	✓	✓	✓
Play Space (Youth)	X	X	X	X	✓
Accessible Natural Green Space	X	X	X	✓	✓

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

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

This study provides a robust analysis of the status of open space within BDC in 2019. It includes an audit of provision and stakeholder consultation, with findings used to produce new recommended standards for access and quantity, with quality standards also recommended based on Green Flag criteria. The study also includes a suite of policy recommendations and methodologies for interpreting and informing the needs for the assessed typologies over the proposed revised plan period, as well as process for calculating developer contributions. It should be read in conjunction with the Stakeholder Consultation Report (2019).

The role and value of open space in contributing to the delivery of national and local priorities and targets is clear from this assessment. It is important that the policies and recommendations included within this assessment are considered for inclusion in the revised Local Plan, and acknowledged in relevant strategies and policy documents, as and when they are reviewed. Council officers and elected members play a pivotal role in adopting and promoting the recommendations within this assessment and ensuring that key stakeholders such as town and parish councils, community groups and agents and developers are suitably informed and engaged in the open space process.

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## **Appendix 1 Open Space Provision by Parish**

## **Appendix 2 Access maps by typology and Parish**

## **Appendix 3 Quality audit maps by Parish**