

**AUDIT OF OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION
FACILITIES AND ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL NEEDS**



**A
REPORT
BY
PMP**

MARCH 2006

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Wider Benefits of Open Space

<p>Social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing safe outdoor areas that are available to all ages of the local population to mix and socialise • social cohesion - potential to engender a sense of community ownership and pride • providing opportunities for community events, voluntary activities and charitable fund raising • providing opportunities to improve health and take part in a wide range of outdoor sports and activities.
<p>Recreational</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing easily accessible recreation areas as an alternative to other more chargeable leisure pursuits • offers wide range of leisure opportunities from informal leisure and play to formal events, activities and games. • open spaces, particularly parks, are the first areas where children come into contact with the natural world • play opportunities are a vital factor in the development of children.
<p>Environmental</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing motor car dependence to access specific facilities • providing habitats for wildlife as an aid to local biodiversity • helping to stabilise urban temperatures and humidity • providing opportunities for the recycling of organic materials • providing opportunities to reduce transport use through the provision of local facilities.
<p>Educational</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • valuable educational role in promoting an understanding of nature and the opportunity to learn about the environment • open spaces can be used to demonstrate virtues of sustainable development and health awareness.
<p>Economic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adding value to surrounding property, both commercial and residential, thus increasing local tax revenues • contribution to urban regeneration and renewal projects • contributing to attracting visitors and tourism, including using the parks as venues for major events • encouraging employment and inward investment • complementing new development with a landscape that enhances its value.

Demographic Indicator	Relevance to open space in Epsom and Ewell
Mid 2003 estimates: 67,800 people residing in Epsom and Ewell, of whom 48.3 per cent were male and 51.7 per cent were female	
The number of children under 5 years is slightly higher than for England and Wales. The number of people in the category 5 – 15 years is lower than England and Wales. The number of 16 – 44 year olds is also lower. The number of people 45 years and above is higher than England and Wales.	The open space provided within the borough will need to take account of the different needs of the different age groups. This is particularly the case with lower numbers of young people and higher numbers of older people.
Population density of Epsom and Ewell averaged 1,960 people per square kilometre, compared with an average of 421, for the region and 380 people per square kilometre for England overall.	A denser urban area creates a need for open spaces for the residents of the area to use and enjoy but also to act as a buffer to the urban area
91.33% of the population are white in Epsom and Ewell. This is lower than the regional average but about the same as the average for England and Wales	The provision of open spaces can encourage social inclusion
Using indices of multiple deprivation, relating to income, employment, education, health, skills and training, barriers to housing and services and crime, Epsom and Ewell rates four from the top of the least deprived borough	A higher standard of living may be attributable in some small part to the provision of open space in the area and as such should be maintained. Higher standards of living can also lead to higher expectations and the provision of open space will need to meet these expectations.
There is a low percentage of residents that have no access to a car or a van (15.31%) compared with the regional (19.43%) and England and Wales (26.79%) percentages.	Despite being a predominantly urban area, the level of mobility is high.

Source: www.ons.gov.uk

OPEN SPACE TYPES AND DESCRIPTIONS – APPENDIX C

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

There are a number of types of land use that have not been included in this assessment of open space in conjunction with PPG17, namely:

- grass verges on the side of roads
- small insignificant areas of grassland or trees – for example on the corner of the junction of 2 roads
- SLOAP (space left over after planning i.e in and around a block of flats)
- farmland and farm tracks
- private roads and private gardens.

As a result of the multifunctionality of open spaces there is a requirement to classify each open space by its 'primary purpose' as recommended in PPG17 so that it is counted only once in the audit.

This should be taken into account when considering additional provision. For example - in areas of deficiency of amenity greenspace, playing pitches may exist that provide the function of required amenity greenspace but its primary purpose is as an outdoor sports facility.

WIDER BENEFITS SCORING ASSESSMENT (Definitions)

		Yes	No	Definition	Factors
Wider Benefits	Structural and landscape benefits	Yes	No	The landscape framework of open spaces can contribute to the study of environmental quality. Well-located, high quality greenspaces help to define the identity and character of an area, and separate it from other areas nearby.	buffer between roads and houses greenbelt land edge of settlement forming local landscape
	Ecological benefits	Yes	No	Greenspaces support local biodiversity and some provide habitats for local wildlife and may exhibit some geological features. Some may help to alleviate the extremes of urban climates such as noise and water pollution.	designations - e.g. SSSI's, LNR's diverse and rich habitats site includes rivers, ponds, lakes that encourage local wildlife habitats local biodiversity studies
	Education benefits	Yes	No	Seen as 'outdoor classrooms' ; some greenspaces offer educational opportunities in science, history, ecological and environmental activities.	nature walks interpretational material provided opportunities for volunteers in practical conservation outdoor educational facilities
	Social inclusion and health benefits	Yes	No	Greenspaces , including sport and recreation facilities can promote some civic pride, community ownership and a sense of belonging; they are also one of the very few publicly accessible facilities equally available to everyone irrespective of personal circumstances	range of age groups use by community groups organised community activities social, cultural or community facilities specific walking/jogging trails and/or sports facilities central location to be accessed by majority
	Cultural and heritage benefits	Yes	No	Some greenspaces have a historical value and some provided a setting listed buildings; also can be high profile symbols of towns and cities	historic buildings historic gardens symbol of the area conservation area monuments and/or memorials
	Amenity benefits and a "sense of place"	Yes	No	The network of greenspaces can contribute to the visual amenity of an urban landscape and make them a more attractive place to live, work and play. They can be appreciated both visually and passively - not just through the active use of facilities provided.	helps to create specific neighbourhood provides important landmark clearly visible from most areas softens urban texture
	Economic benefits	Yes	No	greenspaces can promote economic development and regeneration; can also help to enhance property values	local tourist site income from sports facilities enhancing or devaluing housing within estates potential hosting of major events offers employment opportunities regeneration

QUALITY SCORING ASSESSMENT

Site ID:

Date of Visit:

Site Name:

Specific Facilities

Site Address:

Type of Open Space:

1	Parks and Gardens
2	Natural and semi natural areas
3	Green Corridors

4	Amenity Greenspace
5	Young People and Children
6	Outdoor Sports Facilities

7	Allotments
8	Cemeteries and Churchyards
9	Civic Spaces
10	Indoor Sports Facilities

PMP Audit Codes:

Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
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Weighting

Assessor's Comments

Cleanliness and Maintenance				
Includes: Vandalism and Graffiti Equipment	Litter problems Maintenance	Dog Fouling	Noise	
5	4	3	2	1

x3

Security and Safety				
Includes: Lighting Equipment	Boundaries (e.g. fencing)			
5	4	3	2	1

x2

Vegetation				
Includes: Planted areas	Grass areas			
5	4	3	2	1

x2

Ancillary Accomodation				
Includes: Toilets Pathways (within the open space sites)	Parking	Provision of bins for rubbish/litter	Seats / Benches	
5	4	3	2	1

x2

Quantity

PPG17 advocates that planning policies for open space, including playing fields, should be based upon local standards derived from a robust assessment of local need.

The quantity of provision provided by the audit of open space has assisted in the setting of such local provision standards for Epsom and Ewell Borough. These are included for each type of open space in the separate sections and, as recommended by PPG17, is undertaken by population to calculate the quantity of provision per person.

The quantitative analysis has also taken into account key issues raised from consultations with the public. This provides a more objective view rather than relying solely on statistical calculations. A comparison with the community's view on the level of facilities required and the current level of provision needs to be undertaken to help establish a reasonable level of provision.

Provision standards are then applied to determine whether there is a surplus of provision, the provision was about right or there is a deficiency. All standards are based on 2001 Census data.

The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:

- establish areas of the Borough suffering from deficiency of provision within each type of open space
- areas of significant surplus where it may be possible to investigate changing the type of open space to types that are deficient in that area.

Quality

Quality and value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. An example of this could be:

- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Its usage is therefore restricted and its value to the public limited; or
- a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have some significant wider benefit such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a relatively high value to the public.

The needs assessment therefore analyses quality and value separately within each type of open space.

The overall aim of a quality assessment should be to identify deficiencies in quality and key quality factors that need to be improved within:

- the geographical areas of the Borough
- specific types of open space
- specific quality factors that ensure a high quality open space

This enables resources to be concentrated on areas that need to be improved.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a key assessment of open space sites. Without accessibility for the public the provision of good quality or quantity of open space sites would be of very limited value. The overall aim of an accessibility assessment should be to identify:

- how accessible sites are
- how far are people are willing to travel to reach open space
- areas of the Borough deficient in provision
- areas of the Borough differing in accessibility and therefore of priority importance
- key accessibility factors that need to be improved.

Setting accessibility standards for open space should be derived from an analysis of the accessibility issues within the audit and in light of community views.

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

PPG17 encourages any new open space sites or enhancement of existing sites to be accessible by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Level of usage and value

The value of an open space site relates to three key factors as described in the PPG17 Companion Guide:

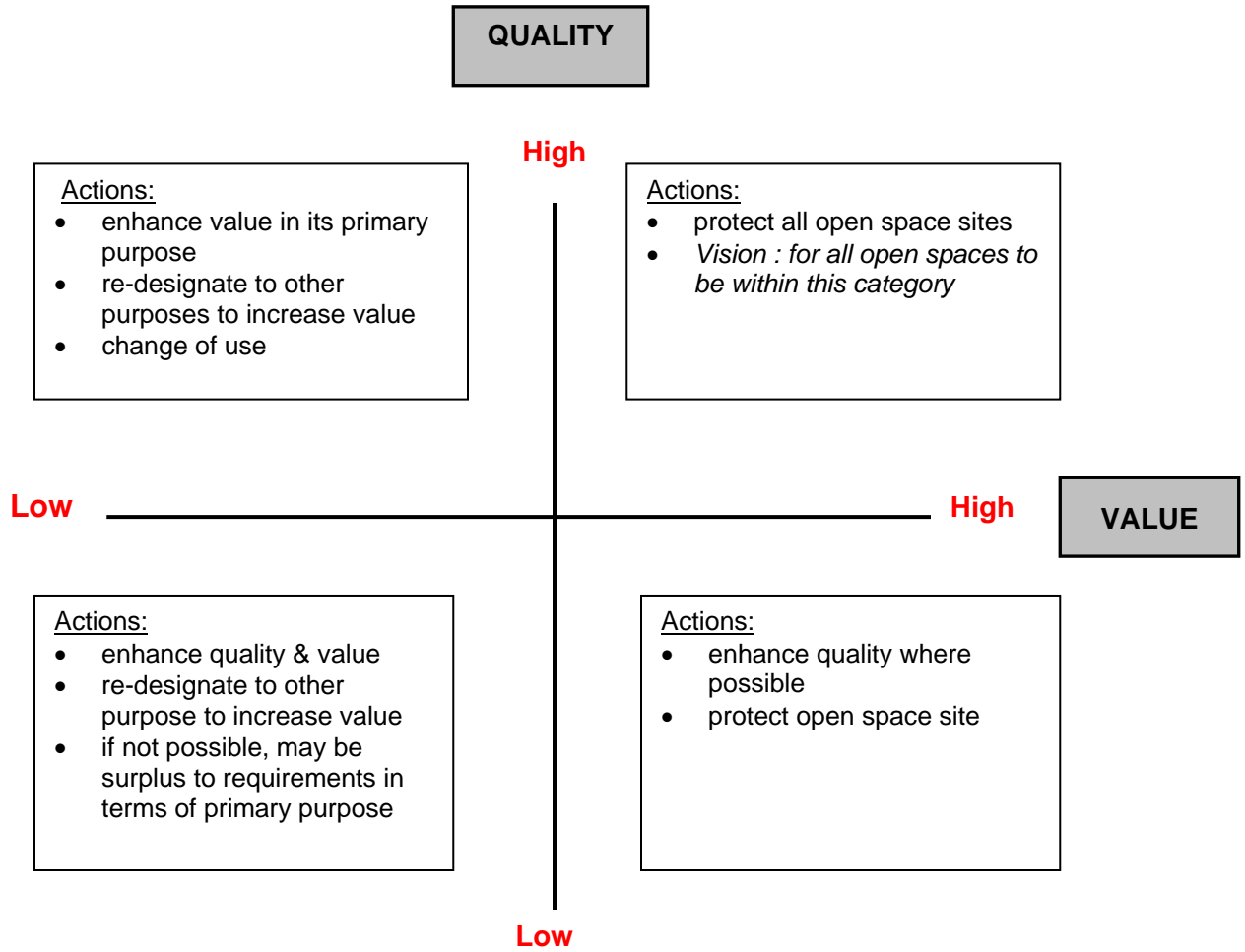
- context – a site that is inaccessible is irrelevant to potential users and therefore is of little value irrespective of its quality. Also, in areas where there is a large amount of high quality open space or more than is actually required, some of it may be of little value. In contrast to this, a site of low quality but in an area of low provision maybe of extremely high value to the public
- level and type of use – poorly used open space sites may be of little value while highly used sites may be of high value
- wider benefits – there are many wider benefits of open space sites that should be taken into account when analysing the results of particular sites eg visual impact, benefits for biodiversity, education, cultural, economy etc. These benefits are difficult to assess in a systematic way and would require detailed site visits.

Evaluating value therefore involves attempting to assess these factors, in particular relating the context of the open space site (quality and accessibility) against the level of use of each site.

From the assessment of the value of sites, we are able to start to determine policy options in terms of feeding into a specific action plan. This is fundamental to effective planning.

STEP 3 & 4: SETTING AND APPLYING PROVISION STANDARDS – APPENDIX F

The figure below provides a simple means of determining the most appropriate policy approach to each existing open space site.



CABE Space

CABE Space is part of the Commission for the Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and is publicly funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). CABE Space aims :



“to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in towns and cities.”

Through their work, they encourage people to think holistically about green space, and what it means for the health and well being of communities, routes to school and work, and recreation through play and sport. Their ultimate goal is to ensure that people in England have easy access to well designed and well looked after public space.

Lessons learnt for some of CABE Space’s case studies include:

- strategic vision is essential
- political commitment is essential
- think long-term
- start by making the case for high quality green spaces in-house (persuading other departments is key – high priority)
- a need to market parks and green spaces
- a need to manage resources more efficiently
- work with others - projects are partnerships
- keep good records: monitor investments and outcomes
- consult widely and get public support for your work

Green Space Strategies – a good practice guide CABE Space (May 2004)

The guidance draws on the principles of the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 and will help contribute to national objectives for better public spaces, focusing on three broad stages in producing a green space strategy.



- **Stage 1: Preliminary activities**
 - provides the foundation of a successful strategy
- **Stage 2: Information gathering and analysis**
 - provides the objective and subjective data necessary to make informed judgements
- **Stage 3: Strategy production**
 - preparing consultation draft and final strategy drawing on consultation responses

The document demonstrates why a green space strategy is important and the potential opportunity and benefits that it can provide, including:

- reinforcing local identity and enhancing the physical character of an area, so shaping existing and future development
- maintaining the visual amenity and increasing the attractiveness of a locality to create a sense of civic pride
- securing external funding and focusing capital and revenue expenditure cost-effectively
- improving physical and social inclusion including accessibility, particularly for young, disabled and older people
- protecting and enhancing levels of biodiversity and ecological habitats

Is the grass greener...? Learning from the international innovations in urban green space management, CABE Space (July 2004)

This is an international perspective using examples of good and bad practice that demonstrate the many issues common to English local authorities that international cities also face and providing practical solutions that have combat the problems overseas.

The guide focuses in particular on aspects of management and maintenance practice, providing a series of challenging and inspiring solutions to common issues that are not dissimilar to current English practice.



The problem in England!

The document describes the problems faced by green space and how English towns and cities are often criticised for:

- **being poorly maintained** – uncoordinated development and maintenance activities
- **being insecure** – the hostile nature of many green spaces
- **lacking a coherent approach to their management** – conflicting interventions by a multitude of agencies, without clear overall responsibility
- **offering little to their users** – lacking in facilities and amenities and being a haven for anti-social behaviour
- **being poorly designed** – unwelcoming to people, created with poor quality materials

Manifesto for better public spaces, CABE Space (2003)

There is huge national demand for better quality parks and public spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood. CABE Space 'manifesto for better public spaces' explains the 10 things we must do to achieve this:

- 1) ensure that creating and caring for well-designed parks, streets and other public spaces is a national and local political priority
- 2) encourage people of all ages – including children, young people and retired people – to play and active role in deciding what our parks and public spaces should be like and how they should be looked after



- 3) ensure that everyone understands the importance of good design to the vitality of our cities, towns and suburbs and that designers, planners and managers all have the right skills to create high quality public spaces
- 4) ensure that the care of parks and public spaces is acknowledged to be an essential service
- 5) work to increase public debate about the issue of risk in outside spaces, and will encourage people to make decisions that give more weight to the benefits of interesting spaces, rather than to the perceived risks
- 6) work to ensure that national and local health policy recognises the role of high quality parks and public space in helping people to become physically active, to recover from illness, and to increase their general health and well-being
- 7) work to ensure that good paths and seating, play opportunities, signs in local languages, cultural events and art are understood to be essential elements of great places – not optional extras that can be cut from the budget
- 8) encourage people who are designing and managing parks and public spaces to protect and enhance biodiversity and to promote its enjoyment to local people
- 9) seek to ensure that public spaces feel safe to use by encouraging councils to adopt a positive approach to crime prevention through investment in good design and management of the whole network of urban green spaces
- 10) encourage people from all sectors of the community to give time to improving their local environment. If we work together we can transform our public spaces and help to improve everyone's quality of life.

The Value of Public Space, CABE Space (March 2004)

CABE Space market how high quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value, as well as being beneficial to physical and mental health, children and young people and a variety of other external issues.

Specific examples are used to illustrate the benefits and highlight the issues arising on the value of public space :

The economic value of public spaces

A high quality public environment is an essential part of any regeneration strategy and can impact positively on the local economy. For example - property prices

The impact on physical and mental health

Research has shown that well maintained public spaces can help to improve physical and mental health encouraging more people to become active.

Benefits and children and young people

Good quality public spaces encourage children to play freely outdoors and experience the natural environment, providing children with opportunities for fun, exercise and learning.



Reducing crime and fear of crime

Better management of public spaces can help to reduce crime rates and help to allay fears of crime, especially in open spaces.

Social dimension of public space

Well-designed and maintained open spaces can help bring communities together, providing meeting places in the right context and fostering social ties.

Movement in and between spaces

One of the fundamental functions of public space is to allow people to move around with the challenge of reconciling the needs of different modes of transport.

Value from biodiversity and nature

Public spaces and gardens helps to bring important environmental benefits to urban areas, as well as providing an opportunity for people to be close to nature.

A Guide to Producing Park and Green Space Management Plans, CABE Space (May 2004)

A primary intention of the guide is to encourage wider use of management plans by dispelling the myth that the creation of a site management plan is an exceptionally difficult task that can be undertaken only by an expert.

The guide presents ideas on benefits of management plans identifying steps to be taken to writing the plan. It also provides a list of subject areas that need to be addressed in any comprehensive management plan. The document has been split into two sections, providing a logical explanation of the management process:

Part 1: Planning the plan

the who, what, when, where and how questions that may arise in the preparation of a park and green space management plan.

Part 2: Content and structure of the plan

- what information needs to be contained in the final management plan and how should that information be presented?

Decent parks? Decent behaviour? – The link between the quality of parks and user behaviour, CABE space (May 2005)

Based on research that supports public consultation that poor maintenance of parks, in turn, attracts anti-social behaviour. Encouragingly it provides examples of places where a combination of good design, management and maintenance has transformed no-go areas back into popular community spaces.



There are nine case studies explored in the report. Below are some of the key elements that have made these parks a better place to be:

- take advantage of the potential for buildings within parks for natural surveillance e.g. from cafes, flats offices
- involve the community early in the process and continually
- involve 'problem' groups as part of the solution where possible and work hard to avoid single group dominance in the park
- provide activities and facilities to ensure young people feel a sense of ownership. Address young peoples fear of crime as well as that if adults

The evidence in this report suggests that parks were in decline and failing to meet customer expectations long before anti-social behaviour started to become the dominant characteristic, however by investing and creating good-quality parks and green spaces, which are staffed and provide a range of attractive facilities for the local community, can be an effective use of resource.

DLTR

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

The main messages to emerge from Green Spaces, Better Places are:

- urban parks and open spaces remain popular, despite a decline in the quality as well as quantitative elements
- open spaces make an important contribution to the quality of life in many areas and help to deliver wider social, economic and environmental benefits
- planners and planning mechanisms need to take better account of the need for parks and open spaces including related management and maintenance issues
- parks and open spaces should be central to any vision of sustainable modern towns and cities
- strong civic and local pride and responsibility are necessary to achieve the vision reinforced by a successful green spaces strategy
- there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach at the national level to guide local strategies.



Improving urban parks, play areas and green space, DTLR (May 2002)

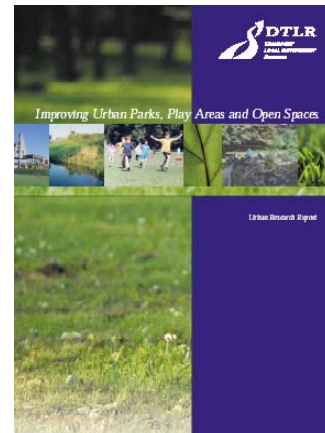
In May 2002 the DTLR produced this linked research report to Green Spaces, Better Places which looked at patterns of use, barriers to open space and the wider role of open space in urban regeneration.

The vital importance of parks and other urban green spaces in enhancing the urban environment and the quality of city life has been recognised in both the Urban Taskforce report and the Urban White Paper.

Wider Value of Open Space

There are clear links demonstrating how parks and other green spaces meet wider council policy objectives linked to other agendas, like education, diversity, health, safety, environment, jobs and regeneration can help raise the political profile and commitment of an authority to green space issues. In particular they:

- contribute significantly to social inclusion because they are free and accessible to all
- can become a centre of community spirit



- contribute to child development through scope for outdoor, energetic and imaginative play
- offer numerous educational opportunities
- provide a range of health, environmental and economic benefits.

The report also highlights major issues in the management, funding and integration of open spaces into the wider context of urban renewal and planning:

Community Involvement - Community involvement in local parks can lead to increased use, enhancement of quality and richness of experience and, in particular, can ensure that the facilities are suited to local needs.

Resources - The acknowledged decline in the quality of care of the urban green space resource in England can be linked to declining local authority green space budgets but in terms of different external sources for capital development, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Section 106 Agreements are seen as the most valuable.

Partnerships - between a local authority and community groups, funding agencies and business can result in significant added value, both in terms of finances and quality of green space.

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

- attracting inward economic investment through the provision of attractive urban landscapes
- unforeseen spin-offs from grassroots green space initiatives
- parks as flagships in neighbourhood renewal
- strategic, multi-agency area based regeneration, linking environment and economy.

Sport England

Planning for Open Space, Sport England (Sept 2002)

The main messages from Sport England within this document are:

- Sport England's policy on planning applications for development of playing fields (A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England) provides 5 exceptions to its normal stance of opposing any loss of all or part of such facilities and are reflected in PPG 17 (paragraphs 10-15)
- Sport England must be consulted on development proposals affecting playing fields at any time in the previous 5 years or is identified as a playing field in a development plan



- It is highly likely that planning inspectors will no longer accept a Six Acre Standard approach in emerging development plans and therefore increasing the importance of setting local standards
- In undertaking a playing pitch assessment as part of an overall open space assessment, local authorities will need to consider the revised advice and methodology '*Towards a Level Playing Field: A manual for the production of Playing Pitch Strategies*'.

A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England / Playing Fields for Sport Revisited, Sport England (2000)

These documents provides Sport England's planning policy statement on playing fields. It acknowledges that playing fields:

- are one of the most important resources for sport in England as they provide the space which is required for the playing of team sports on outdoor pitches
- as open space particularly in urban areas are becoming an increasingly scarce resource
- can provide an important landscape function, perform the function of a strategic gap or provide a resource for other community activities and informal recreation.

