

Birmingham

Open Space Assessment

2022



(Final Version October 2022)

Ecology | Green Space | Community | GIS

Unit 1, Brassmill Lane Enterprise Centre | Bath | BA1 3JN

01225444114 | info@ethosep.co.uk

www.ethosep.co.uk



Birmingham Open Space Assessment (2022)

Contents	Page no.
1.0 Introduction	3-9
2.0 Methodology	10-14
3.0 Strategic Context	15-33
4.0 Local Needs Assessment	34-36
5.0 Audit of existing open space provision	37-57
6.0 Setting local standards	58-72
7.0 Applying local standards	73-98
8.0 Strategic options, policy and management recommendations	99-116
9.0 Conclusion	117
Appendix 1 Open space provision by ward	
Appendix 2 Access maps by typology and ward	
Appendix 3 Quality audit maps by ward	
Appendix 4 Technical appendix	

Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
ANGSt	Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
BCC	Birmingham City Council
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
FIT	Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
GI	Green and Blue Infrastructure
GIS	Geographic Information System
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
NEWP	Natural Environment White Paper
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Ethos Environmental Planning have undertaken this Open Space Assessment to inform Birmingham City Council's decision-making processes in relation to open space provision. It will inform the Council's new Local Plan - the 'Birmingham Local Plan,' which will cover the period up to 2042, and will support the implementation of planning policy when assessing proposals for development in Birmingham.

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

- Birmingham City Council Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022); and
- Birmingham City Council Open Space Assessment (2022) (this report).

The National Planning Policy Framework (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.

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

The study has been conducted in-line with Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)¹ and the NPPF (last updated in July 2021). The assessment has primarily been affected by the omission of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) from the national policy framework. Whilst the government has not published anything specifically to replace this document, there is however, still a clear reference made in the new guidance to the principles 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 PPG is a web-based resource which brings together guidance on various planning topics in one place. It largely draws on the government's planning policies within the NPPF.

1.2 Purpose of this report

The overall aims of the study are to provide a robust assessment of the quality, quantity and accessibility in publicly accessible open spaces in order to establish local provision standards and create an up to date evidence base which can be used to inform new Birmingham Local Plan policy.

The assessment recognises the need for improving the quality of existing open spaces in addition to requiring new provision in order to deliver on the Council's aspirations and opportunities for a high-quality network of open spaces across the city, which supports the City of Nature Plan.

The Open Space Assessment report:

- Provides an NPPF and PPG compliant assessment of open spaces within the city. This includes defining local typologies and standards for open space and assessing the quantity, quality and accessibility of different types of open spaces across the city. Results are presented on a city-wide as well as ward by basis.
- Identifies quantity and quality deficiencies at a ward level and make recommendations for addressing these.
- Makes recommendations for the updated local plan policy and provide open space provision and maintenance costings to support development of an up to date policy on developer contributions.
- Identifies the potential for new strategic green links between open spaces including 'blue' links along waterways and existing/potential cross boundary opportunities.

1.3 Structure of the report

The study 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
-

1.4 The Study Area

1.4.1 Overview



Birmingham is a major city, the UK's largest outside London, with an established international standing and reputation as well as being the largest urban centre in the West Midlands. With a population of just over 1 million, Birmingham has a significantly younger population profile than the national average, and an ethnically diverse population. The city also has a strong network of over 70 urban centres with Birmingham city centre being the economic, cultural and tourist hub of the region, with over 30 million people visiting a year.

Birmingham is at the centre of the West Midlands region and has important relationships with surrounding areas. There are significant amounts of in-commuting to Birmingham, particularly from within the rest of the West Midlands Metropolitan area as well as from south east Staffordshire, south Warwickshire, and north Worcestershire. There are also important connections to neighbouring communities, regeneration programmes and environmental networks in the Black Country, north Solihull and Bromsgrove. The Council collaborates with these areas through partnership arrangements, including the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and is a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

The city is one of Britain's greenest with more than one fifth of its area consisting of parks, nature reserves, allotments, golf courses and playing fields, many of which are linked by rivers, streams and canals. Some of these assets are of national significance, in particular Sutton Park, which is designated as a National Nature Reserve, SSSI and Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are also a number of Local Nature Reserves and locally designated wildlife sites identified for their nature conservation value. The city also formed part of the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area.

Birmingham is one of eight urban areas chosen as part of the Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) scheme which is a unique multi-million-pound initiative formed jointly by the National Trust, National Lottery Heritage fund, and the Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities); designed to enhance and secure the future of the UK's green spaces. The goal of the FPA programme for Birmingham goes beyond simply funding and maintaining parks but to embed the value of

green spaces across all areas of the Council and ensure that Birmingham’s substantial green infrastructure is well utilised, sustainable, and valued. Through the FPA programme, the Council aims to generate valuable networks and learning that can be taken forward in the future to fundamentally shift ways of working to create a more sustainable, inclusive model for the provision of parks and open spaces.

1.4.2 Administrative Boundaries

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

- The study area (the city boundary); and
- 69 wards.

These boundaries are shown in Figure 1 below and were agreed by the project steering group as the most effective way to analyse open space provision.



Figure 1 The study area - city and ward boundaries

1.4.3 Population Statistics

Of particular relevance to this study are the ONS mid 2020 population statistics by ward², which have been used as the basis for much of the current and future assessment of need for open space.

The population of the study area is 1,140,525. The breakdown by ward is shown in the table below.

Table 1 Population figures by ward

Ward	Population (ONS Mid-2020 Estimates)
Acocks Green Ward	23951
Allens Cross Ward	10466
Alum Rock Ward	26763
Aston Ward	23904
Balsall Heath West Ward	11790
Bartley Green Ward	22676
Billesley Ward	19892
Birchfield Ward	12531
Bordesley & Highgate Ward	16295
Bordesley Green Ward	12816
Bournbrook & Selly Park Ward	25295
Bournville & Cotteridge Ward	17925
Brandwood & King's Heath Ward	18500
Bromford & Hodge Hill Ward	21926
Castle Vale Ward	9648
Druids Heath & Monyhull Ward	11660
Edgbaston Ward	22112
Erdington Ward	20764
Frankley Great Park Ward	11717
Garretts Green Ward	10772
Glebe Farm & Tile Cross Ward	24227
Gravelly Hill Ward	10604
Hall Green North Ward	23136
Hall Green South Ward	10253
Handsworth Ward	12537
Handsworth Wood Ward	20414
Harborne Ward	24816
Heartlands Ward	13454
Highter's Heath Ward	10946
Holyhead Ward	12476
King's Norton North Ward	11644
King's Norton South Ward	11168
Kingstanding Ward	20848
Ladywood Ward	30344
Longbridge & West Heath Ward	20019

² Census 2021 population figures by ward were not available at the time of writing.

Ward	Population (ONS Mid-2020 Estimates)
Lozells Ward	9713
Moseley Ward	21699
Nechells Ward	16678
Newtown Ward	15498
North Edgbaston Ward	24555
Northfield Ward	10124
Oscott Ward	20113
Perry Barr Ward	20279
Perry Common Ward	11854
Pype Hayes Ward	10645
Quinton Ward	20441
Rubery & Rednal Ward	11016
Shard End Ward	12061
Sheldon Ward	19653
Small Heath Ward	20541
Soho & Jewellery Quarter Ward	28124
South Yardley Ward	10551
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East Ward	25643
Sparkhill Ward	21561
Stirchley Ward	10004
Stockland Green Ward	24233
Sutton Four Oaks Ward	9111
Sutton Mere Green Ward	9806
Sutton Reddicap Ward	9896
Sutton Roughley Ward	11531
Sutton Trinity Ward	9273
Sutton Vesey Ward	19513
Sutton Walmley & Minworth Ward	15804
Sutton Wylde Green Ward	8552
Tyseley & Hay Mills Ward	12547
Ward End Ward	13688
Weoley & Selly Oak Ward	24303
Yardley East Ward	10247
Yardley West & Stechford Ward	12979
City Wide	1140525

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

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

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

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

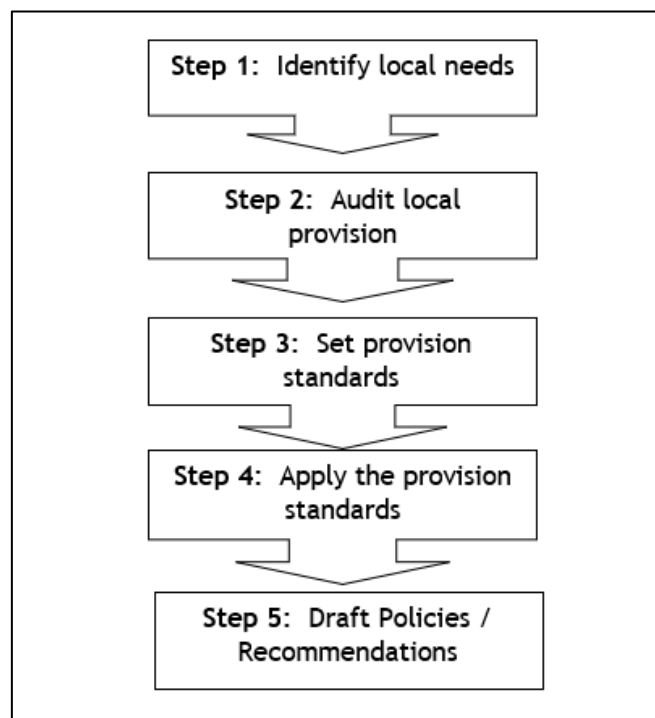


Figure 2 Steps undertaken as part of this study

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

2.2 Identifying Local Need (Step 1)

The Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022) examines identified local need for various types of open space. It has drawn upon a survey questionnaire to key stakeholders as well as a review of existing consultation data and other relevant documentation. The findings from the Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022) are summarised in this report.

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 publicly accessible open space and play provision in the city, an initial desktop audit of the open space asset was carried out, which included:

- analysis of existing GIS data held by Birmingham City Council;
- desktop mapping of open space from aerial photography, the Ordnance Survey Greenspace layer and other open datasets e.g., from Natural England;
- liaison with council officers.

Following this, site visits were undertaken by Ethos during March 2022 at a total of 300 sites, with quality audits undertaken at 283³ sites. The quality audit drew on criteria set out in the ‘Green Flag Award⁴’ and was informed by the draft Naturally Birmingham Environmental Justice Assessment site based audit and management tool (however it is important to note that the tool is more detailed and has not been used for this assessment). 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 outside of this study through site management plans and neighbourhood plans as appropriate.

Open space forms an important part of the wider green and blue infrastructure network within the city, which has also been identified and mapped. The protection and enhancement of the city’s GI network, alongside the creation of new GI is fundamental in supporting the climate, nature and health emergency response.

³ Not all sites were quality audited, as the site visits might have revealed that a site was not accessible/private and therefore should not be included.

⁴ <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/judges/judging-criteria>

2.3.2 Approach to mapping

As part of the audit process, sites were mapped into their different primary typologies using a multi-functional approach to mapping, as explained in further detail in Section 5. Sites have been snapped to MasterMap topographic boundaries where possible to ensure an accurate and consistent approach to the mapping.

Key open spaces that cross the boundary of the city or fall just outside the city have been mapped in order to inform the access analysis, however only the part of the open space that falls within the city boundary is included within the quantity analysis. Cross-border use of open space has been noted and considered (including within the Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022)).

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

It should be noted that the mapping is as accurate as possible following cross checking with the councils' GIS layers; desktop mapping; liaison with council officers; consultation with local groups and site visits.

The open space provision tables (in Section 5) and resulting supply and access maps (Section 7) are based on the mapping of open space which was signed off by the Council in August 2022.

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

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

- quantity;
- accessibility; and
- quality.

Quantity

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

Access

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

A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in this report. The maps are intended to be indicative, and more detailed maps by ward are provided at Appendix 2. The maps show walk time buffers and straight line buffers, depending on the access standards set⁵.

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

Table 2 Standard walk-times and distances

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

Quality

Quality assessment criteria have been developed with the project team, these are based on the Green Flag Award criteria and informed by the draft Naturally Birmingham Environmental Justice Assessment Site Based Audit Tool (however it is important to note that the tool is more detailed and has not been used for this assessment). 283 open spaces have been assessed against the quality criteria and have been categorised into four different groups – excellent, good, adequate and poor.

⁵ Drive-time standards have not been proposed as these are normally only appropriate for strategic sites such as country parks and sports hub sites. Drive-time standards generally do not work well for analysing access to local facilities/open space, as they do not generally show where the gaps in access are.

The quality standards also include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future.

2.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 5)

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

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

In addition, information on developer contributions and the methodology for calculating costs for on- and off-site provision of open space is provided in Section 8.7.

3.0 CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

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

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 Context

Tackling the climate and ecological emergency

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

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

The climate and ecological emergency are inextricably linked. Biodiversity underpins healthy ecosystems that are able to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, however climate change is driving declines in biodiversity, and the degradation of our ecosystems. The degradation of our ecosystems could result in total collapse and an inability to support life on earth.

The **UK government declaration of an environment and climate emergency** in May 2019 has put climate and the environment at the centre of government policy. The government has since made a legally binding commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (through the Climate Change Act 2008, as amended in 2019), and has committed to planting 30,000 hectares of trees annually by 2025 (through the England Tree Strategy), helping to form part of the green recovery from Covid-19 and support the transition to net zero. In September 2020, the Prime Minister signed the Leaders Pledge for Nature, committing to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030, to protect nature and boost biodiversity, as well as committing to prioritise a green recovery following the coronavirus pandemic.

The UK hosted the 26th **UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)** in October-November 2021, where Nations adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact, aiming to turn the 2020s into a decade of climate action and support, with the aim of accelerating action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. **The UN Biodiversity Conference (Convention on Biological Diversity COP15)** is due to take place in Autumn 2022. It will see the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which provides a strategic vision and a global roadmap for the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems for the next decade.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

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.

Within the NPPF, open space is defined as 'All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.'

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

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

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- **Para 100** - Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
 - **Para 126** - The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
 - **Para 153** - Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
 - **Para 174** - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
 - **Para 175** – Plans should take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

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

Green Infrastructure (GI)

Open space forms a key part of the GI network within Birmingham, 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.




The concept of GI is firmly embedded within the NPPF, which requires local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. It defines green infrastructure as ‘A network of multi-functional green and blue

spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.'

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

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

Table 3 Benefits provided by GI

 Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and provides biodiversity (which underpins healthy and resilient ecosystems) and species movement/dispersal including through providing habitat, wildlife corridors and stepping-stones. • Provides climate change mitigation and adaption e.g., through providing flood and soil erosion protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and urban cooling. • Improves air and water quality (pollution absorption and removal). • Enables food production and supports pollination. • Supports and creates attractive and sustainable places and landscapes i.e., quality placemaking.
 Social/health and wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities for outdoor recreation, exercise, play, nature connectedness and access to nature. • Provides attractive and safe spaces for people to enjoy and improve social contacts – a key component of 'liveable' towns and cities where people want to live. • Supports the development of skills and capabilities. • Improves air and water quality, provides urban cooling and shade, and reduces noise pollution thereby increasing life expectancy and reducing years of life lost. • Provides green active travel routes.
 Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides attractive places to live and work, attracting inward investment and tourism. • Increased land and property values. • Supports sustainable homes and communities e.g., through providing local food and building materials, encouraging low carbon lifestyles e.g., through well connected and attractive walking and cycling routes. • Provides health and wellbeing benefits that result in avoided healthcare costs. • Provides local food, energy, and timber production. • Climate change resilience mitigation and adaption. This includes reducing economic costs of, for example reduced insurance and rebuild costs by avoiding flooding.

Nature-based Solutions

A nature-based solution is the application or purposeful use of green infrastructure to deal with a particular issue.

Nature-based solutions are defined as ‘*actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits*’⁶. They have huge potential to help cities and urban areas become more resilient to climate change, and benefit people’s health and the economy.

Nature-based solutions tend to be focused on six key areas within urban areas⁷:

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

Green Infrastructure Standards

Natural England’s **National Green Infrastructure Framework** will be fully available in autumn 2022. It establishes national standards for GI in England and currently comprises the following:

- GI Principles – underpin the framework and cover why, what and how to deliver good GI.
- GI Mapping Database and Analysis (currently Beta version is available) – a freely available tool providing GI Mapping layers and analyses.

The GI Standards, GI Design Guide, Case Studies and Process Journeys (to assist different audiences) are still to be published.

The Framework does not seek to duplicate existing standards such as Building with Nature, but rather to learn from best practice and reinforce key messages, such as that green

⁶ IUCN

⁷ <https://earthwatch.org.uk/working-with-business/climate-proof-cities>

infrastructure and natural capital needs to be considered and incorporated at the earliest stages of development and treated like other types of essential infrastructure.

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

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (2022)

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (2022) provides a framework for levelling up to ensure all parts of the country share equally in the nation's success. This includes giving local communities control over what is built, where it is built, and what it looks like. Ensuring new development meets clear design standards which reflect community views (reflecting the recommendations in the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission⁸) is a key part of this, alongside a strengthened framework of environmental outcomes, and expanded protections for the places people value.

The 25 Year Environment Plan

This 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) 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.

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.

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a key policy commitment in the 25 YEP. The NRN will benefit people and wildlife by increasing, improving and joining-up wildlife-rich places across England. It will create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife habitat outside protected sites, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-with-beauty-report-of-the-building-better-building-beautiful-commission>

infrastructure (such as trees, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests) and urban blue infrastructure (such as bioswales, rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, and floodplains). This landscape-scale approach to restoring nature was recently demonstrated by Natural England’s recent designation of the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve (NNR) in Dorset.

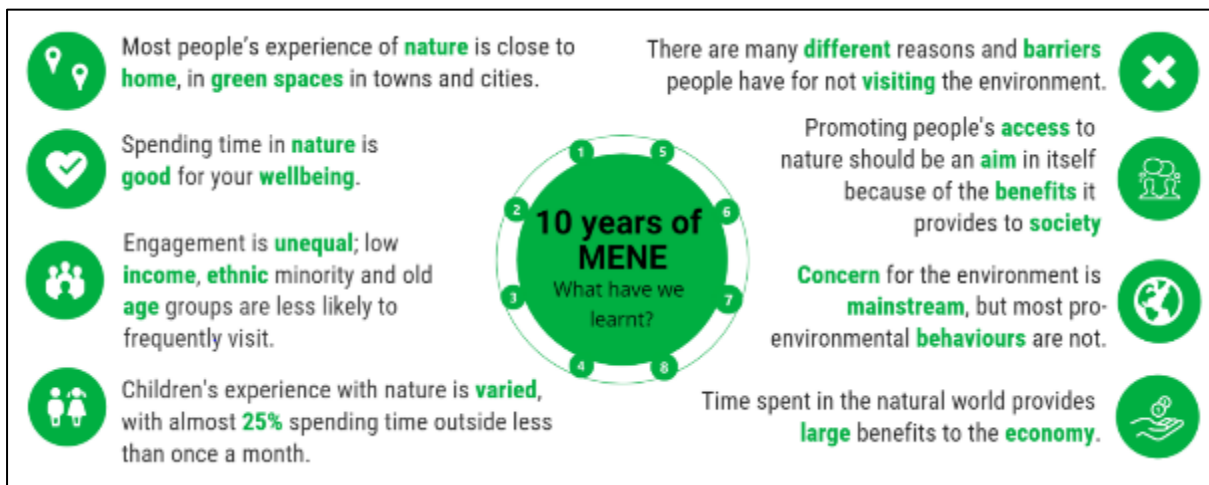
The **Environment Act (2021)** places the 25 Year Environment Plan on statutory footing. A key outcome from this includes a requirement for all areas in England to establish Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs). This will help bring a broad range of groups together – from farmers to businesses to local communities – to deliver priorities for nature recovery at a local and national level. Five local authorities (Cornwall, Buckinghamshire, Greater Manchester, Northumberland, and Cumbria) have been selected to set up LNRSs pilot studies to help map the most valuable sites and habitats for wildlife in their area and identify where nature can be restored. The pilots will also help kick-start the creation of over a million acres of habitats for wildlife.

The Environment Act (2021) will also require all development to achieve mandatory net gains in biodiversity. LPAs will be required to report on both biodiversity net gains and LNRSs, however the mechanism for this has not yet been published by Central Government.

Covid 19 and the impact on open spaces and green infrastructure

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

This biodiversity strategy for England built on the Natural Environment White Paper and set 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 was 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 majority of the 2020 outcomes and indicators were not met. The UN Biodiversity Conference (Convention on Biological Diversity COP15) is due to take place in Autumn 2022 and will see the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Uniting the Movement Strategy by Sport England is a 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. It sets out how the sector needs to change to give people opportunities now and, in the future, to allow people to live happier, healthier, and more fulfilled lives. This includes tackling inequalities seen in sport and physical activity and helping to remove barriers. The three objectives for the strategy are:

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

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

3.2.2 Regional Context

West Midlands Five Year Plan 2021-26

This five year plan sets out how the West Midlands Combined Authority will achieve its target for the region to be net zero by 2041. There are 11 key priorities to deliver the target of being net zero, these are:

1. Set up a regional approach to work with stakeholders to unlock investment to deliver energy efficient homes.
 2. Unlock investment in land based renewables and rooftop PV.
 3. Energy Capital will support local authorities, LEPs and stakeholders to undertake and implement local area energy planning, enable net zero energy systems and renewables delivery.
 4. Be a pathfinder for energy devolution and regulatory change.
 5. Support changes in travel through reduction in car usage, public transport, and cycling.
 6. Implement the zero carbon homes route map which provides clear actions and targets for reducing operational and life emissions for new residential development.
 7. Work with stakeholders to secure inward investment that support green growth such as electric vehicle charging facilities.
 8. Launch a net zero business pledge to enable businesses in the region to become champions and understand how they can play their part.
 9. Establish a regional natural capital board to produce a natural capital plan for the West Midlands.
 10. Work with stakeholders to develop and drive behaviour change initiatives across the region.
 11. Work with stakeholders to develop the skills and training programmes required to provide the work force for the net zero transition.
-

West Midlands Natural Environment Plan 2021-26

The Natural Environment Plan follows on from the West Midlands Five Year Plan. It aims to deliver the following outcomes:

- Everybody can access high quality green space within 300m walk of their home.
- Forestry cover to be increased from 1.5% now to 13%.
- Creation/restoration of 6 wildlife corridors.
- All rivers to be restored to good condition by 2030.
- Support the creation of 200 jobs in natural capital by 2026.

3.2.3 Local Context

Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) (2031)

The Birmingham Development Plan sets out a spatial vision and strategy for the sustainable growth of Birmingham till 2031 guiding decisions on planning, development, and regeneration.

Policy TP9 of the BDP focusses on open space, playing field and allotments. The policy highlights that with built up character of the city and pressure for development, opportunities for creating new open space are limited. Therefore, the main emphasis is on the quality and accessibility ensuring that people have access to good facilities and sufficient recreational space. The current adequate open space provision is a minimum of 2ha per 1,000 population.

Summary of Policy TP9

Planning policy will not normally be granted for development on open space except where:

- The open space is surplus to the minimum standard of 2ha per 1,000 people.
- The lost site will be replaced by a similar sized piece of open space.
- Open space is underused or has inherent problems, and the proposal would result in the loss of a small part of a larger area of open space and compensation would be given to the remaining area.
- The development is for alternative sport or recreational provision.

Provision of public open space

Open space should be in line with the following standards:

- All residents should have access within 400m to an area of accessible open space of at least 0.2 ha in size. Children's play facilities should also be within 400m.
 - Within 1km of all residents there should be an area of accessible open space of at least 2ha in size.
 - Within 3km of all residents there should be access to an accessible park of more than 2ha in size.
-

In new residential developments provision of new public open space will broadly be in line with 2ha per 1,000, with residential schemes of 20 or more dwellings providing on site open space and/or children’s play provision. Developer contributions could be used to address the demand from new residents on other types of open space.

Allotments

Provision of allotments should relate directly to demand in the area, where there is a shortage of provision then consideration will be given to using other surplus open space land for allotments.

Green Living Spaces Plan (2013)

This Green Living Spaces Plan aims to secure, enhance, and ensure the effective long term maintenance of the city’s natural green and water spaces. It links the issues of climate change, public health, and spatial planning. It also introduced a new approach that of valuing all the city’s natural spaces and features as Natural Capital. The plan proposed seven green living principles which are outlined in the table below.

Table 4 Green Living Spaces Plan - Principles and Outcomes

PRINCIPLE	OUTCOME
An Adapted City	Retain City’s top ranking for adaption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all future growth is ‘adapted’ • Trees for cooling and thermal insulation • Green roofs, walls, and street canyon research
The City’s Blue Network	Adopt water sensitive urban design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated SuDs, flood, and water management solutions • ‘Blueprint’ for enhanced walking and cycling network • Blue corridor/network policy with Canal River Trust
A Healthy City	Adopt natural health improvement zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate the delivery of health and green living spaces • Continue to extend the Be-active offer • Public health as key partners in planning
The City’s Productive Landscapes	Embrace urban forestry and urban food growing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote allotments • Facilitate community food growing and orchards • Promote the multiple benefits of urban forestry
The City’s Greenways	Change gear to a walking and cycling city <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create walkable/cyclable neighbourhoods • Citywide signed routes linked to public transport • Link healthcare activities and prevention programmes
The City’s Ecosystems	Birmingham as a biophilic city <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City to adopt an ecosystem services approach • Partners to lead on district NIA continuation plans • Birmingham to join global biophilic cities network
The City’s Green Living Spaces	Birmingham an international city of green living spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the 7 principles across planning framework • Green infrastructure and adaption delivery group • Work with business partners on green economy

Nature Conservation Strategy for Birmingham (1997)

The Nature and Conservation Strategy provides comprehensive action and direction regarding Birmingham’s nature conservation resource and practical guidelines for action. It addresses the social value of nature and makes recommendations about access, promotion, and its value for education.

Public open space in new residential development SPD (2007)

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance to seek and ensure that adequate public open space, children’s play, and sports pitches are provided to serve all new residential development in the city. The policy states that open space of 2ha per 1,000 population will be required which could include either on site provision or in a commuted sum to be used off site, this applies to all new residential development of twenty or more dwellings. A children’s play area will be required where there is no existing provision within walking distance of the new development (400m), with the size and design of the play facility dependent on the size of the development (see table below).

	Public open space	Equipped children’s play	Youth Facilities
Houses	✓	✓	✓
1 bed flats	✓	×	×
Flats of 2 or more bedrooms	✓	✓	✓
Sheltered accommodation	✓	×	×
Institutional uses	×	×	×
Extra care retirements villages	×	×	×

Developments of 20 to 49 dwellings will require a toddler play area, and development of 50 or more dwellings will require a junior play area with equipment for toddlers and children.

The SPD highlights the off-site requirements may be more preferable including where the development is close to an existing facility or where there is a conversion of an existing non-residential building into residential use implementing improvements may be more suitable.

Parks and Open Space SPD (2006)

This SPD aims to protect and guide the planning, design, management, maintenance and provision of parks and public open space in the city over the next 10 – 15 years. The strategy is split into two parts:

1. Main strategy outlining the background, the results of public consultation and the principles, policies and guidelines for Birmingham’s parks and open spaces.
2. Local open space plans and schedules which present information on the existing parks resource for each ward/constituency.

The City Council aims to ensure parks will form an integral part of social regeneration strategies going forward and will devise park regeneration schemes and funding packages to

deliver broader urban regeneration aims. The strategy notes that to achieve this there will be a need for higher levels of capital and revenue investment.

The strategy also highlights a need for parks to provide multiple uses and facilities that are accessible for all, creating a linked network of diverse public open space. Open spaces should be designed to be purposeful, meaningful, well integrated and with a distinctive identity.

Part 2 of the strategy developed local ward and constituency visions in consultation with stakeholders of which it hopes that the comprehensive approach to park regenerations will develop stronger partnership working and community involvement. This includes creating site management plans for each park setting out the approach for future design and management.

Route to Zero Action Plan – Call to Action (2020)

This action plan sets out 40 actions to achieve net zero emissions. It should be noted that these actions are about climate change mitigation and set out the first wave of actions only. Adaptation and resilience actions through GI and nature-based solutions are not covered. The actions are split into 7 sectors: new build housing, housing retrofit, transport, EV charging, waste, energy, and natural environment.

The natural environment sector includes actions in relation to the improvement of open space and includes:

- Completing the Future Parks Accelerator Project, embed Environmental Justice policy and governance recommendations where appropriate and maximise joint working.
- Produce trees SPD.
- Produce biodiversity SPD.
- Production of an urban forest masterplan.
- Begin targeting the wards with the lowest % canopy cover.
- Work collaboratively with WMCA on the WM National Park concept.
- Deliver the Ward End and Cole Valley Green Skills Hub project.

Birmingham Transport Plan (2021)

The Birmingham Transport Plan 2031 outlines how the city's transport system needs to be transformed to meet the challenges of the next decade. The plan contains four principles:

- Reallocating road space
- Transforming the city centre
- Prioritising active travel in local neighbourhoods
- Managing demand through parking measures

Walking and Cycling Strategy (2020)

This strategy forms part of the Birmingham Transport Plan and sets the context for future investment in measures to enable, develop and inspire walking and cycling for the next ten years. The aim of the strategy is to make walking and cycling the everyday choice for local

journeys and leisure activities, as part of a safe and integrated transport network for Birmingham. To achieve this three objectives have been set:

- 1. Enable walking and cycling** – provide training, improving access to bikes, tackling safety issues and securing funding.
- 2. Develop a great city for walking and cycling** – providing safe infrastructure, managing traffic and maintaining streets.
- 3. Inspire walking and cycling** – organising events, distributing information, and evaluating outcomes.

In terms of open space, objective number 2 focusses on improving infrastructure in open spaces including prioritising improvements within open spaces and along routes connecting open spaces, this involves providing clear and consistent wayfinding and directional signage. It also highlights the need to protect and enhance green and blue corridors as active travel routes, recreational spaces, and ecological corridors.

Playing Pitch Strategy (2017)

The playing pitch strategy follows national guidance and to local sports development criteria to guide the future provision and management of old and new sports pitches in the area. The strategy provides the evidence to help protect and enhance playing pitch provision along with a series of strategic recommendations for future improvements and prioritisation of playing pitch facilities.

The strategy found that the existing position for all pitch sports is either that demand is being met or there is a shortfall (football, rugby union and rugby league). Future position indicates that there will be an exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of shortfalls where currently existing demand. The conclusion drawn from this that there is a need to protect all existing playing pitch provision until demand is met; or there is a requirement to replace any lost provision to an equal or better quantity and quality before it is lost.

The Future Parks Accelerator (Naturally Birmingham)

In 2019 Birmingham became one of only eight places across the UK selected to take part in the ground-breaking Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) programme. This programme was designed to help councils find sustainable ways to manage and invest in parks and open spaces across entire towns and cities.

Birmingham's FPA - Naturally Birmingham, has at its core, a new vision for a greener city, one that recognises and embeds the true value of the city's green open spaces in all future policy and decision making processes, and that helps bring about better environmental quality and greater environmental justice for all its citizens.

The Naturally Birmingham project led the city council to produce the City of Nature Plan (see below).

Environmental Justice Mapping

Birmingham City Council have produced an Environmental Justice Assessment for Birmingham. This consists of a city map and a site based audit tool (currently in draft version), which informed the quality assessment undertaken as part of the report – see Section 7.4).

The city map categorises each ward based on 4 datasets (which are overlain with the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) which is how cities universally measure equity). The 4 datasets are:

- Access to green space (2ha per 1,000 population; derived from ONS Green Space data)
- Urban Heat Island (derived freely from UK Space Agency maps)
- Flood Risk (derived from Birmingham City Council Flood Risk Assessment)
- Excess Years Life Lost (Derived from Birmingham City Council Public Health, standard dataset)

The 35 worst wards for environmental justice (i.e., those wards with the largest gaps in access to open space, highest urban temperatures, highest flood risk, highest levels of deprivation and lowest life expectancy (Excess Years Life Lost)) are considered to be the priorities for improving the quality of open space.

The ambition is that open space in all of the lowest 35 wards, as depicted in the map; are brought up to a new Fair Parks Standard (over the 25 year vision period) (assessed using the site based audit and management tool – this is currently in draft format).

The ambition is that all public open spaces in all wards reach the Birmingham Fair Standard.

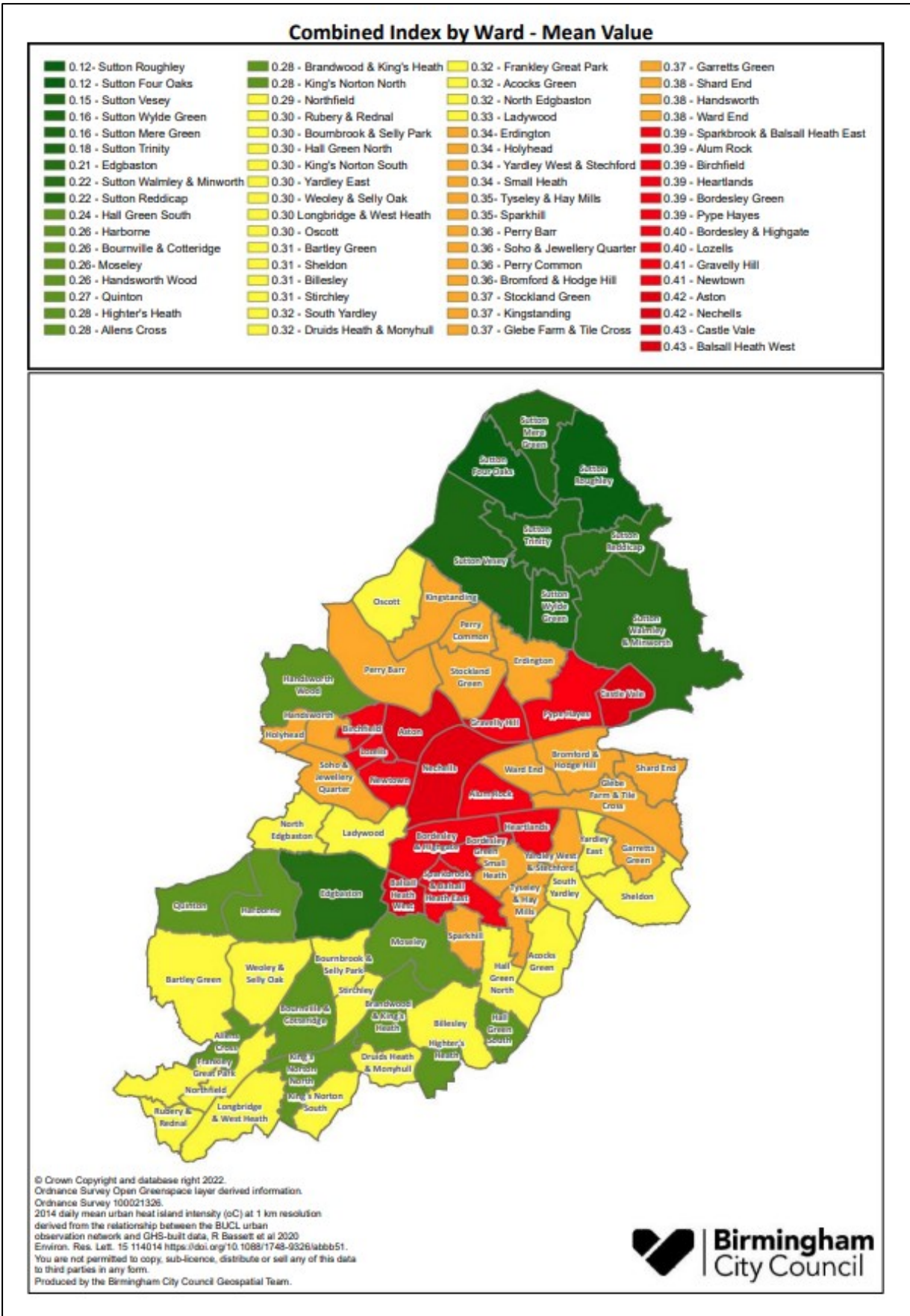


Figure 4 Birmingham Environmental Justice Mapping

City of Nature Plan (2022)

The Birmingham City of Nature Plan is a 25 year ambition to see Birmingham truly transform into a global green city; recognisable as such by every citizen and visitor.

The City of Nature Plan is the first detailed plan to explain how the Council will advance one of the six themes of Our Future City Plan (see below): a city of nature.

To help achieve this and lock-in change right across the organisation and all with its partners, the vision has been cast across 5 city themes that try to capture the multiple dimensions in which the contribution of the natural environment makes to a city overall and to individual lives. These are:

- **A green city** - ensuring green and blue infrastructure is safe, clean, and sustainably managed. Our 25 year plan for nature will set the threshold for the City's Nature Recovery Network Plan and embed a new governance model.
- **A healthy city** - we will make sure every citizen in Birmingham can access green spaces to improve their health and wellbeing as part of the foundations of a good life.
- **A fair city** - we will make sure; that there is fair access to green jobs and that our workforce reflects our diverse communities; ensuring every citizen has access to good quality green space wherever they live, fast tracking those in greatest need first.
- **An involved city** - citizens will know, love, and protect green spaces and nature.
- **A valued city** - ensuring that the city better understands and captures the value of nature and green spaces, maximising their commercial and sponsorship potential and establishes new innovative funding avenues.

Nature Recovery Network (NRN) vision map

The NRN vision map (pictured below) was commissioned by Naturally Birmingham (the FPA) and is a key part of the City of Nature Plan (2022).

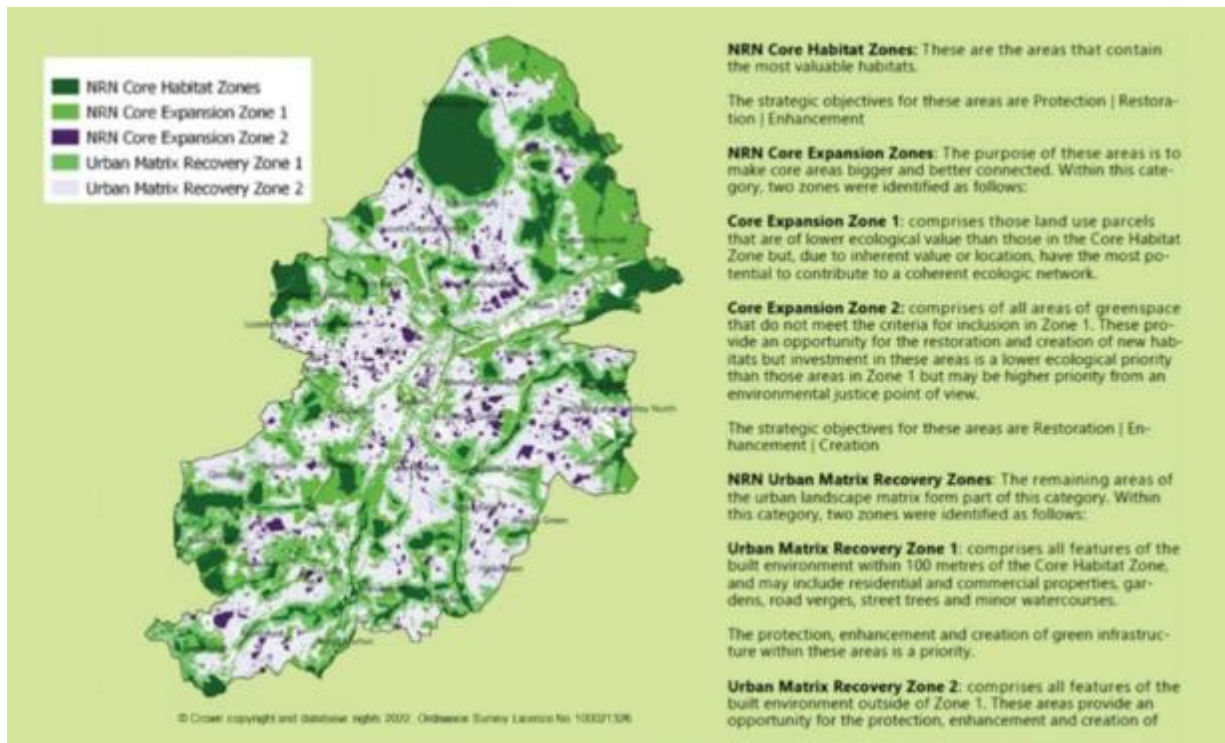


Figure 5 Birmingham Nature Recovery Network Vision Map

Urban Forest Management Plan (2021 - 2051)

The Urban Forest Management Plan has been designed to offer a coherent action-based strategy looking long term for the next 30 years at the city. The vision for the plan is “*having more trees for Birmingham, that deliver benefits for health, mature and climate change, for all the communities within the city, now and in the future, as part of an inclusive and sustainable urban forest*”. The vision is delivered by:

- Developing a diverse and resilient urban forest.
- Building meaningful relationships between trees and all members of Birmingham’s diverse communities.
- Managing the urban forest in an evidence-based and highly professional way.
- Working collaboratively and in partnership, crossing communities, ownership, sectors, and scales.

The plan provides a framework for which various action plans can be developed along with smaller goals including goals around species diversity, environmental equity, tree protection and community engagement. Indicators have also been put in place to monitor progress towards the goals.

Our Future City Plan (OFCP) - Central Birmingham 2040

This emerging non-statutory plan will provide a new vision and strategy for investment that will stimulate green, inclusive growth that meets Birmingham’s communities’ diverse needs and maximise their potential. The OFCP ‘Shaping Our City Together’ (2021) consultation document identifies six city themes: city of centres, city of growth for all, city of nature, city of layers, city of connections, and city of knowledge and innovation.

4.0 LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (STEP 1)

4.1 Introduction

The Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022) examines local need for a wide range of different types of open space and recreation facilities. It draws upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of consultation findings from relevant studies and surveys. The work was undertaken from January to May 2022.

The consultation undertaken looked at the adequacy of current provision in terms of the quantity, quality, and access. The results of this consultation and other analyses have helped (amongst other things) to inform the content of the recommended local standards (Section 6 of this report). It has also helped the study to understand local stakeholders' appreciation of open space and outdoor recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces and 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 planning applications.

This section summarises the key findings from The Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022) in relation to open space under the following sections:

1. Public health.
2. Neighbouring local authorities.
3. Parks, green space, countryside, and rights of way.

4.2 Public Health - Key Findings

The health profile of Birmingham is generally poor in comparison with the England average for both adult and child health. There are also large health inequalities within the city, as highlighted by the Naturally Birmingham Environmental Justice Mapping.

Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board has primary responsibility for public health focussing on five main areas of creating an active city, healthy food city, mentally healthy city, a city without inequality and a health protection forum.

The Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy recognises that open spaces play a role in contributing to a green and sustainable future to tackle health inequalities and mitigate the impact against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Active Wellbeing Society focusses on building health, happy and active communities providing programmes and events in the community to achieve this especially in areas of inequality.

4.3 Neighbouring Local Authorities – Key Findings

Section 3.0 of the Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022) 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, and sport, recreation and play strategies. The approach adopted by each authority is very much locally derived.

Of the neighbouring local authorities that responded relatively few cross border and wider strategic issues have been specifically identified. Many of these issues highlighted seem to already be in discussion between local authorities. These include Egg Hill open space, Cofton Park (wholly in Birmingham) and Lickey Hills Country Park (in Bromsgrove District but owned by Birmingham City Council).

The National Trust has proposed the concept of an 8 Hills Regional Park on Birmingham's southern boundary in Worcestershire, encompassing Waseley Hills, Lickey Hills and Client Hills.

It is notable that many authorities are currently involved with commissioning new open space, sport and recreation related studies or updating previous strategies that are out of date. Nature recovery strategies are also being discussed with the Wildlife Trust and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The WMCA have been appointed as the regional responsible body for Local Nature Recovery Networks.

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

Overview

- Birmingham City Council is part of the national Future Parks Accelerator programme, and its City of Nature plan aims to change the way parks and open spaces are managed for environmental health recovery.
- Natural England suggests that the ANGSt standard should be a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi natural green space.
- The importance of biodiversity, ecological networks and the health and wellbeing benefits (especially after the COVID-19 pandemic) associated with access to good quality open spaces were key issues highlighted throughout.

Quantity

- It was highlighted by consultees that there are shortfalls in parks, children's play spaces, youth facilities and cycle ways.
 - Across a large proportion of typologies, it was highlighted that there is an uneven distribution of provision, notably in parks, allotments, and natural green spaces.
-

- It was emphasised that it may not be possible or suitable to increase provision in certain typologies due to the built-up nature of the city, such as footpaths and water recreation.

Quality

- Across all groups of consultees, parks were rated as good quality in particular the flagship parks and those with associated groups.
- A large proportion of community groups/organisations rated youth play spaces as poor in quality. It was also highlighted that children's play spaces should be more imaginative.
- Littering and fly-tipping was mentioned as an issue across most of the typologies in terms of quality.
- Access points have become lost into many open spaces with development truncating access or paths/entrances becoming overgrown.

Access

- It was noted by the majority of consultees that spaces were accessed mainly by foot or bikes.
- Community groups and organisations, however, did think that a large proportion did use a car/drive to open spaces.
- Access is restricted by overgrown access points and lack of directional signage.

4.4 Concluding remarks

The survey work, stakeholder consultation, and desk-based research have highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the Open Space Assessment.

A large amount of desk-based research has been undertaken to ensure that a wide and diverse range of views have influenced the findings of the study. The key issues have been identified which will be further considered in the main report.

There is a good degree of consistency across the various sources of key areas of local and strategic need/aspirations, from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable.

The information and findings from the consultation report are further considered and analysed in the Open Space Assessment report in relation to the various typologies of the open space being analysed. In particular the findings provide evidence to support the spatial planning standards recommended for the different categories of open space.

5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

5.1 General approach

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

Although sites have been categorised into different typologies, the multifunctionality of different types of open space is important to recognise. For example, informal green space, accessible 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.

The following typologies have been used in this assessment⁹:

Table 5 Birmingham City Council Open Space Typologies

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards ¹⁰
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotments Informal Green Space (>0.15ha) Parks and Recreation Grounds (consisting of Parks and Recreation Grounds and Outdoor Sports (Fixed) - see section 5.2.3 on page 39 for definition). Play Space (Children) Play Space (Youth) Accessible Natural Green Space (>0.15ha) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor Sport (Private) Churchyards and Cemeteries Education Green Corridors Highways amenity and residential or business amenity (as identified by OS MasterMap) Informal green space and accessible natural greenspace <0.15ha in size

5.2 Typologies with Standards

5.2.1 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:

⁹ With the exception of allotments, all open space typologies with standards are publicly accessible open space, and any new requirements for open space must be fully accessible (with the exception of allotments). For example, gated communal gardens would not count towards the requirements.

¹⁰ An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections

“an allotment not exceeding 40 poles¹¹ in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family”

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

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

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

Informal green spaces smaller than 0.15ha; Highways Amenity; and Residential or Business Amenity (as identified by Ordnance Survey MasterMap) are not included within the analysis for this typology, as it is considered that these sites will have limited recreation function and therefore should not count towards public open space provision. However, it is noted that that these spaces may have value in terms of their visual amenity and/or biodiversity value and contribute to the wider network of Green Infrastructure within the city. These spaces have been mapped (but not included within the analysis for open space) and considered as part of the city’s overall GI network and should be provided protection through separate planning policy.

5.2.3 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

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

outdoor sports spaces 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.

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

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

The Parks and Recreation Ground typology comprises those areas laid out as pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis which are accessible i.e., they can be walked over/used informally. Pitches have not been mapped, but fixed facilities including tennis courts and bowls have been mapped as **outdoor sport (fixed)**.

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

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

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

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

The recommended standards for this open space typology are intended to provide sufficient space for sports facilities, pitches, and ancillary space e.g., footpaths, landscaping etc. The 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 local circumstances and on a case-by-case basis.

5.2.4 Play Space (Children and Youth)

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.2.5 Accessible Natural Green Space

For the purpose of this study, accessible natural green space covers a variety of spaces including meadows, woodland, copses, river valleys and lakes all of which share a trait of

having natural characteristics and biodiversity value and are also partly or wholly accessible for informal recreation.

The focus for this typology is those sites where there are definitive boundaries or areas of natural green space which have some form of public access e.g., Local Nature Reserves. In some cases, access may not be fully clear, however, there is evidence of some level of informal use and access.

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

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

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

Accessible 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 public open space provision. However, these spaces have value in terms of visual amenity, biodiversity and contributing to the wider GI network within the city, and these spaces have been mapped and considered as part of the city’s GI network.

5.3 Typologies with no standards

5.3.1 Outdoor Sport (Private)

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

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

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.

5.3.2 Churchyards and Cemeteries

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

5.3.3 Education

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

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

5.3.4 Green Corridors

Green corridors are those sites/routes that offer opportunities for walking, cycling or horse riding, for leisure purposes or travel and offer opportunities for wildlife migration. Strategically important routes have been mapped and identified using the councils canal polyline, linear open space and wildlife corridors GIS data. Standards for quantity and access have not been set, but this data has been considered as part of the city's GI network.

5.3.5 Informal green space and accessible natural greenspace <0.15ha in size

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, about 38m by 38m). This will avoid a proliferation of small informal/semi-natural green spaces which have no real recreation function. These small informal/semi-natural spaces have been identified and mapped (but not considered in the quantity or access analysis) where known as they form part of the GI network and contribute to visual amenity and biodiversity.

5.3.6 Highways amenity and residential or business amenity

This typology covers roadside amenity spaces which generally have a visual amenity function and those informal green spaces on housing estates which effectively function as private gardens or have visual amenity value and therefore have limited open space function for the general public. However, the importance of these spaces in terms of their contribution to the overall GI network is recognised. It is also recognised that there are some existing residential amenity spaces in residential areas of less than 0.15ha in area that do function as recreational spaces.

These spaces have therefore been mapped (but not considered in the quantity or access analysis) and considered as part of the city's overall GI network and should be provided protection through separate planning policy.

5.4 Existing provision of open space

5.4.1 Open space provision across the study area

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 the Council and from other sources including but not limited to Ordnance Survey Greenspace, OpenStreetMap Leisure/Highways, Woodland Trust Accessible Woodlands, Natural England designated sites;
- desktop mapping of open space from aerial photography;
- liaison with council officers; and
- Site visits to check accessibility, boundaries, typologies and complete quality audits.

We understand that new sites will come forward and there may have been sites that are used by the local community that have not been recorded. Local communities are encouraged to share this information with the Council for future updates of this assessment.

Table 6 shows the existing provision of open space in hectares (ha) and hectares per 1000 population (ha/1000) across the study area.

Table 6 Provision of open space across the study area

Typology	Number of Sites	Ha	Ha/1000
Allotments	114	242.69	0.21
Informal Green Space (>0.15Ha)	328	394.63	0.35
Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined) ¹²		1021.44	0.9
<i>Parks and Recreation Grounds</i>	135	1014.68	0.89
<i>Outdoor Sport (Fixed)</i>	27	6.78	0.01

¹² The figures for Ha and Ha/1000 of 'Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)' is the sum of 'Parks and Recreation Grounds' and 'Outdoor Sport (Fixed)'.

Typology	Number of Sites	Ha	Ha/1000
Play Space (Child)	237	12.01	0.01
Play Space (Youth)	124	8.67	0.01
Accessible Natural Green Space	100	1994.4	1.75
Churchyards and Cemeteries	86	199.35	0.17
Education	509	1048.59	0.92
Outdoor Sport (Private)	171	875.54	0.77

Figure 5 below provides an overview of the open space mapping across the study area (this map is intended to be indicative). More detailed maps showing open space provision by ward are provided in Appendix 1. A GIS database containing all mapped sites has also been provided to the Council.

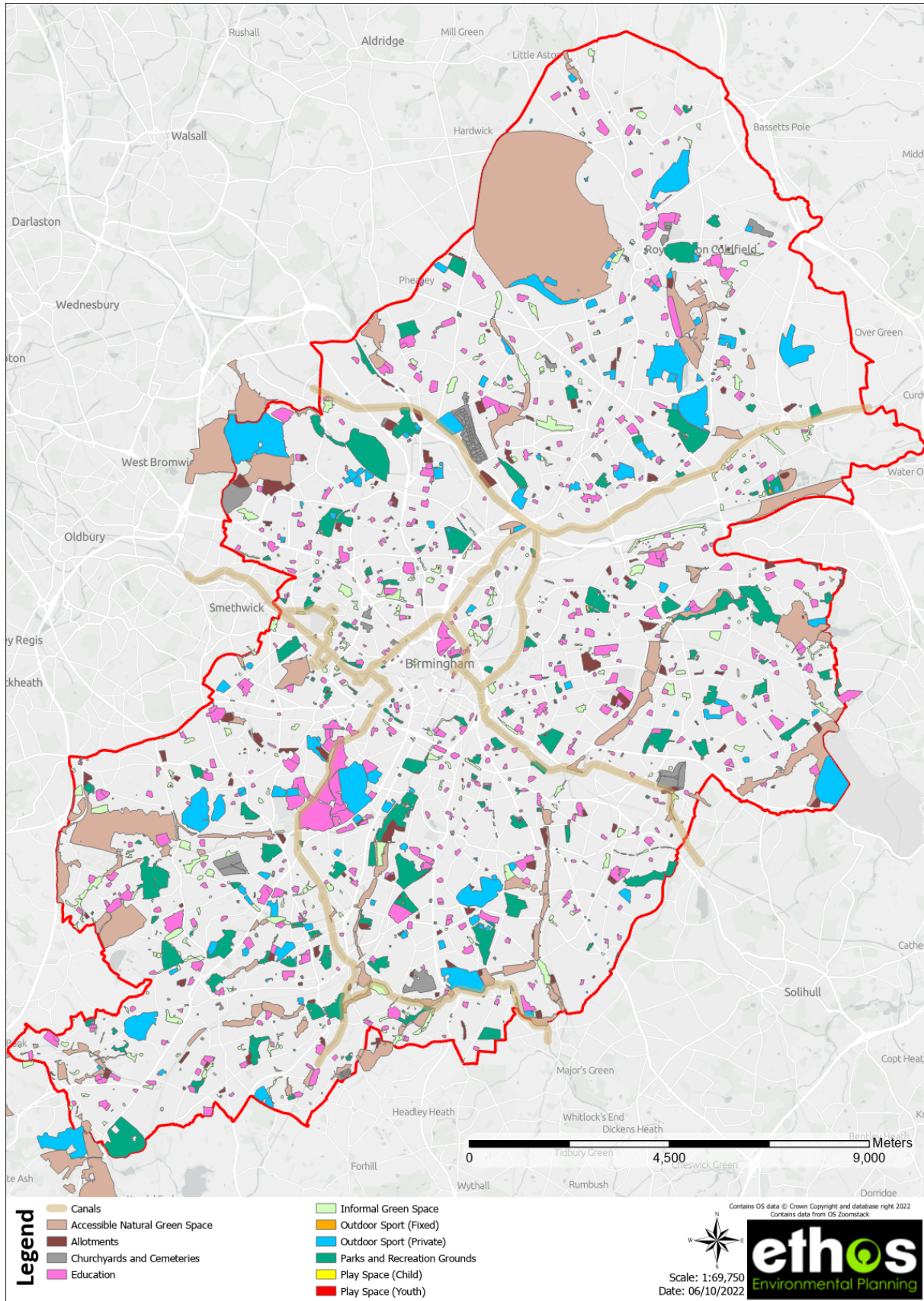


Figure 6 Overview of open space provision across the study area

5.4.2 Open space provision by Ward

Tables 7 and 8 below show the breakdown of open space (in hectares (ha) and hectares per 1000 population (ha/1000)) by ward.

Table 7 Existing provision of open space (ha) by ward

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Acocks Green Ward	3.91	5.12	22.13	22.13	0.00	0.20	0.19	2.51	0.29	16.18	5.15
Allens Cross Ward	2.55	11.49	0.10	0.10	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.40	1.90
Alum Rock Ward	0.07	0.83	7.05	7.05	0.00	0.71	0.15	0.00	2.03	12.07	0.00
Aston Ward	8.22	3.95	23.52	23.52	0.00	0.08	0.35	0.00	0.24	10.48	2.90
Balsall Heath West Ward	0.00	5.67	13.02	13.02	0.00	0.17	0.13	0.00	0.28	6.28	1.04
Bartley Green Ward	1.62	22.27	61.70	61.67	0.03	0.54	0.22	199.25	0.25	44.10	0.00
Billesley Ward	6.76	8.24	40.40	40.40	0.00	0.20	0.00	38.39	0.26	19.97	48.27
Birchfield Ward	5.20	0.18	0.16	0.16	0.00	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.48	3.49	0.00
Bordesley & Highgate Ward	0.00	6.02	6.02	6.02	0.00	0.30	0.12	0.00	1.04	15.63	0.00
Bordesley Green Ward	0.17	2.55	4.38	4.38	0.00	0.16	0.19	0.00	0.47	11.45	2.45
Bournbrook & Selly Park Ward	1.14	2.48	16.00	16.00	0.00	0.22	0.15	5.30	0.00	6.75	1.96
Bournville & Cotteridge Ward	5.51	11.52	24.10	23.19	0.91	0.38	0.10	7.65	1.34	24.79	22.18
Brandwood & King's Heath Ward	5.33	0.83	20.55	20.38	0.17	0.29	0.10	8.07	22.73	23.98	2.01

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Bromford & Hodge Hill Ward	0.73	16.07	8.72	8.72	0.00	0.11	0.12	31.14	0.00	36.92	4.53
Castle Vale Ward	2.17	10.92	14.18	13.45	0.73	0.26	0.10	12.71	0.00	5.61	1.49
Druids Heath & Monymhull Ward	0.75	19.53	6.92	6.92	0.00	0.11	0.12	24.94	0.40	12.16	0.00
Edgbaston Ward	8.55	3.92	0.27	0.27	0.00	0.04	0.05	0.00	0.25	170.83	92.81
Erdington Ward	3.35	1.06	17.14	16.90	0.24	0.41	0.06	0.00	2.15	13.64	18.49
Frankley Great Park Ward	1.05	3.63	7.00	7.00	0.00	0.22	0.12	15.76	0.00	10.81	32.10
Garretts Green Ward	1.29	2.49	15.79	15.79	0.00	0.17	0.12	0.00	0.00	12.56	0.00
Glebe Farm & Tile Cross Ward	5.21	12.30	56.52	53.80	2.72	0.13	0.11	38.30	0.73	15.62	0.00
Gravelly Hill Ward	0.00	0.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.05	3.43
Hall Green North Ward	0.50	3.39	3.48	3.48	0.00	0.03	0.00	23.51	0.37	8.62	0.55
Hall Green South Ward	2.23	1.25	1.32	1.32	0.00	0.02	0.05	9.06	0.00	0.87	0.29
Handsworth Ward	0.00	0.00	24.17	24.17	0.00	0.13	0.04	0.00	0.38	12.59	2.41
Handsworth Wood Ward	24.44	5.80	11.65	11.65	0.00	0.26	0.07	61.46	27.45	16.60	119.40
Harborne Ward	11.76	5.92	14.38	14.24	0.14	0.17	0.16	12.14	0.36	17.49	55.71
Heartlands Ward	19.91	1.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.05	29.83	0.00	23.80	0.00
Highter's Heath Ward	2.12	0.71	10.79	10.79	0.00	0.07	0.05	0.00	0.00	3.41	0.56

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Holyhead Ward	1.50	1.26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.41	6.70	1.18
King's Norton North Ward	2.04	6.46	26.07	26.07	0.00	0.18	0.07	39.40	0.00	4.52	11.85
King's Norton South Ward	1.48	1.49	2.72	2.71	0.01	0.10	0.08	13.28	3.88	12.66	0.17
Kingstanding Ward	3.82	8.52	0.63	0.63	0.00	0.08	0.13	6.31	2.45	9.17	6.07
Ladywood Ward	0.00	7.15	11.14	11.14	0.00	0.57	0.73	0.17	0.80	9.40	0.00
Longbridge & West Heath Ward	6.56	6.67	67.04	67.04	0.00	0.30	0.17	3.21	0.36	14.90	1.35
Lozells Ward	0.00	0.42	2.16	2.16	0.00	0.21	0.34	0.00	0.00	20.17	0.00
Moseley Ward	15.62	13.66	58.93	58.52	0.41	0.32	0.00	24.29	1.20	18.93	46.65
Nechells Ward	0.00	9.99	4.51	4.51	0.00	0.21	0.40	6.87	1.18	33.45	5.09
Newtown Ward	0.00	12.54	3.98	3.98	0.00	0.36	0.20	0.00	0.00	10.11	0.00
North Edgbaston Ward	0.00	4.47	15.31	15.20	0.11	0.25	0.05	33.49	0.43	12.92	6.91
Northfield Ward	0.00	3.82	8.53	8.39	0.14	0.15	0.05	6.60	1.16	3.96	0.25
Oscott Ward	0.00	2.57	12.65	12.65	0.00	0.15	0.00	28.72	0.93	29.20	4.10
Perry Barr Ward	10.29	4.57	92.97	92.95	0.02	0.10	0.16	0.00	39.86	12.08	26.15
Perry Common Ward	0.00	10.09	0.91	0.91	0.00	0.10	0.06	7.64	3.76	19.68	0.00
Pype Hayes Ward	3.30	0.71	42.99	42.78	0.21	0.16	0.00	0.01	0.44	3.42	2.98
Quinton Ward	5.95	11.98	3.51	3.51	0.00	0.13	0.08	59.10	0.93	12.05	0.17
Rubery & Rednal Ward	1.79	3.31	0.35	0.35	0.00	0.11	0.09	15.56	0.00	11.30	1.10

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Shard End Ward	6.36	2.65	12.55	12.55	0.00	0.14	0.32	39.71	0.00	9.53	5.63
Sheldon Ward	7.90	2.13	9.45	9.28	0.17	0.09	0.10	63.60	0.83	10.62	54.17
Small Heath Ward	0.01	2.33	16.75	16.75	0.00	0.13	0.22	15.87	0.00	10.38	0.09
Soho & Jewellery Quarter Ward	0.21	10.71	11.08	11.08	0.00	0.31	0.46	0.00	8.48	9.53	0.00
South Yardley Ward	2.01	4.06	19.27	19.27	0.00	0.17	0.21	1.20	25.54	4.63	0.00
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East Ward	0.00	5.64	16.31	16.31	0.00	0.51	0.74	0.00	0.34	12.33	0.00
Sparkhill Ward	7.18	0.33	8.49	8.49	0.00	0.15	0.42	0.00	0.00	11.52	0.12
Stirchley Ward	3.16	0.53	4.14	4.14	0.00	0.08	0.00	12.97	0.00	1.09	1.28
Stockland Green Ward	9.58	16.12	13.63	13.52	0.11	0.18	0.03	23.83	0.46	6.21	11.38
Sutton Four Oaks Ward	1.29	1.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	202.60	0.18	9.85	1.10
Sutton Mere Green Ward	1.17	5.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.11	8.00	0.67	9.94	2.39
Sutton Reddicap Ward	3.55	4.35	26.76	26.76	0.00	0.08	0.00	8.12	10.19	16.34	5.30
Sutton Roughley Ward	0.00	2.35	7.42	7.31	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.47	44.70
Sutton Trinity Ward	0.00	5.82	0.17	0.17	0.00	0.05	0.04	146.14	5.79	26.26	5.48
Sutton Vesey Ward	3.88	8.00	11.68	11.68	0.00	0.16	0.00	541.53	1.53	11.35	35.31

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)
Sutton Walmley & Minworth Ward	3.87	11.91	9.31	9.31	0.00	0.24	0.07	133.49	0.69	9.87	92.04
Sutton Wylde Green Ward	1.69	0.54	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.19	0.46	21.86	61.31
Tyseley & Hay Mills Ward	2.68	3.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	5.77	0.26	3.90	0.00
Ward End Ward	4.99	0.00	22.20	21.85	0.35	0.12	0.30	0.00	0.00	10.22	0.26
Weoley & Selly Oak Ward	2.67	19.03	35.56	35.56	0.00	0.21	0.07	8.44	24.43	20.13	11.61
Yardley East Ward	1.05	0.53	10.80	10.59	0.21	0.09	0.02	0.00	0.00	4.16	8.52
Yardley West & Stechford Ward	2.55	7.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.29	0.21	3.63	1.20
City Wide	242.69	394.68	1021.44	1014.65	6.79	12.01	8.67	1994.40	199.35	1048.59	875.54

Table 8 Existing provision of open space (ha/1000 population) by ward

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Acocks Green Ward	0.16	0.21	0.92	0.92	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.10	0.01	0.68	0.22	23951
Allens Cross Ward	0.24	1.10	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.09	0.18	10466
Alum Rock Ward	0.00	0.03	0.26	0.26	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.08	0.45	0.00	26763

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Aston Ward	0.34	0.17	0.98	0.98	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.44	0.12	23904
Balsall Heath West Ward	0.00	0.48	1.10	1.10	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.53	0.09	11790
Bartley Green Ward	0.07	0.98	2.72	2.72	0.00	0.02	0.01	8.79	0.01	1.94	0.00	22676
Billesley Ward	0.34	0.41	2.03	2.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	1.93	0.01	1.00	2.43	19892
Birchfield Ward	0.41	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.28	0.00	12531
Bordesley & Highgate Ward	0.00	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.06	0.96	0.00	16295
Bordesley Green Ward	0.01	0.20	0.34	0.34	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.04	0.89	0.19	12816
Bournbrook & Selly Park Ward	0.05	0.10	0.63	0.63	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.21	0.00	0.27	0.08	25295
Bournville & Cotteridge Ward	0.31	0.64	1.34	1.29	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.43	0.07	1.38	1.24	17925
Brandwood & King's Heath Ward	0.29	0.04	1.11	1.10	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.44	1.23	1.30	0.11	18500
Bromford & Hodge Hill Ward	0.03	0.73	0.40	0.40	0.00	0.01	0.01	1.42	0.00	1.68	0.21	21926
Castle Vale Ward	0.22	1.13	1.47	1.39	0.08	0.03	0.01	1.32	0.00	0.58	0.15	9648

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Druids Heath & Monyhull Ward	0.06	1.67	0.59	0.59	0.00	0.01	0.01	2.14	0.03	1.04	0.00	11660
Edgbaston Ward	0.39	0.18	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	7.73	4.20	22112
Erdington Ward	0.16	0.05	0.83	0.81	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.66	0.89	20764
Frankley Great Park Ward	0.09	0.31	0.60	0.60	0.00	0.02	0.01	1.35	0.00	0.92	2.74	11717
Garretts Green Ward	0.12	0.23	1.47	1.47	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	1.17	0.00	10772
Glebe Farm & Tile Cross Ward	0.22	0.51	2.33	2.22	0.11	0.01	0.00	1.58	0.03	0.64	0.00	24227
Gravelly Hill Ward	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.85	0.32	10604
Hall Green North Ward	0.02	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.02	0.02	0.37	0.02	23136
Hall Green South Ward	0.22	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.88	0.00	0.08	0.03	10253
Handsworth Ward	0.00	0.00	1.93	1.93	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03	1.00	0.19	12537
Handsworth Wood Ward	1.20	0.28	0.57	0.57	0.00	0.01	0.00	3.01	1.34	0.81	5.85	20414
Harborne Ward	0.47	0.24	0.58	0.57	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.49	0.01	0.70	2.24	24816
Heartlands Ward	1.48	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.22	0.00	1.77	0.00	13454

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Highter's Heath Ward	0.19	0.06	0.99	0.99	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.05	10946
Holyhead Ward	0.12	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.54	0.09	12476
King's Norton North Ward	0.18	0.55	2.24	2.24	0.00	0.02	0.01	3.38	0.00	0.39	1.02	11644
King's Norton South Ward	0.13	0.13	0.24	0.24	0.00	0.01	0.01	1.19	0.35	1.13	0.02	11168
Kingstanding Ward	0.18	0.41	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.30	0.12	0.44	0.29	20848
Ladywood Ward	0.00	0.24	0.37	0.37	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.31	0.00	30344
Longbridge & West Heath Ward	0.33	0.33	3.35	3.35	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.16	0.02	0.74	0.07	20019
Lozells Ward	0.00	0.04	0.22	0.22	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.00	0.00	2.08	0.00	9713
Moseley Ward	0.72	0.63	2.72	2.70	0.02	0.01	0.00	1.12	0.06	0.87	2.15	21699
Nechells Ward	0.00	0.60	0.27	0.27	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.41	0.07	2.01	0.31	16678
Newtown Ward	0.00	0.81	0.26	0.26	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.65	0.00	15498
North Edgbaston Ward	0.00	0.18	0.62	0.62	0.00	0.01	0.00	1.36	0.02	0.53	0.28	24555
Northfield Ward	0.00	0.38	0.84	0.83	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.65	0.11	0.39	0.02	10124
Oscott Ward	0.00	0.13	0.63	0.63	0.00	0.01	0.00	1.43	0.05	1.45	0.20	20113

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Perry Barr Ward	0.51	0.23	4.58	4.58	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	1.97	0.60	1.29	20279
Perry Common Ward	0.00	0.85	0.08	0.08	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.64	0.32	1.66	0.00	11854
Pype Hayes Ward	0.31	0.07	4.04	4.02	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.32	0.28	10645
Quinton Ward	0.29	0.59	0.17	0.17	0.00	0.01	0.00	2.89	0.05	0.59	0.01	20441
Rubery & Rednal Ward	0.16	0.30	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.01	1.41	0.00	1.03	0.10	11016
Shard End Ward	0.53	0.22	1.04	1.04	0.00	0.01	0.03	3.29	0.00	0.79	0.47	12061
Sheldon Ward	0.40	0.11	0.48	0.47	0.01	0.00	0.01	3.24	0.04	0.54	2.76	19653
Small Heath Ward	0.00	0.11	0.82	0.82	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.77	0.00	0.51	0.00	20541
Soho & Jewellery Quarter Ward	0.01	0.38	0.39	0.39	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.30	0.34	0.00	28124
South Yardley Ward	0.19	0.38	1.83	1.83	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.11	2.42	0.44	0.00	10551
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East Ward	0.00	0.22	0.64	0.64	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.01	0.48	0.00	25643
Sparkhill Ward	0.33	0.02	0.39	0.39	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.53	0.01	21561

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Stirchley Ward	0.32	0.05	0.41	0.41	0.00	0.01	0.00	1.30	0.00	0.11	0.13	10004
Stockland Green Ward	0.40	0.67	0.56	0.56	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.98	0.02	0.26	0.47	24233
Sutton Four Oaks Ward	0.14	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.24	0.02	1.08	0.12	9111
Sutton Mere Green Ward	0.12	0.52	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.82	0.07	1.01	0.24	9806
Sutton Reddicap Ward	0.36	0.44	2.70	2.70	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.82	1.03	1.65	0.54	9896
Sutton Roughley Ward	0.00	0.20	0.64	0.63	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	3.88	11531
Sutton Trinity Ward	0.00	0.63	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	15.76	0.62	2.83	0.59	9273
Sutton Vesey Ward	0.20	0.41	0.60	0.60	0.00	0.01	0.00	27.75	0.08	0.58	1.81	19513
Sutton Walmley & Minworth Ward	0.24	0.75	0.59	0.59	0.00	0.02	0.00	8.45	0.04	0.62	5.82	15804
Sutton Wylde Green Ward	0.20	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.72	0.05	2.56	7.17	8552
Tyseley & Hay Mills Ward	0.21	0.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.46	0.02	0.31	0.00	12547
Ward End Ward	0.36	0.00	1.62	1.60	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.75	0.02	13688

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Outdoor Sport (Fixed)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Churchyards and Cemeteries	Education	Outdoor Sport (Private)	Mid-2020 Estimates
Weoley & Selly Oak Ward	0.11	0.78	1.46	1.46	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.35	1.01	0.83	0.48	24303
Yardley East Ward	0.10	0.05	1.05	1.03	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.41	0.83	10247
Yardley West & Stechford Ward	0.20	0.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.95	0.02	0.28	0.09	12979
City Wide	0.21	0.35	0.90	0.89	0.01	0.01	0.01	1.75	0.17	0.92	0.77	1140525

5.5 Birmingham's GI Network

Open space forms an important part of the wider green infrastructure (GI) network within the city, which is defined as 'a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity' (National Planning Policy Framework, 2021). The multiple benefits provided by GI are summarised in Table 3 of this report.

The figure below shows the key GI assets that have been identified and mapped. These include¹³:

- Open space (all typologies listed in Section 5.1, Table 4)
- Strategic blue infrastructure – Rivers, streams, canals, lakes and ponds
- Green belt land
- Statutory and non-statutory designated wildlife sites
- CRoW Open Access land
- Priority Habitat Index¹⁴
- Historic parks and gardens
- National cycle network (the wider PROW network is also an important part of the GI network but has not been included on the map as it confuses the overall picture at this scale)

The linear open space, canal polylines (which all fall within the linear open space dataset) and wildlife corridors (all BCC datasets) highlight some of the key areas of connectivity between existing green/open spaces for people and wildlife (and also the areas in which to focus improvements) – see Figure 6 below.

Some of the key existing cross boundary links are within the north (around Little Aston), south (Lickey Hills Country Park and Waseley Hills Country Park), west (around Sandwell Valley Country Park) and east (around Birmingham airport and Solihull) of the city. The blue infrastructure network also represents key existing and potential improvements to cross boundary links e.g., improving water quality and flood management through natural flood management techniques upstream and/or improving recreational access along watercourses.

Further opportunities exist for strengthening the GI network within the city and beyond, including through the development of the Nature Recovery Network (strengthening habitat connectivity and creating stepping stones for wildlife; improving the provision, quality and functionality of blue infrastructure; optimising the quality and multifunctionality of existing

¹³ The sources of all data are provided in Appendix 4 (Technical appendix).

¹⁴ It should be noted that the majority of the Natural England Priority Habitat Index (PHI) data is now 20 years old (with the exception of traditional orchards which were updated in 2020). If/when resources allow, an up-to-date comprehensive survey of habitats would provide a more accurate existing picture of the resource and the required management.

green space; and greening within dense urban areas). These opportunities could be considered as part of a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the city.

Planning policy and development play a vital role in protecting, enhancing and creating new GI within the city (not only public open space), which will support the council's response to the climate emergency and help meet wider priorities around biodiversity and health and wellbeing.

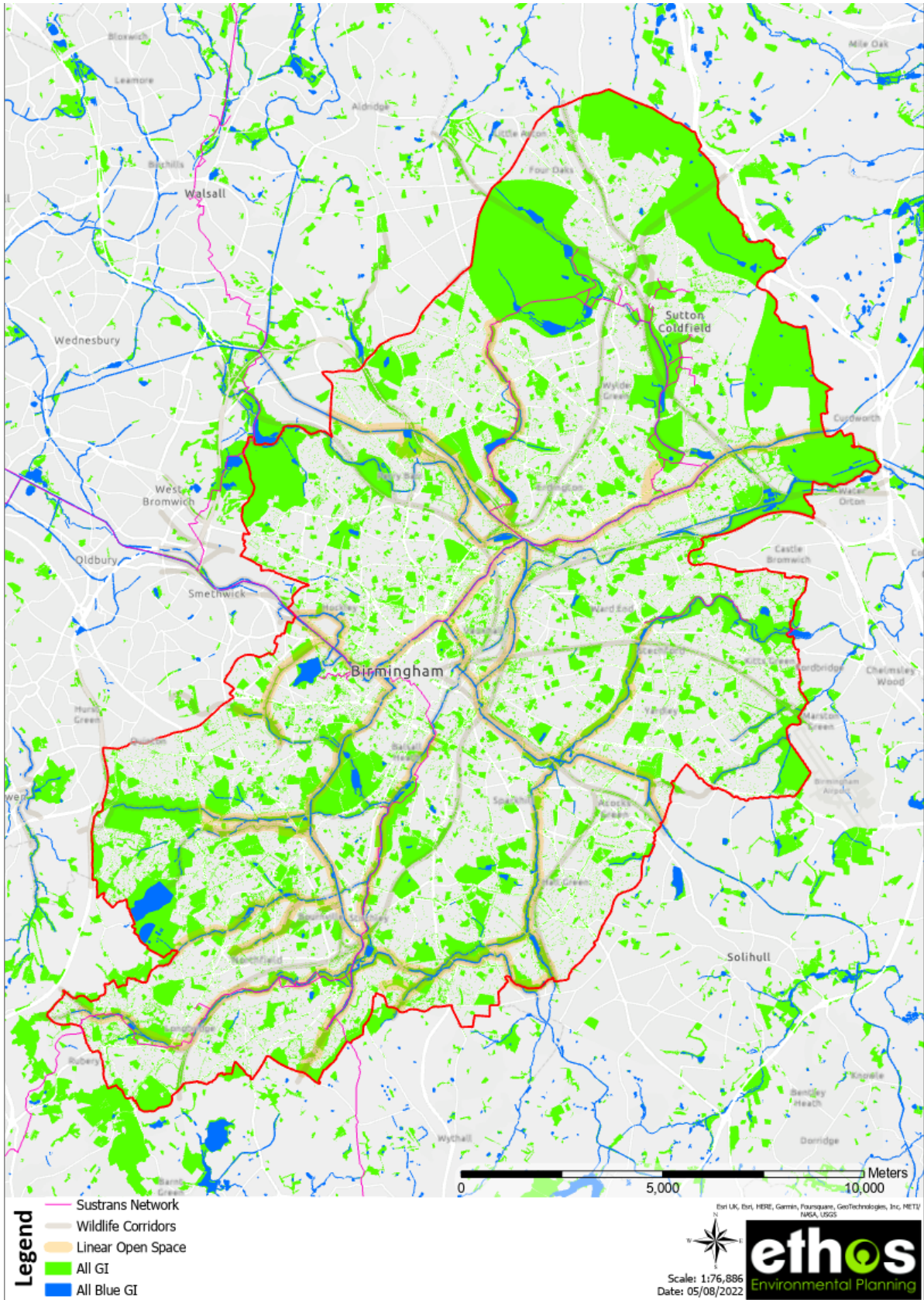


Figure 7 GI assets

6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

6.1 General

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

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

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

It is proposed to increase the overall quantity standard from 2ha per 1,000 people in Birmingham Development Plan Policy TP9 to 2.35ha per 1,000 people.

The principles behind applying the standards

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

- The standards that have been set are for **minimum guidance levels of provision**. So, just because geographical areas may have levels of open space provision exceeding the minimum standards, does not mean there is a surplus, as other factors need to be taken into consideration, such as the quality of provision and access to open space i.e. The quantity, accessibility and quality standards need to be considered together – they should not be considered in isolation.
-

- An inability to provide sufficient quantity might be at least partly compensated for through better quality, integration and access (in the inner city greening streets through for example rain gardens, street trees and green walls will have to act as a part proxy for the quantity of public open space). 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. However, some benefits such as reducing the urban heat island effect, carbon sequestration and increasing biodiversity will also require new open spaces.
- New and improved open space should be designed to optimise multi-functionality to benefit both people and nature/the wider environment e.g., offering wildlife habitats, flood management opportunities, providing recreation opportunities etc. Wherever possible it should heighten residents’ overall appreciation, understanding of, and respect for that environment so it becomes an important and valued local resource. Good practice guidance for the design of high quality green space should draw on the Green Flag Award guidance, and new/emerging guidance such as the Building with Nature Benchmark, Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Standards Framework and emerging guidance produced through the Naturally Birmingham project.
- 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. Where flood management measures such as balancing ponds dominate an open space at the expense of other forms of recreation, these features will not be considered a quantifiable contribution to the provision of on-site open space.

6.2 Allotments

Table 9 Summary of quantity and access standards for allotments

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.20ha/1000 population (for assessing existing provision and the requirements for new provision)	15 minutes’ walk time (720m straight line)

Existing national or local standards

National standards for allotments and other such open spaces are difficult to find. The closest 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
- Plot holders shed = 12sqm
- Greenhouse = 15sqm

- Polytunnel = 30sqm

The Birmingham Development Plan (Policy TP9) does not provide specific quantity or access standards for allotment provision (it falls within the overall open space standard of 2ha per 1000 population), but states that provision should relate directly to demand in the area.

Justification of a new quantity standard for allotments

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.21ha/1000.
- Consultation with Council Officers highlighted that allotment occupancy across the city is currently around 88%. There is a good amount of provision across the city but there is demand for urban community growing spaces.
- The stakeholder consultation highlights the value of open space such as allotments in providing access to outdoor physical activity and associated benefits for health and wellbeing.
- The stakeholder consultation highlighted that there is uneven distribution in the provision of allotments.
- Allotments will contribute towards the city priority of creating a ‘Healthy Food City.’ The Council is at the time of writing consulting on its Birmingham food system strategy 2022-2030 which includes as a food production objective of “Empower citizens and local producers to grow and preserve food and connect to the city’s food system”.
- The propensity for higher density new housing with smaller (or no) gardens is likely to increase demand.
- With the above in mind, a standard in line with the existing average level of provision is recommended. Therefore, a standard of **0.20 ha/1000** is proposed for analysing existing provision and for new provision.
- It is considered that the allotment standard would be used flexibly to meet local needs – for example, in some areas the standard might be used to deliver other types of community food growing, such as community orchards; unfenced growing plots e.g., within open spaces; and urban farms.

Justification of a new access standard for allotments

- It is considered that the availability of allotments is more important than having them very close to home, nevertheless facilities should be relatively nearby.
- When looking at bordering local authorities, Bromsgrove, North Warwickshire and Solihull all recommend a 15 minute walk time.
- Therefore, a standard of no more than **15 minutes’ walk time** (or 720 metres straight line) is justified.
- It is also acknowledged that there may be demand for more informal community growing spaces on people’s doorsteps, however these have not been considered as part of this study.

Justification of quality standards for allotments

Consultation with Council Officers highlighted that the majority of allotment sites require improvement works including making sites more accessible. There is limited scope to

improve the quality allotments due to no capital grants being available. The available budget is made up from plot holders rent which tends to limit improvements to repairs only.

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.

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

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

6.3 Informal Green Space

Table 10 Summary of quantity and access standards for informal green space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.4ha/1000 population (for assessing existing provision).	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
1.0ha/1000 population (for assessing requirements for new provision, combined with accessible natural green space).	

Existing national or local standards

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

Policy TP9 of the Birmingham Development Plan sets out the requirement for 2ha per 1000 population of public open space for residential schemes of twenty or more dwellings.

Justification of a new quantity standard for informal green space

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.35ha/1000 (for sites greater than 0.15 ha in size).

- Provision varies by ward, with some areas falling well below the average, and others exceeding it.
- 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.
- Although the average level of provision of informal green space is relatively low compared to the FIT guideline, this is in the context of overall good levels of provision of accessible natural green space. In many cases, the distinction between informal green space and accessible natural green space is blurred, with many informal green spaces having areas of semi-natural habitat, and accessible natural green spaces containing areas of amenity grassland.
- Considering the above, a minimum standard of **0.4 ha/1000** (in line with existing levels of provision) is recommended for analysing existing levels of provision.
- It is recommended that a **combined standard with accessible natural green space of 1.0ha/1000** is used for assessing the requirements for new provision (also see Section 6.4.7) in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces.
- The minimum size of a space that will be considered acceptable and count towards open space provision is recommended to be 0.15ha in size (about the size of a mini football pitch, approximately 38m by 38m). This is considered to be a realistic minimum size for new on-site provision. 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. Additionally, to count towards meeting the requirement spaces will need to have some public open space function. Roadside amenity spaces (such as highway verges) which generally have only a visual amenity function and those informal green spaces on housing estates which effectively function as private gardens or have only visual amenity value but limited open space function for the general public will not count towards meeting the required level of provision.

Justification of a new access standard for informal green space

- Informal green spaces provide important local access to green space for informal recreation and therefore should be close to home.
- FIT 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' proposes a walking distance guideline of 480m.
- The Birmingham Development Plan (TP9) sets out that all residents should have access within 400m, (5 to 10 minutes' walk) to an area of publicly accessible open space which should have grass and trees and be at least 0.2 ha in size.
- Neighbouring local authorities (including Bromsgrove, Dudley, Lichfield and Solihull) recommended access standards for amenity green space vary between 5 to 10 minutes.
- Therefore, a standard of no more than **10 minutes' walk time** (480 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standard for informal green space

The value of informal/amenity green space must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise, visual amenity

and biodiversity that are almost immediately accessible. It is important to strike the correct balance between having accessible and attractive space to meet the needs of the community and having too much which may be difficult to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that amenity green space should be capable of use for at least some forms of public recreation activity.

Key quality issues identified through the quality audits (March 2022) included high levels of litter and graffiti, and a lack of feeling safe. Littering and fly-tipping was also highlighted in the Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022) as an issue across most of the typologies in terms of quality.

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 (more detailed guidance will be provided in the City of Nature Landscape Planning Checklist, when published):

- Be accessible and functional i.e., capable of supporting informal recreation such as a kickabout, space for dog walking or space to sit and relax;
- Include high quality planting of trees and/or shrubs to create landscape structure, biodiversity value and carbon sequestration;
- Include paths along main desire lines (lit where appropriate);
- Be designed to ensure easy maintenance;
- Include adequate provision of bins;
- Provide comfortable seating with back rests;
- Be designed to ensure safety and personal security.

6.4 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Table 11 Summary of quantity and access standards for parks and recreation grounds

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.9ha/1000 population (for assessing existing provision and the requirements for new provision).	15 minutes' walk time (720 metres straight line).

Existing national or local standards

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

Policy TP9 of the Birmingham Development Plan sets out the requirement for 2ha per 1000 population of public open space for residential schemes of twenty or more dwellings. There is also a requirement for a minimum standard of 1.2ha/1000 of playing fields.

Justification of a new quantity standard for parks and recreation grounds

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.9 ha/1000
- There is an additional 0.77 ha/1000 of outdoor private sports space which includes a variety of uses (including golf courses);
- The Stakeholder Consultation highlighted that consultees think there are shortfalls in parks, and that there is an uneven distribution in parks.
- The Birmingham Parks Survey (2020) found that the provision of public parks are identified as ‘extremely important’ by respondents of the survey.
- The Fields in Trust (FIT) Guidance ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens.
- Considering the above, a quantity standard of **0.9ha/1000** (in line with existing average levels of provision) is recommended for analysing existing provision and the requirements for new provision.
- It should be reiterated that this standard is intended to provide sufficient space for a variety of park uses and facilities and is designed to be flexible so that the council can make the case for what facilities/sports are required. The separate Playing Pitch Strategy will deal with some of the detail around pitch requirements.

Justification of a new access standard for parks and recreation grounds

- It is considered that a balance is needed between keeping parks relatively local, while recognising that larger parks with a range of facilities will serve a much wider catchment area.
 - The Birmingham Development Plan (TP9) sets out that all residents should have access within 400m, (5 to 10 minutes’ walk) to an area of publicly accessible open space which should have grass and trees and be at least 0.2 ha in size; and within 1km (15 to 20 minutes’ walk) of all residents there should be an area of publicly accessible open space of at least 2 ha in size.
 - FIT ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ proposes a walking distance guideline of 710m for parks and gardens and 1,200m for playing pitches and outdoor sports.
 - Neighbouring local authorities (including Bromsgrove, Dudley, and Solihull) recommend access standards for parks and gardens to be up to 15 minutes’ walk time, while Sandwell and Walsall recommend that local parks should be closer by.
 - Considering the above, a standard of no more than **15 minutes’ walk time** (or 720 metres straight line) is recommended.
-

Justification of a new quality standard for park and recreation grounds

The Stakeholder Consultation found that respondents thought that in general, parks are good quality, in particular the flagship parks and those with associated groups. The quality audits carried out by Ethos (March 2022) found a large variation in the quality of parks.

National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the ‘Green Flag’ quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces. New and emerging guidance is also available from Building with Nature and the Natural England Green Infrastructure Standards Framework, and locally by the Naturally Birmingham site based audit tool (on which the quality audits undertaken as part of this assessment were partly based). The ambition of the Birmingham City of Nature Plan (2022) is that all open space within Birmingham achieves the Fair Parks Standard, with a focus on the open space in the wards that have the poorest environmental justice.

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

6.5 Play Space (children and youth)

Table 12 Summary of quantity and access standards for play space (children and youth)

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Children’s Play Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.125 ha/1000 (for assessing existing provision) 0.25ha/1000 (for assessing requirements for new provision, combined with youth play space) 	400m straight line (5-10 minutes’ walk)
Youth Play Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.125 ha/1000 (for assessing existing provision) 0.25ha/1000 (for assessing requirements for new provision, combined with children’s play space) 	15 minutes’ walk time (720m straight line)

Existing National and Local Policies

The FIT guidance ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ (2018) recommends provision of 0.25ha/1000 population of equipped/designated play areas, with a walking distance of 100m

for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). For other outdoor provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks) the recommendation is 0.30ha/1000 population and a walking distance of 700m.

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 following minimum size guidelines and buffers are recommended by FIT:

Playable space (LAP type - need not be equipped)

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

Equipped play area (LEAP type)

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

Teen Play including a MUGA (NEAP type)

- 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.

Policy TP9 of the Birmingham Development Plan sets out the requirement for 2ha per 1000 population of public open space for residential schemes of twenty or more dwellings. Children's play facilities are included in this requirement and are expected to be provided where there is no existing facility within easy walking distance of the new development.

The Birmingham Outdoor Play Facilities Policy (2020) is not an evidence based planning policy but advocates existing policy including BDP Policy TP9 – which seeks to ensure that children's play facilities are within 400m of all residents. It sets out the vision for Birmingham's play provision and provides information regarding the types of play areas within the city, safety standards, design and key objectives. It also covers other facilities such as outdoor gyms, trim trails and MUGA's.

Justification of a new quantity standard for play spaces

- The existing average level of provision of children’s play space across the study area is 0.01 ha/1000, and also for youth play space.
 - The Stakeholder Consultation highlighted that consultees think there are shortfalls in both children’s play spaces and youth facilities.
 - Birmingham City Council planning officers have stated the following:
 - The 2019 mid-year estimates show that Birmingham had the 12th highest proportion of residents aged 0-16 among 379 UK lower tier local authorities, with children making up 22.7% of the population. As Birmingham is, by far, the UK’s most populous local authority, that means we have many more children living in the city than any other UK local authority.
 - With existing provision for both children’s and youth space of a mere 0.01ha/1000, the city’s children must be among the most poorly provided for in terms of play space anywhere in the country.
 - If we are to have any chance of starting to make inroads into this shortfall, we need to set a stretching target that enables us to deliver more play space on-site and off-site.
 - The first outputs on the Census 2021 data show that 20.9% of Birmingham’s population is aged 15 or under, the 10th highest among all English and Welsh local authorities.
 - The FIT guidance ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ recommends provision of 0.25ha/1000 population of equipped/designated play areas, and 0.30ha/1000 for MUGAs and skateboard parks. These standards are considered to be high and difficult to deliver (this is in Ethos’ experience).
 - The average levels of provision across the city for both children’s and youth spaces are considered to be very low, and there are a number of wards with no provision.
 - Considering the above factors, it is recommended that an ambitious standard is set for children’s and youth provision, with a standard of **0.125ha/1000** for assessing existing provision of both children’s and youth play space, and a combined standard of **0.25ha/1000** for assessing the requirements for new provision. This is a significant increase against the existing levels of provision. Having a combined standard for new provision provides the Council with flexibility to make the case for what type of provision is required based on local need.
 - The hierarchy approach (LAPs, LEAPs, NEAPs etc.) is a bit dated and it directs developers towards providing standardised play rather than thinking about what is needed locally, and opportunities for more creative play design e.g., natural play. A single standard for children’s play aims to move away from lots of little play areas which are not sustainable, and providing fewer, bigger, better play areas.
 - The minimum sizes of equipped play provision have been recommended to help ensure that high quality play areas with sufficient space to provide high play value are delivered. These are:
 - ‘Tertiary’ (toddler) play area: minimum size is required to be 400m² (minimum 5 pieces of equipment)
-

- ‘Secondary’ (junior) play area: minimum size is required to be 900m² (minimum 7 of more pieces of equipment)
- ‘Primary’ play area: (minimum 9 pieces of equipment).
- It is also recognised that open space (not only equipped children’s play areas and youth facilities) provides ‘playable space.’

Justification of a new access standard for play spaces

- Generally, there is a requirement for children’s play spaces closer to home, due to the reliance on walking, whereas for youth play spaces older children can walk further and will often use other modes of transport such as cycling.
- This is reflected in the FIT ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard,’ which proposes a walking distance guideline of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). For MUGA’s and skateboard parks FIT propose a walking distance guideline of 700m.
- Neighbouring local planning authorities have varying access standards for children’s play space, ranging from 250 metres (around 5 minutes) up to 15 minutes. For youth play space, distances are generally a bit further, largely around 15 minutes or 800m (just over 15 minutes’ walk time).
- The Outdoor Play Facilities Policy (2020) sets out that a play area provided by the City Council should aim to be a maximum walking distance of 800 metres from all households. When assessing the need for a new play area in a particular location check whether there is another publicly accessible play area within a distance of 400m of the proposed site (this is based on BDP Policy TP9).
- Considering the above, the following access standards are recommended:
 - Children’s play space – **400m straight line** (This is in line with the Birmingham Outdoor Play Facilities Policy (2020) and equates to just under 10 minutes’ walk time).
 - Youth play space – **15 minutes’ walk time** (720 metres straight line).

Justification of a new quality standard for play spaces

A large proportion of community groups/organisations (as part of the Stakeholder Consultation) rated youth play spaces as poor in quality. It was also highlighted that children’s play spaces should be more imaginative. The Ethos quality audits (March 2022) also highlighted huge variation in the quality of children’s and youth play spaces.

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

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

Moving forward, Play England would like their new Design Guide; ‘Design for Play’ to be referenced and added as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in standard configuration. Play England have also developed a ‘Quality Assessment Tool’ which can be used to judge the quality of individual play spaces. It has been recommended that the council consider adopting this as a means of assessing the quality of play spaces in the city.

Disability access is also an important issue for Play England, and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS¹⁵ 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 Accessible Natural Green Space

Table 13 Summary of quantity and access standards for accessible natural green space

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
1.0ha/1000 population (for assessing existing provision and the requirements for new provision, combined with informal green space).	15 minutes’ walk time (720m straight line) and ANGSt standards.

Existing National and Local standards

Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt):

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 kilometres 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.

¹⁵ 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.

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

Justification of a new quantity standard for accessible natural green space

- The existing average level of provision of accessible natural green space across the study area is 1.75ha/1000.
- Many wards have no provision or fall below this average level of provision, and there are a number of wards with very high levels of provision, especially the wards that encompass Sutton park, an 887ha national nature reserve and SSSI.
- When Sutton Park is removed from the calculations, the average level of provision of accessible natural green space across the study area is 0.97ha/1000.
- The Stakeholder Consultation also highlighted that there is an uneven distribution of provision in natural green spaces.
- The importance of natural green spaces (along with other open spaces) is recognised not only in their contribution to recreation and health and wellbeing, but also importantly in terms of Green Infrastructure and nature conservation/biodiversity and climate change mitigation/adaptation.
- The FIT guidance ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ also recommends a quantity standard of 1.8ha per 1000 population for natural and semi-natural green space. This is considered difficult to achieve in terms of new provision.
- Considering the above, a standard of **1.0 ha/1000** is proposed for analysing existing provision, and also for assessing the requirements for new provision, in combination with informal green space. This is in line with existing levels of provision (excluding Sutton Park).
- A combined accessible natural green space and informal green space standard for new provision is considered to be realistic and achievable, especially when considering urban schemes within the city. It also aims to provide bigger and more biodiverse spaces, in accordance with the NPPF.
- Just because a ward may have levels of provision above the minimum standard, it does not mean these spaces are surplus to requirement (as access and quality also need to be considered, and they may be important in terms of heritage, biodiversity, green infrastructure etc). For example, the Local Nature recovery Network includes a schedule of sites that will be potential or actual Biodiversity Net Gain offset sites. The minimum standard for assessing existing provision serves to highlight those areas with low levels of provision, and therefore where new provision should be focused.

Justification of a new access standard for accessible natural green space

- The FIT guidance ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ recommends a walking distance of 720m for natural and semi-natural green space.
 - The Natural England **ANGSt Standards** will be applied to identify key gaps in access. However, it is acknowledged that the standard of 300m for sites above 2ha in size will be difficult to achieve in many cases, and consideration of access to smaller spaces below 2ha in size is also needed.
-

- It is therefore recommended that an access standard of **15 minutes' walk time** (720m straight line) is used to identify key gaps in access to all accessible natural green spaces above 0.15ha in size.

Justification of a new quality standards for accessible 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 and walls 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 natural 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 be 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-win approach to delivering positive outcomes for people and wildlife. The new Building with Nature¹⁶ benchmark quality standards for the design and delivery of GI could be endorsed and advocated by the Council and included within their GI policy where possible.

¹⁶ <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/about>

6.7 Summary of open space quantity and access standards

Table 14 Summary of open space quantity and access standards

Typology	Quantity standards for assessing existing provision (ha/1000 population)	Quantity standards for assessing the requirements for new provision (ha/1000)	Access standard
Allotments	0.2	0.2	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Informal Green Space (sites above 0.15 ha)	0.4	Combined with accessible natural green space (see accessible natural green space standard below).	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Parks and Recreation Grounds	0.9	0.9	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Play Space (Children)	0.125	0.25 (combined with youth play space)	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Play Space (Youth)	0.125	Combined with children's play space (see children's play standard above)	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Accessible Natural Green Space	1.0	1.0 (Combined with informal green space).	ANGSt standards + 15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Total for new provision (ha/1000)		2.35	

7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

7.1 Introduction

This part of the report uses the standards to analyse open space provision across the study area. This section provides an overview of provision and supply across the study area and individual wards, with more detailed maps provided in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

This section discusses the application of the proposed new standards and their components in respect of ‘quantity,’ ‘quality,’ and ‘access.’

Quantity analysis

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

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

Access analysis

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

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

Quality analysis

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

7.2 Application of quantity standards

7.2.1 Current supply against the quantity standards (for assessing existing provision)

The table below shows the existing supply (in hectares) of open space for each typology for each of the wards, and also at the city level. The supply is calculated using the population figures (using 2020 ONS mid-year population estimates) and the quantity of open space compared to what the requirements for open space are against the recommended standards.

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

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

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

Table 15 Supply of open space by typology and ward (with city-wide summary)

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space
Acocks Green Ward	-0.88	-4.46	0.57	-2.79	-2.80	-21.44
Allens Cross Ward	0.46	7.30	-9.32	-1.22	-1.31	-10.47
Alum Rock Ward	-5.28	-9.88	-17.04	-2.64	-3.20	-26.76
Aston Ward	3.44	-5.61	2.01	-2.91	-2.64	-23.90
Balsall Heath West Ward	-2.36	0.96	2.41	-1.30	-1.34	-11.79
Bartley Green Ward	-2.92	13.20	41.29	-2.29	-2.61	176.57
Billesley Ward	2.78	0.28	22.50	-2.29	-2.49	18.50
Birchfield Ward	2.69	-4.83	-11.12	-1.53	-1.54	-12.53
Bordesley & Highgate Ward	-3.26	-0.50	-8.65	-1.74	-1.92	-16.30
Bordesley Green Ward	-2.39	-2.58	-7.15	-1.44	-1.41	-12.82
Bournbrook & Selly Park Ward	-3.92	-7.64	-6.77	-2.94	-3.01	-20.00
Bournville & Cotteridge Ward	1.92	4.35	7.97	-1.86	-2.14	-10.28

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space
Brandwood & King's Heath Ward	1.63	-6.57	3.90	-2.02	-2.21	-10.43
Bromford & Hodge Hill Ward	-3.66	7.30	-11.01	-2.63	-2.62	9.21
Castle Vale Ward	0.24	7.06	5.50	-0.95	-1.11	3.06
Druids Heath & Monymhull Ward	-1.58	14.87	-3.57	-1.35	-1.34	13.28
Edgbaston Ward	4.13	-4.92	-19.63	-2.72	-2.71	-22.11
Erdington Ward	-0.80	-7.25	-1.55	-2.19	-2.54	-20.76
Frankley Great Park Ward	-1.29	-1.00	-3.55	-1.24	-1.34	4.04
Garretts Green Ward	-0.86	-1.82	6.10	-1.18	-1.23	-10.77
Glebe Farm & Tile Cross Ward	0.36	2.61	34.72	-2.90	-2.92	14.07
Gravelly Hill Ward	-2.12	-3.86	-9.54	-1.31	-1.33	-10.60
Hall Green North Ward	-4.13	-5.86	-17.34	-2.86	-2.89	0.37
Hall Green South Ward	0.18	-2.85	-7.91	-1.26	-1.23	-1.19
Handsworth Ward	-2.51	-5.01	12.89	-1.44	-1.53	-12.54
Handsworth Wood Ward	20.36	-2.37	-6.72	-2.29	-2.48	41.05
Harborne Ward	6.80	-4.01	-7.95	-2.93	-2.94	-12.68
Heartlands Ward	17.22	-3.51	-12.11	-1.63	-1.63	16.38
Highter's Heath Ward	-0.07	-3.67	0.94	-1.30	-1.32	-10.95
Holyhead Ward	-1.00	-3.73	-11.23	-1.56	-1.56	-12.48
King's Norton North Ward	-0.29	1.80	15.59	-1.28	-1.39	27.76
King's Norton South Ward	-0.75	-2.98	-7.33	-1.30	-1.32	2.11
Kingstanding Ward	-0.35	0.18	-18.13	-2.53	-2.48	-14.54
Ladywood Ward	-6.07	-4.99	-16.17	-3.22	-3.06	-30.17
Longbridge & West Heath Ward	2.56	-1.34	49.02	-2.20	-2.33	-16.81
Lozells Ward	-1.94	-3.47	-6.58	-1.00	-0.87	-9.71
Moseley Ward	11.28	4.98	39.40	-2.39	-2.71	2.59
Nechells Ward	-3.34	3.32	-10.50	-1.87	-1.68	-9.81

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space
Newtown Ward	-3.10	6.34	-9.97	-1.58	-1.74	-15.50
North Edgbaston Ward	-4.91	-5.35	-6.79	-2.82	-3.02	8.93
Northfield Ward	-2.02	-0.23	-0.58	-1.12	-1.22	-3.52
Oscott Ward	-4.02	-5.48	-5.45	-2.36	-2.51	8.61
Perry Barr Ward	6.23	-3.54	74.72	-2.43	-2.37	-20.28
Perry Common Ward	-2.37	5.35	-9.76	-1.38	-1.42	-4.21
Pype Hayes Ward	1.17	-3.55	33.41	-1.17	-1.33	-10.65
Quinton Ward	1.86	3.80	-14.89	-2.43	-2.48	38.66
Rubery & Rednal Ward	-0.41	-1.10	-9.56	-1.27	-1.29	4.54
Shard End Ward	3.95	-2.17	1.70	-1.37	-1.19	27.65
Sheldon Ward	3.97	-5.73	-8.24	-2.37	-2.36	43.95
Small Heath Ward	-4.10	-5.89	-1.74	-2.44	-2.35	-4.67
Soho & Jewellery Quarter Ward	-5.41	-0.54	-14.23	-3.21	-3.06	-28.12
South Yardley Ward	-0.10	-0.16	9.77	-1.15	-1.11	-9.35
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East Ward	-5.13	-4.62	-6.77	-2.70	-2.47	-25.64
Sparkhill Ward	2.87	-8.29	-10.91	-2.55	-2.28	-21.56
Stirchley Ward	1.16	-3.47	-4.86	-1.17	-1.25	2.97
Stockland Green Ward	4.73	6.43	-8.18	-2.85	-3.00	-0.40
Sutton Four Oaks Ward	-0.53	-2.63	-8.20	-1.14	-1.14	193.49
Sutton Mere Green Ward	-0.79	1.18	-8.83	-1.16	-1.12	-1.81
Sutton Reddicap Ward	1.57	0.54	17.85	-1.16	-1.24	-1.78
Sutton Roughley Ward	-2.31	-2.26	-2.96	-1.33	-1.44	-11.53
Sutton Trinity Ward	-1.85	2.11	-8.18	-1.11	-1.12	136.86
Sutton Vesey Ward	-0.02	0.19	-5.88	-2.28	-2.44	522.02
Sutton Walmley & Minworth Ward	0.71	5.59	-4.91	-1.74	-1.91	117.69
Sutton Wylde Green Ward	-0.02	-2.88	-7.69	-1.07	-1.07	-2.36

Ward	Allotments	Informal Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds (Combined)	Play Space (Child)	Play Space (Youth)	Accessible Natural Green Space
Tyseley & Hay Mills Ward	0.17	-1.69	-11.29	-1.51	-1.57	-6.78
Ward End Ward	2.25	-5.48	9.88	-1.59	-1.41	-13.69
Weoley & Selly Oak Ward	-2.19	9.31	13.69	-2.83	-2.97	-15.86
Yardley East Ward	-1.00	-3.57	1.58	-1.19	-1.26	-10.25
Yardley West & Stechford Ward	-0.05	2.73	-11.68	-1.62	-1.62	-0.69
City Wide	14.58	-61.53	-5.03	-130.56	-133.90	853.87

Table 15 shows that open space provision varies across wards and typologies. For children’s play space and youth play space there are shortfalls in provision in every ward within the city. For allotments, 39% of the wards meet the standard, for informal green space 35% of wards meet the standard, for parks and recreation grounds 33% of wards meet the standard and for accessible natural green space 35% meet the standard. This will be an important consideration when determining the need for on-site open space as part of new development.

Just because a typology is in sufficient supply, this does not mean it is ‘surplus’ to requirements, as the access and quality standards also need to be considered alongside the quantity standards (which are minimum guidance levels of provision). There may also be other factors such as a site’s nature conservation, historic or cultural value, or its contribution to the Green Infrastructure network which mean it should be protected. The key objective of any open space assessment in relation to development should be how to meet or exceed the minimum standard in this guidance.

7.2.2 Future need for open space

At the time of writing, the Council do not have a housing-growth based population projection. Although the government’s minimum local housing need figure has been set out, it is not yet known how much of that housing can be accommodated within the city boundary.

The latest 2018-based subnational population projection illustrates potential population growth between 2020 and 2042. This projection shows the population of Birmingham increasing from 1,152,785 in 2020 to 1,247,361 in 2042.

Based on a population increase of 94,576, this is likely to result in the following indicative additional open space requirements up to 2042 (using the quantity standards set out in Section 6.7, Table 13):

- Allotments: 18.92 ha
- Informal green space/accessible natural green space: 94.58 ha
- Parks and recreation grounds: 85.12 ha

- Children’s/youth play space: 23.64 ha

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

7.3 Application of access standards

7.3.1 Overview

This section provides an overview of access to different types of open space typologies across the city, using the access standards summarised in Section 6.7. The maps are intended to provide an overview and are for illustrative purposes only. More detailed maps by ward are provided for each typology within Appendix 2.

The walk time buffers for all typologies are created from access points, derived where a path or road from OpenStreetMap intersects with a site boundary. In the few cases that sites have no paths or roads into them from this dataset, a centroid is used instead as the buffer feature. The walking buffers are generated using ESRI’s service area tool with a standard 5 kilometres/3.1 miles an hour walking speed¹⁷ and detailed isochrone output. The tool follows paths and roads that allow pedestrian traffic (as specified by Esri which uses Here mapping data), and therefore takes account of physical barriers to access such as rivers and railway lines - the buffer will follow bridges/tunnels/crossing points.

The more basic straight line buffer access analysis approach is used for children’s play space (to align with the Birmingham Outdoor Play Facilities Policy (2020) – see Section 6.5) and the Natural England ANGSt standards, which define straight line buffers and not walk times. Table 2 (Section 2.4 of this report) shows how walk-time generally relates to straight-line distances and pedestrian route distances.

The access maps also show buildings (extracted from OS MasterMap) to help show where the key gaps in access are.

7.3.2 Access to allotments, informal green space, parks and play space (child and youth)

As can be seen from the figures below there are large gaps in access to allotments, children’s play space and youth play space. There are smaller gaps in access to parks and recreation grounds and informal green space.

When parks and recreation grounds, informal green space and accessible natural green space (720m straight line) are considered together, there is generally good access across the residential areas of the city, with the exception of Sutton Wylde Green and Edgbaston.

¹⁷ This is in line with what 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-fags>

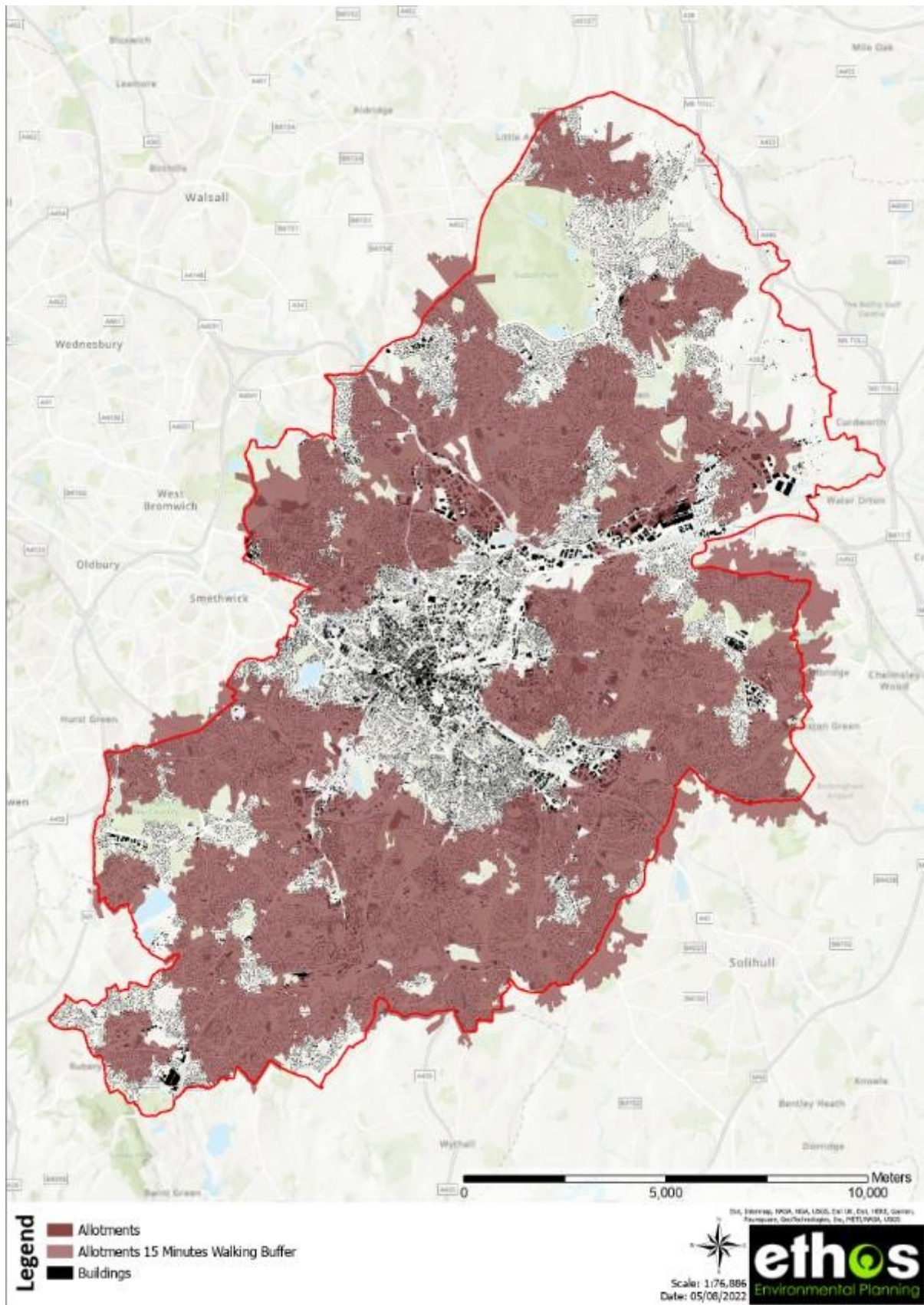


Figure 8 Access to allotments (15 minute walk time buffer)

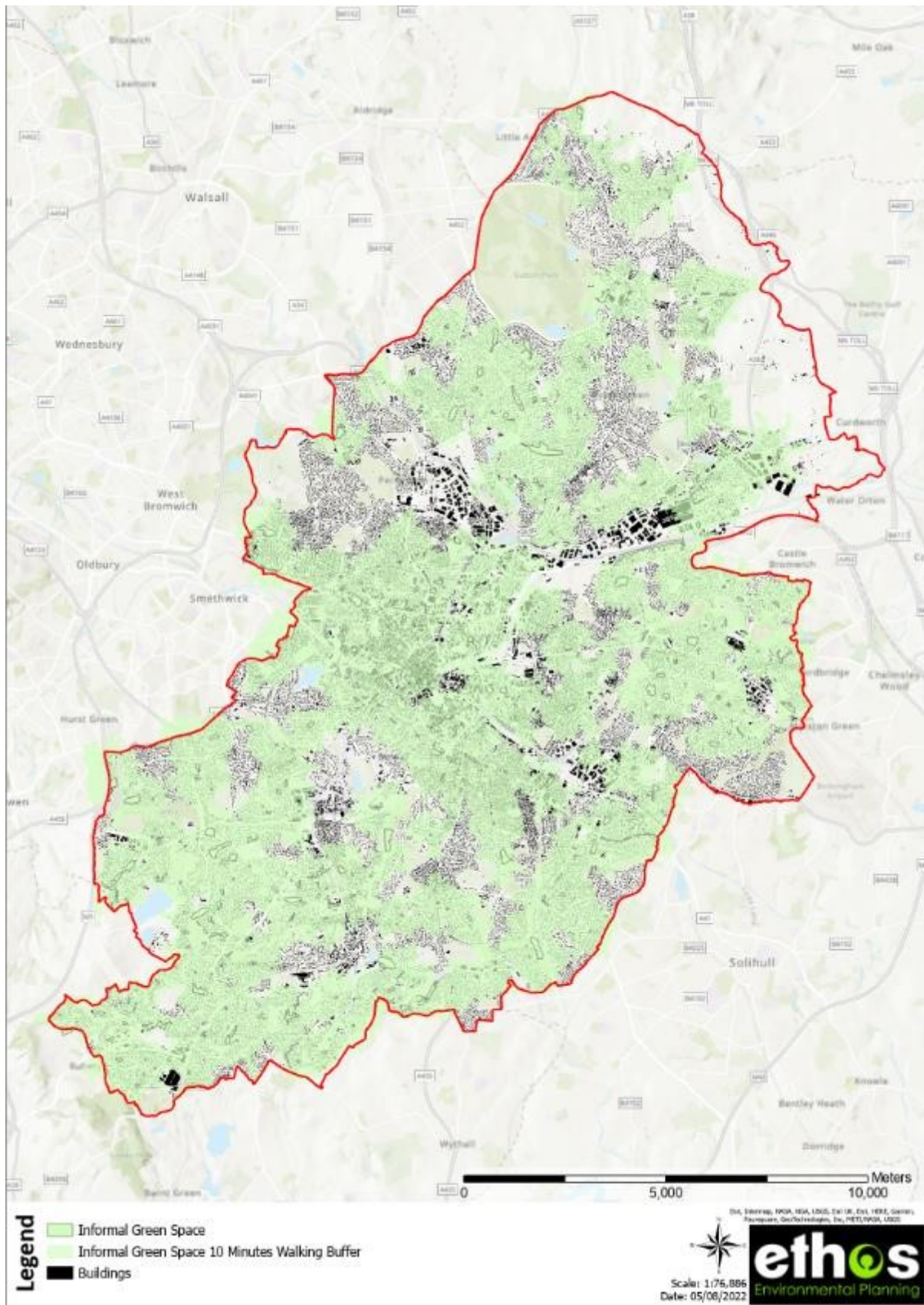


Figure 9 Access to informal green space (10 minute walk time buffer)

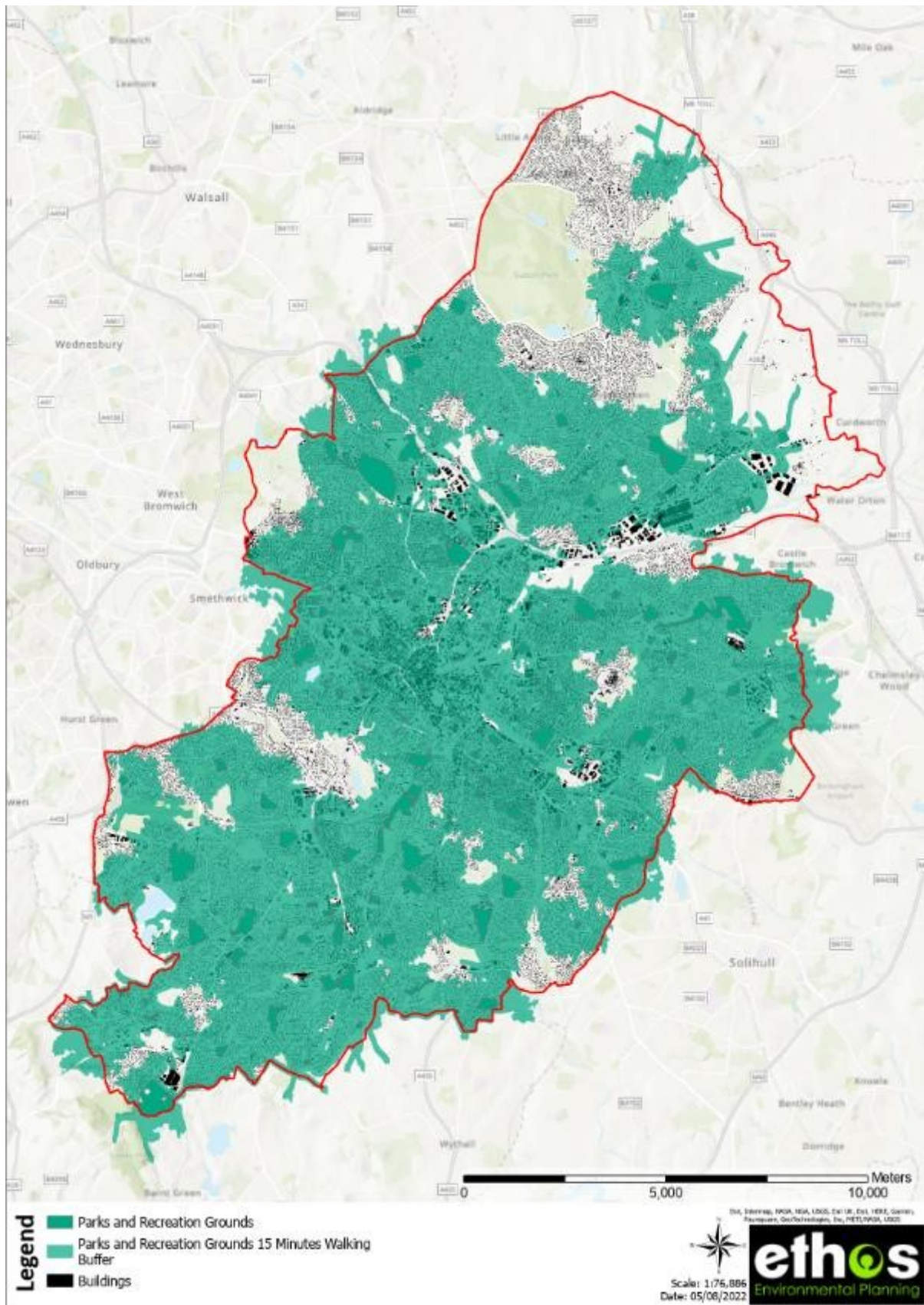


Figure 10 Access to parks and recreation grounds (15 minute walk time buffer)

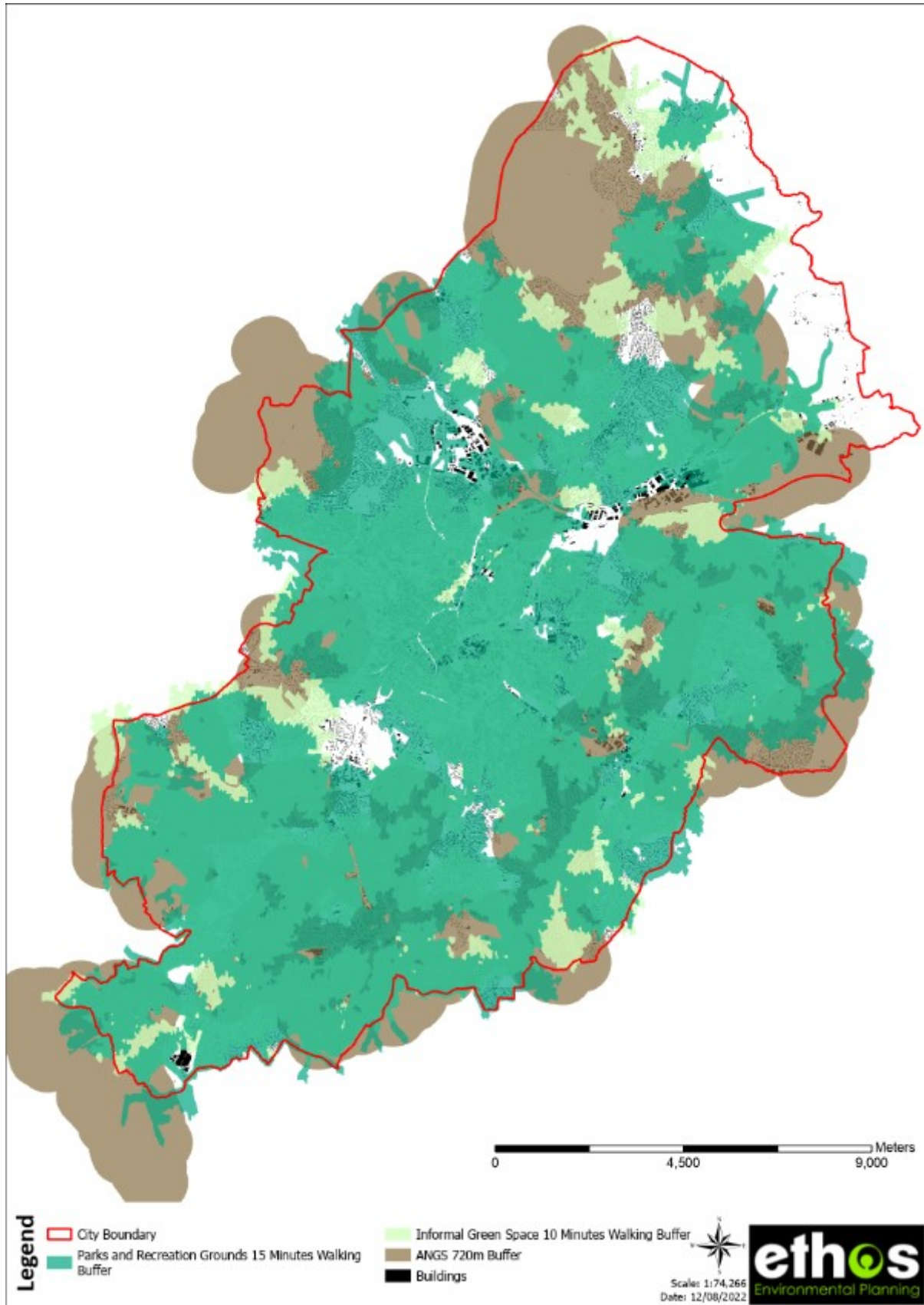


Figure 11 Access to parks, informal and natural green space (combined)

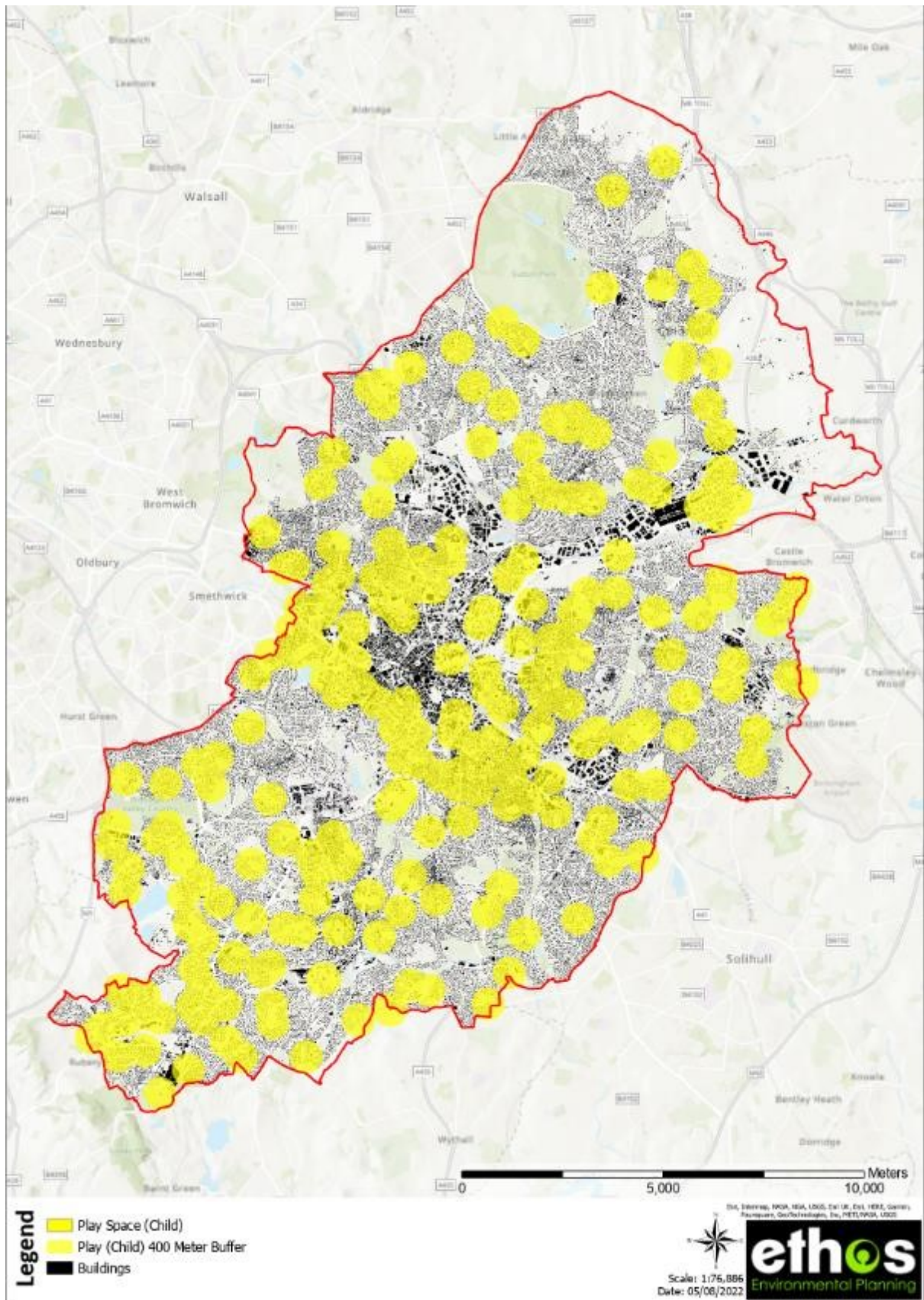


Figure 12 Access to children's play space (400m straight line buffer)

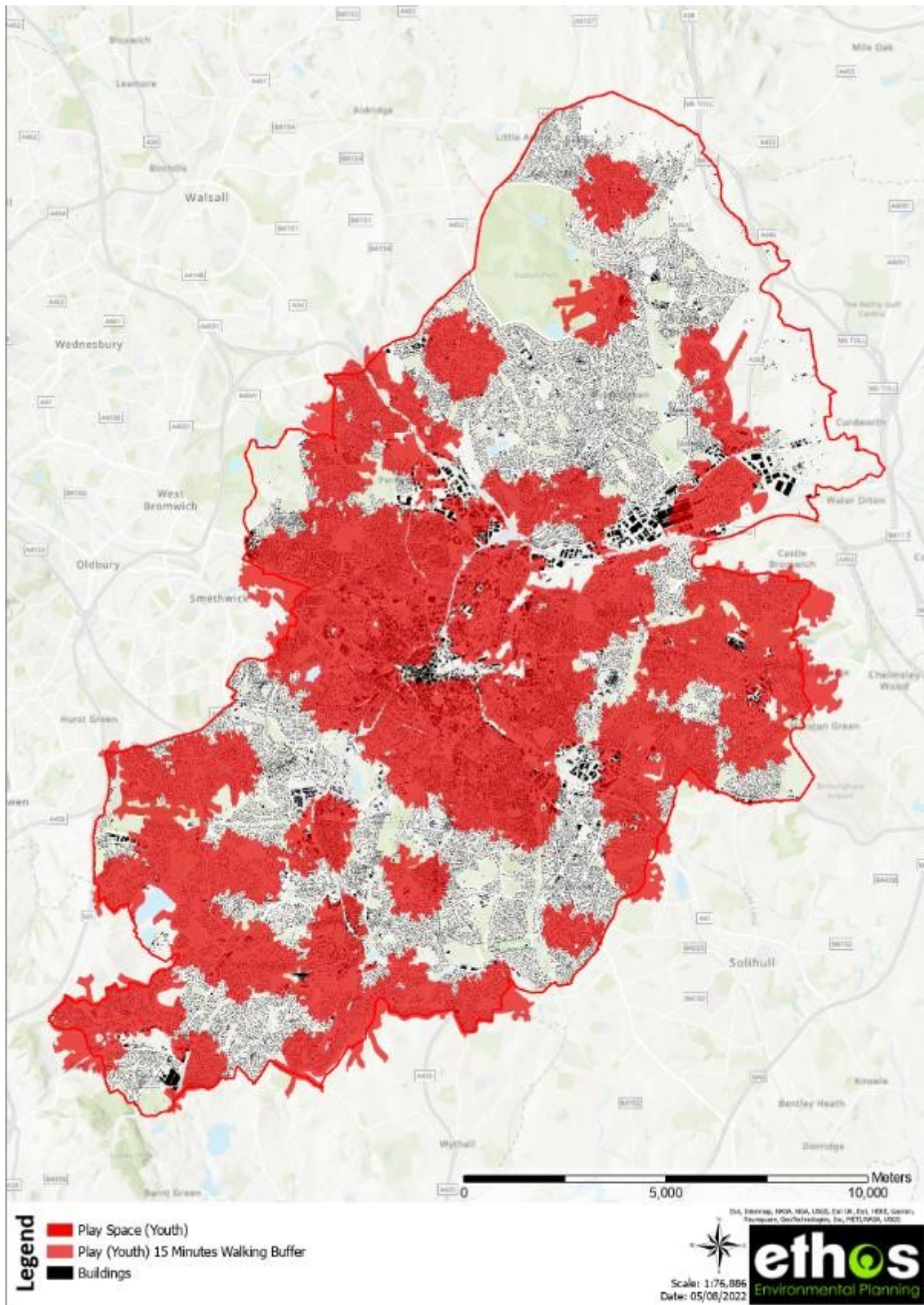


Figure 13 Access to youth play space (15 minute walk time buffer)

7.3.3 Access to accessible natural green space

This section looks at access to accessible natural green space within the city including through the application of the locally derived access standard (15-minute walk time/720m straight line), and the ANGSt standards, in order to identify the main gaps in access. As already mentioned under Section 5.2.5, this typology only includes those natural green spaces which have a definitive boundary and public access e.g., Local Nature Reserves, and not the open countryside where the only access is via the Public Right of Way network.

Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt)

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 kilometres 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.

As can be seen from the figures below, there are large gaps in access to accessible natural green space against both the locally derived access standard, and the ANGSt standards, with the exception of 20ha+ sites within 2km (although there is still a large gap in access within the city centre).

There are 14 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) within the study area totaling 317.11ha in size. This equates to 0.28ha of LNRs per 1000 population, which falls well below the ANGSt standard of 1ha per 1000.

The PROW network provides access between open spaces and provides an important element of access to open space and the wider countryside.

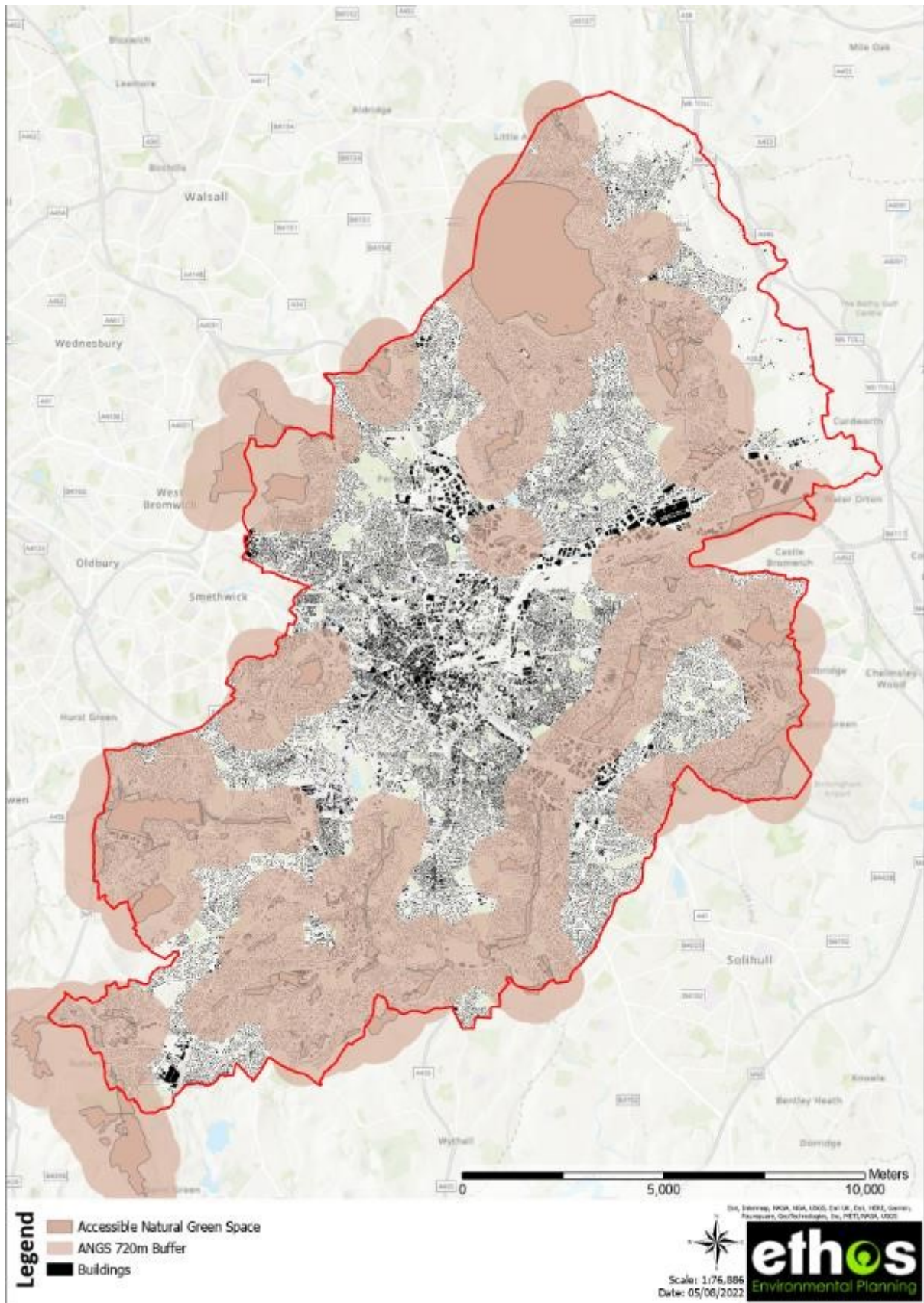


Figure 14 Access to accessible natural green space (720m straight line)

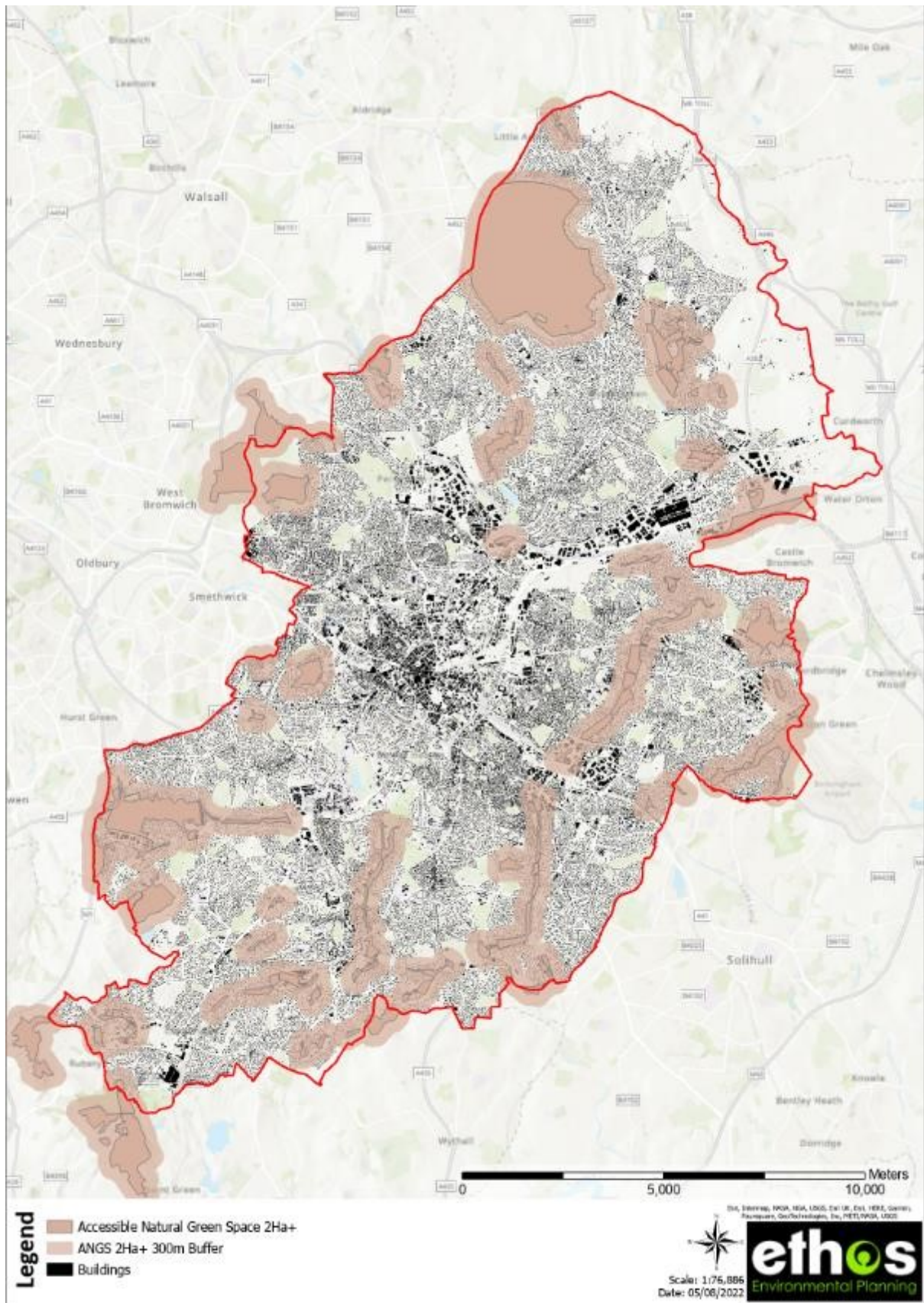


Figure 15 ANGSt Standard: Access to 2ha+ sites within 300m

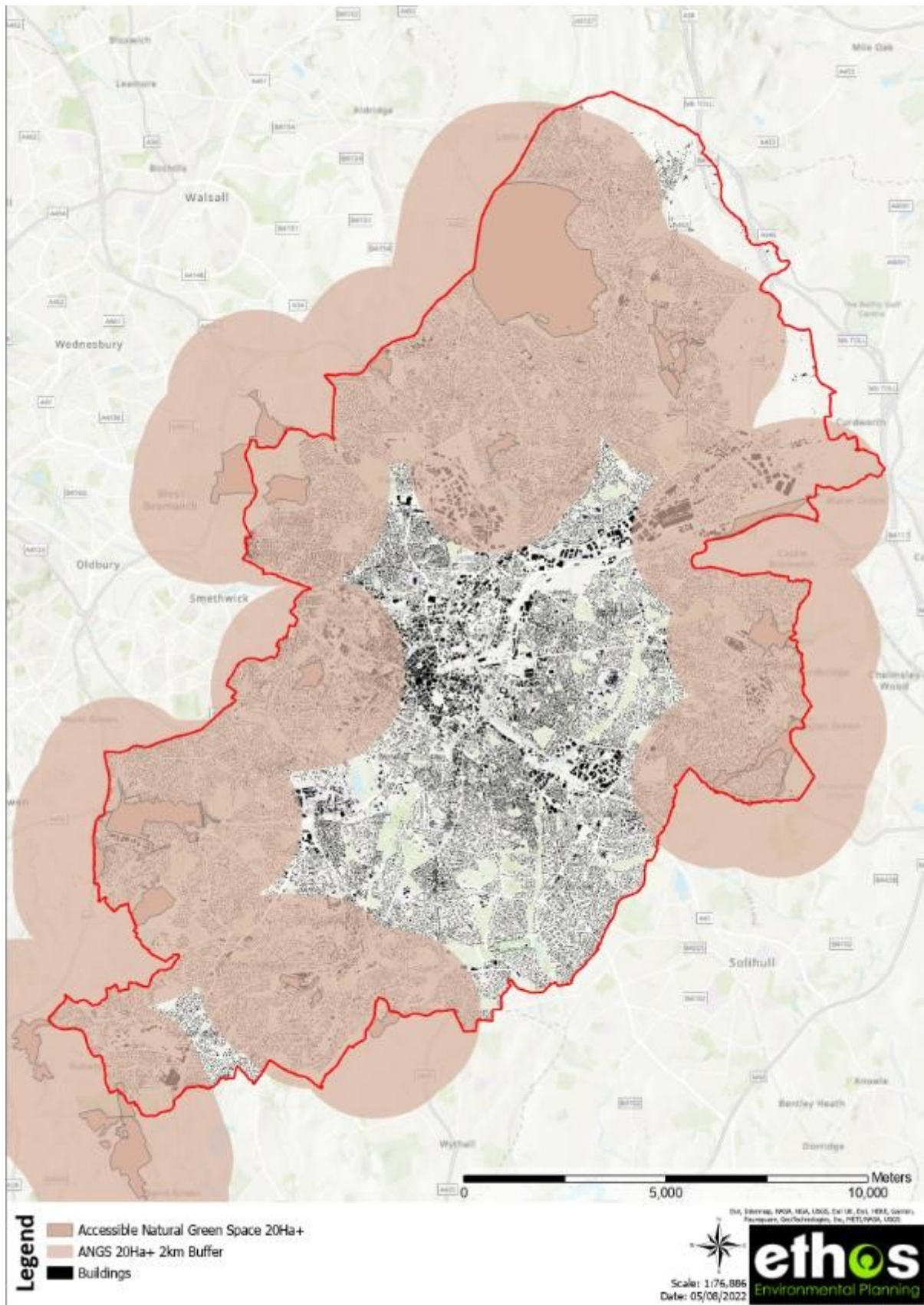


Figure 16 ANGSt Standard: Access to 20ha+ sites within 2km

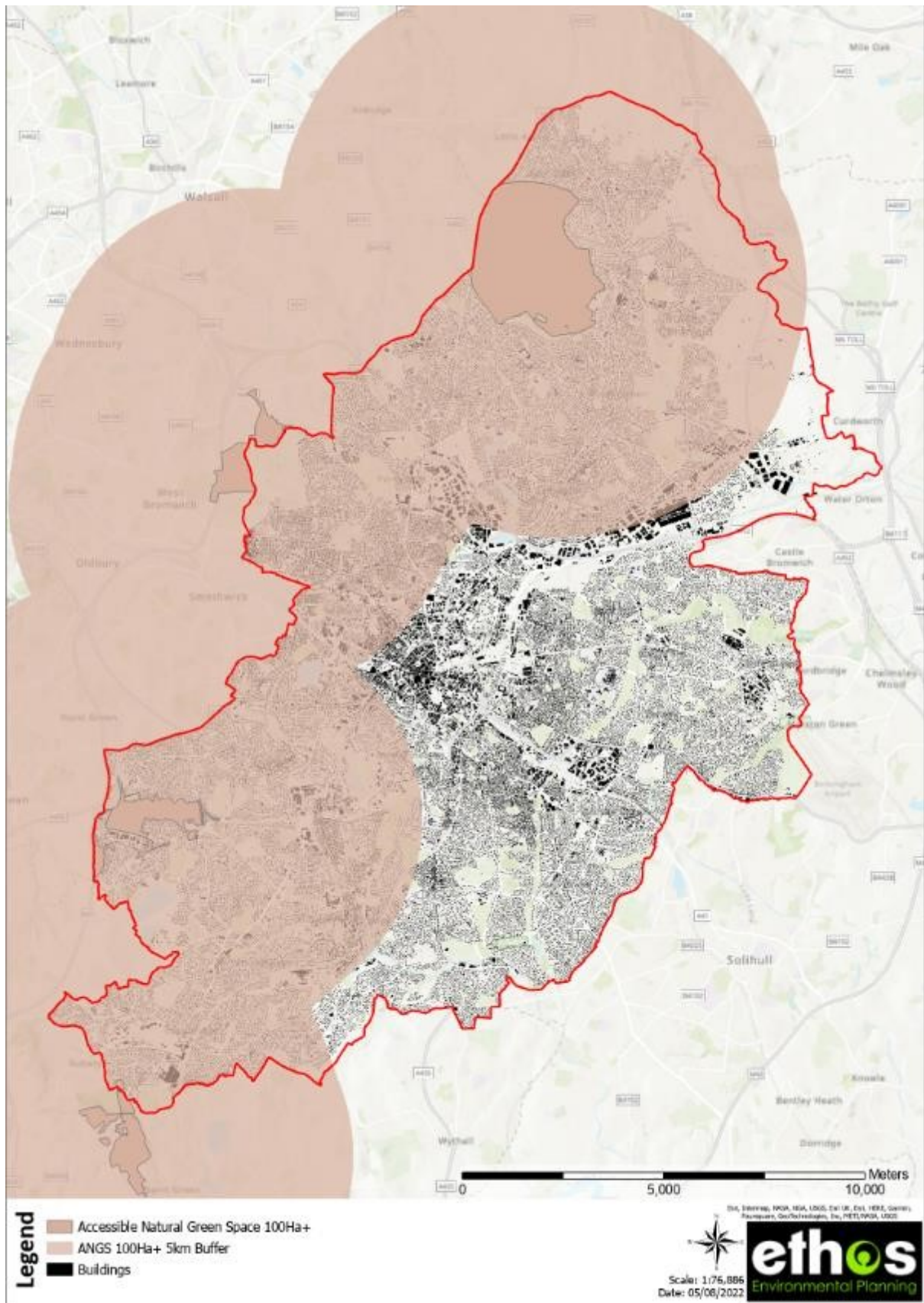


Figure 17 ANGSt Standard: Access to 100ha+ sites within 5km

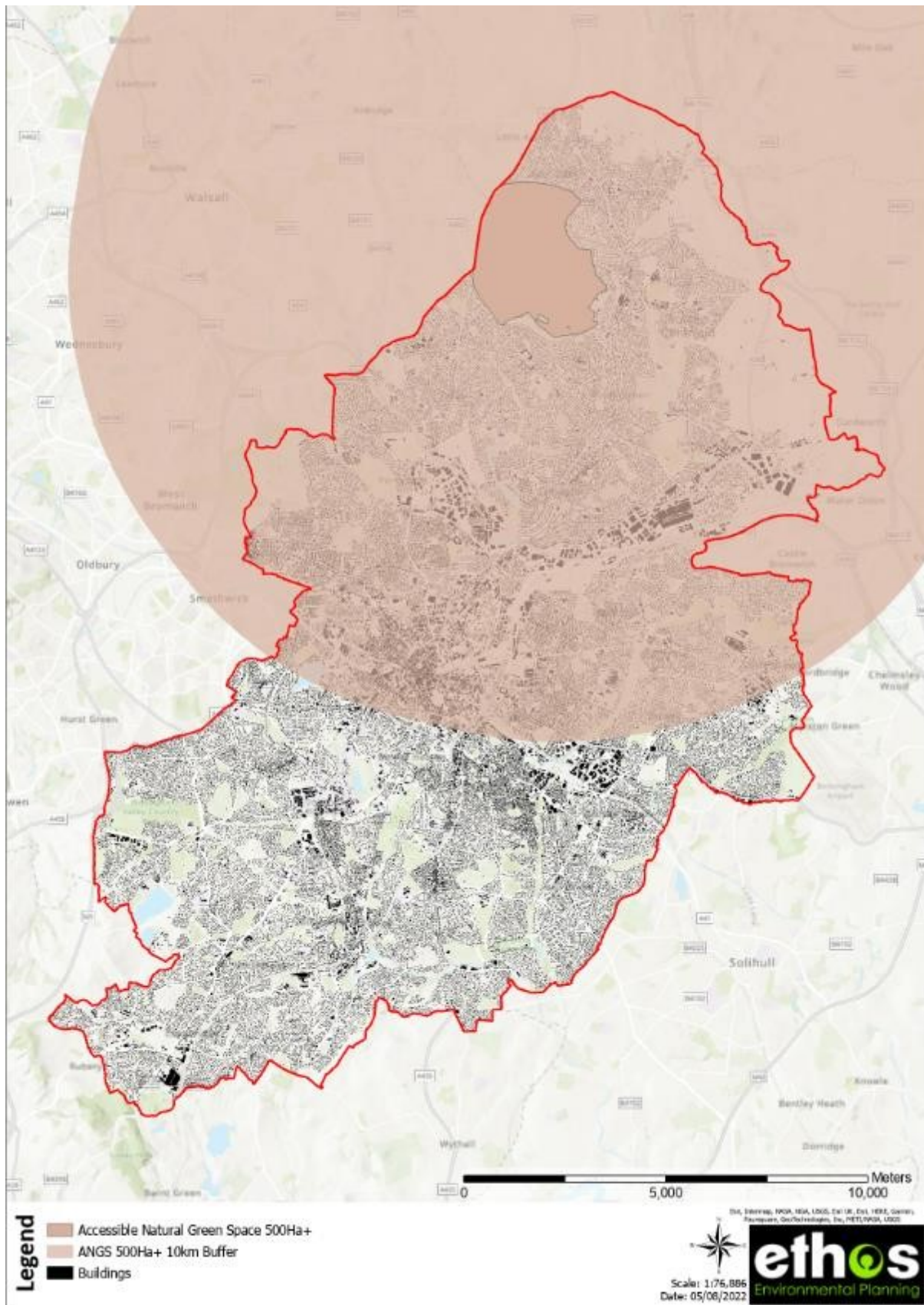


Figure 18 ANGSt Standard: Access to 500ha+ sites within 10km

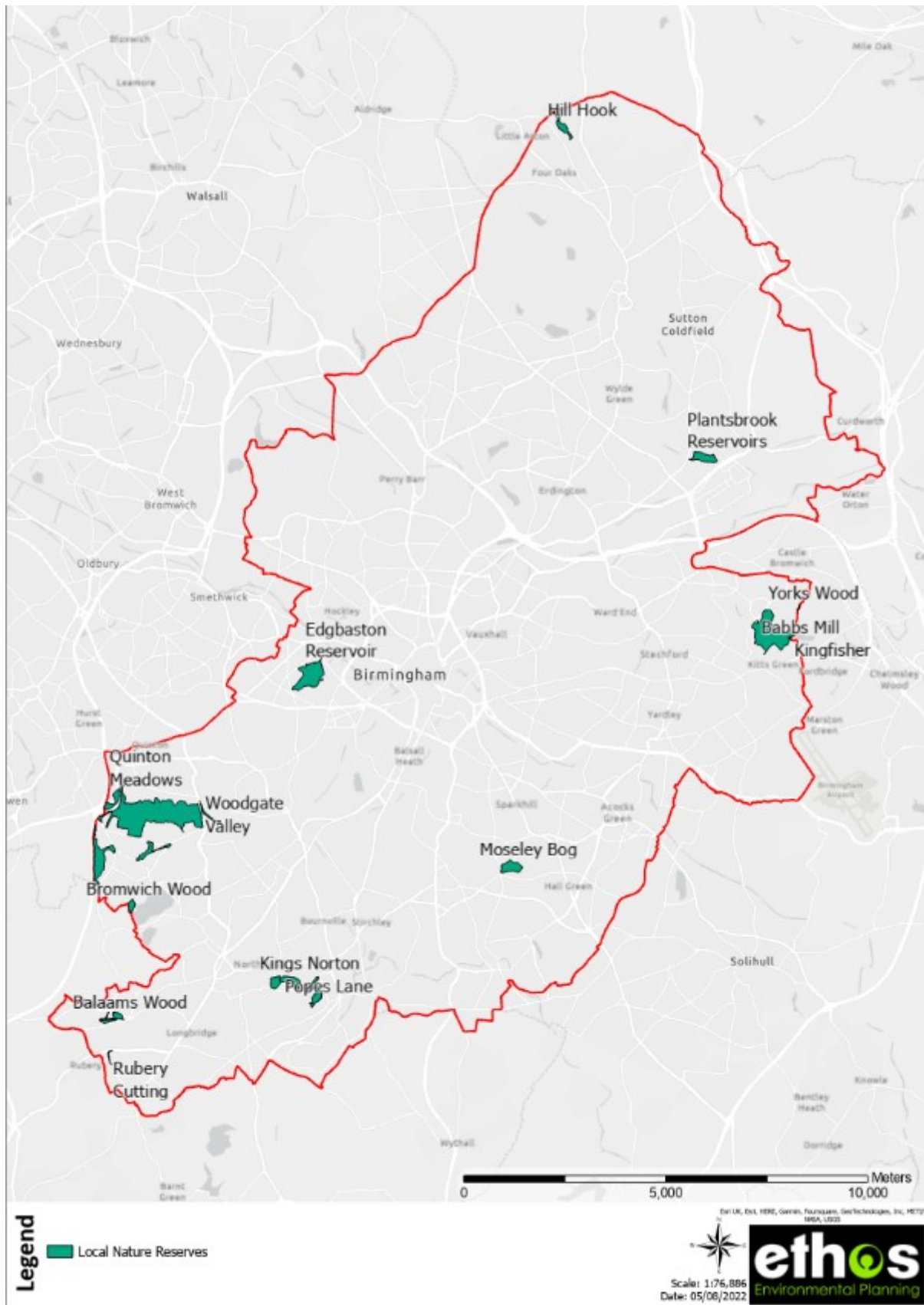


Figure 19 Local Nature Reserves

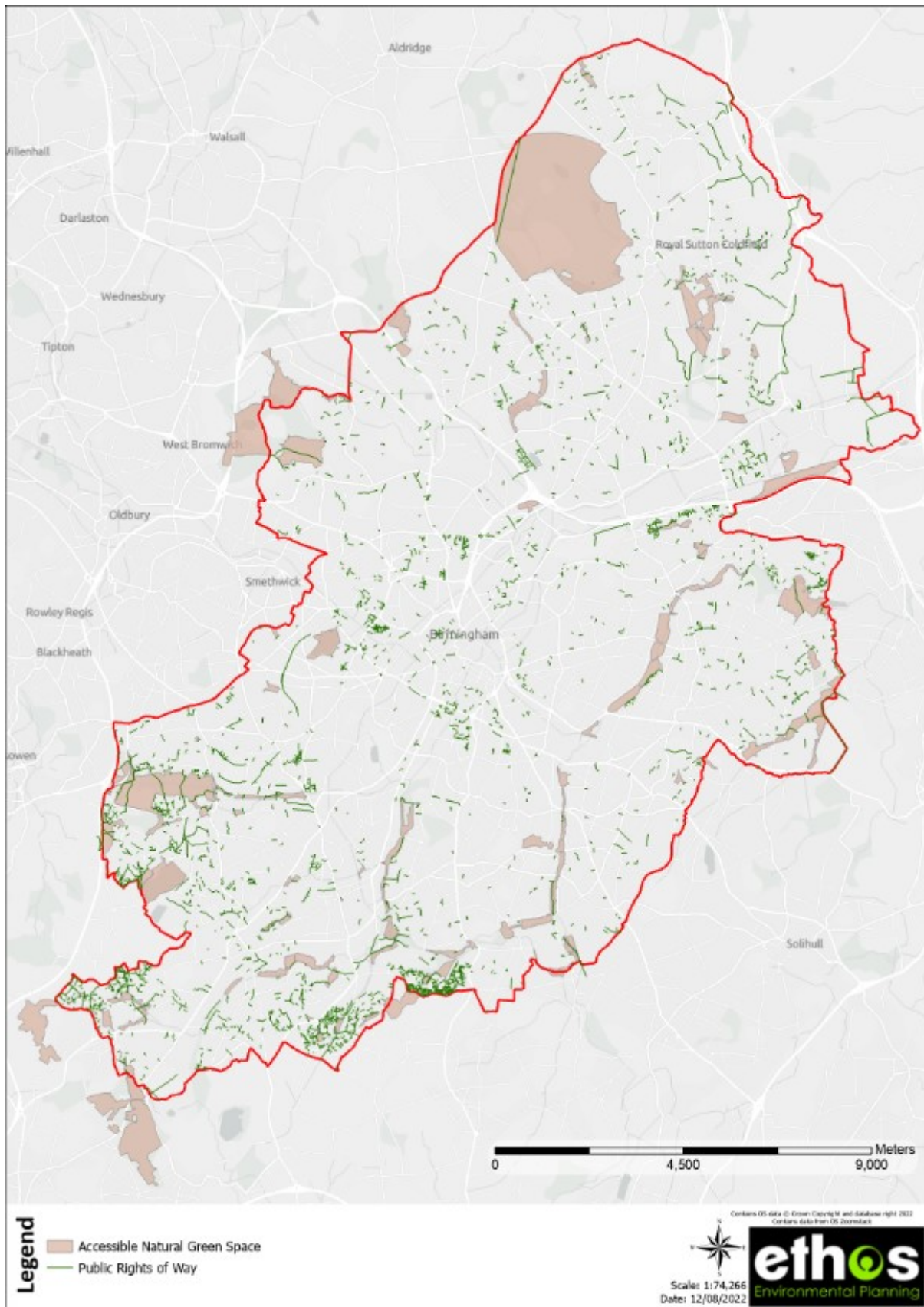


Figure 20 Public Rights of Way (PROW)

7.4 Application of quality standards

7.4.1 Quality of open space – stakeholder consultation key findings

Some of the key findings from the Stakeholder Consultation report (2022) in relation to open space quality are as follows:

- Across all groups of consultees, parks were rated as good quality in particular the flagship parks and those with associated groups.
- A large proportion of community groups/organisations rated youth play spaces as poor in quality. It was also highlighted that children’s play spaces should be more imaginative.
- Littering and fly-tipping was mentioned as an issue across most of the typologies in terms of quality.
- Access points have become lost into many open spaces with development truncating access or paths/entrances becoming overgrown.

7.4.2 Quality of open space – audit methodology

Quality

The quality audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach. However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site’s existing quality rather than a full asset audit. Site visits were undertaken in March 2022.

The quality audits were designed to focus on the key publicly accessible open spaces. It was not possible to survey all sites due to access restrictions (namely private sports grounds, education sites and allotments). Other sites were excluded due to restrictions on time/resources available, such as small informal green spaces. It was agreed with the project team that the following open spaces would be subject to quality audits:

- All parks and recreation grounds
- All accessible natural green space above 0.2ha in size
- All informal green spaces above 0.2ha in size that also contain a children’s or youth play area

A number of sites (approximately 20) were also visited to check any outstanding queries from the desktop mapping around the site boundary, access and/or typology.

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 criteria set out in the draft Naturally Birmingham Environmental Justice Assessment site based audit tool (with some refinements to ensure repeatability and efficiency), which is in turn informed by the Green Flag Award criteria. However, it should be noted that the Naturally Birmingham audit

tool is a more detailed assessment with many more criteria than have been used in the site audit for this report.

Table 16 Quality audit criteria

Agreed criteria	Key points for consideration
1. Welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the entrances well maintained and safe? • Is the site managed/laid out so that there is an overall sense of welcome?
2. Good and safe access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the paths clean and tidy? • Are the paths accessible for mobility scooter/wheelchair users? • Are there good links to adjacent green spaces/community facilities?
3. Appropriate signage and information (NA option)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there clear and well-maintained signs/maps/information boards, which are appropriate to the site.
4. Appropriate provision of facilities (NA option)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there a range of good quality facilities which are appropriate to the site?
5. Play value (NA option)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For children’s play areas, is there good ‘play value’ (i.e., high quality and variety of play experiences (physical, sensory and social) on offer?
6. Personal security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the site overlooked by housing? • Are there clear sight lines? • Does it look like the site has a problem with anti-social behaviour (e.g., graffiti, dumping)?
7. Dog Fouling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are dog bins or general litter bins into which do waste can be disposed available and visible and is there dog fouling present?
8. Litter and waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are bins/signs available and visible and is there a litter issue/fly tipping across the site?
9. Maintenance of soft landscaping/grounds maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the grounds, horticultural areas and trees managed appropriately?

Agreed criteria	Key points for consideration
10. Building, infrastructure and equipment maintenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is equipment fit-for-use and well-maintained and has redundant equipment been removed? • Is the infrastructure (paths, lighting, fencing, seating) and buildings (if present) well-maintained and safe? • Do surfaces drain well? • Are equipment and facilities safe and dangers/hazards cordoned off?
11. Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the site contribute positively to biodiversity through providing a diversity of habitats which are well managed and connected within the site.
12. Landscape, heritage and sense of place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the site contribute significantly to the quality, character and setting of the area through the overall character and quality and visibility of the site? • Does the site offer attractive plant assemblages that support place character and quality • Is the cultural or historical significance of the site clearly evident, with features well maintained and appropriate interpretation, significantly contributing to the sense of place and providing distinctive/memorable features.
13. Climate Change Adaption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there mature trees which provide shade and cooling, help attenuate rainwater provide biodiversity benefits, store and capture carbon? • Are there wetlands or SuDs on site to help attenuate rainwater and improve quality? • Are these wetlands/SuDs well managed and designed to create better places for people and wildlife?

In addition, for each site it was noted (Yes or No) if the site has a community notice board or is advertising events/volunteer activities.

SCORING LINE						
Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent	Exceptional
0/1	2/3/4	5/6	7	8	9	10

Each of the 13 criteria are scored between 1 (very poor) and 10 (exceptional), and there is also an N/A option for some of the criteria. The scores for each site are added together and the mean calculated based on how many criteria were scored (e.g., If 'Play Value' is given N/A for a site (because the site doesn't contain an equipped play space), the total will be divided by 12). This mean is then multiplied by 10 to produce the percentage final score.

Considering the range of site scores across the city, the following band scores/categories have been set:

- Excellent: $\geq 80\%$
- Good: $\geq 65\%$ and $< 80\%$
- Adequate: $\geq 50\%$ and $< 65\%$
- Poor: $< 50\%$

Where a site scores 4 or below (poor) for any of the criteria and is assessed as being of excellent, good, or adequate quality overall, this has been flagged up as an issue.

7.4.3 Quality of open space – audit findings

The quality audits were undertaken at 283 open spaces across the city. The details of the quality audits are contained within the GIS database provided to the local authority. For each of the wards a map summarising the results of the quality audit has been produced, showing the sites which scored excellent, good, adequate, or poor quality (see Appendix 3).

Figure 20 and Table 17 below provides an overview of the quality audit results across the city.

Table 17 Summary of results from quality audit

Typology	Excellent	Good	Good with 1+ poor criteria	Adequate	Adequate with 1+ poor criteria	Poor
Accessible natural green space	12	34	5	9	23	2
Informal green space	3	21	2	7	26	4
Parks and recreation grounds	18	57	6	18	30	4
Play space (child) (parent sites)	0	1		0	1	0
Play space (youth) (parent sites)	0	0		0	1	0
Total	33	113	13	34	81	10

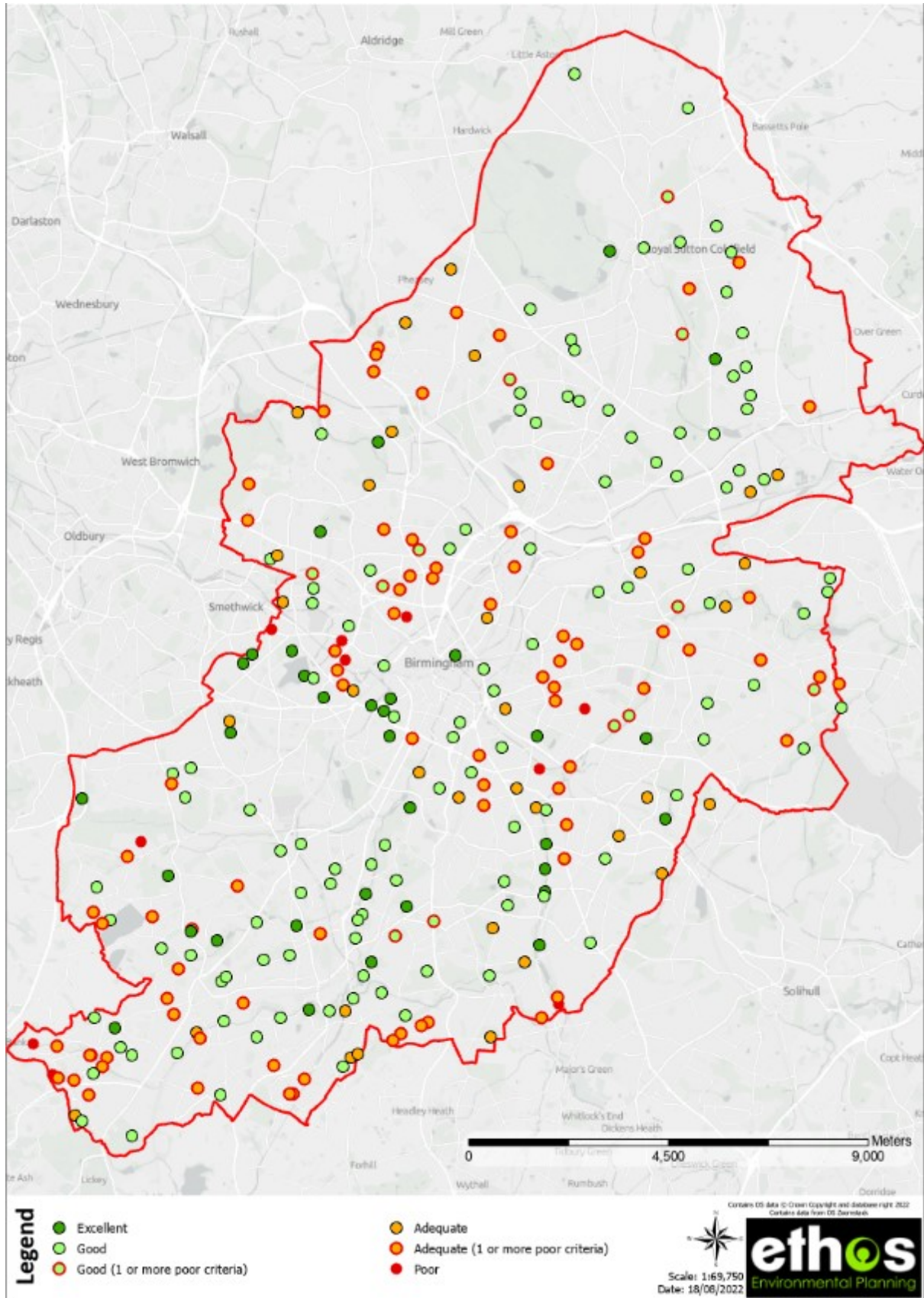


Figure 21 Summary map showing results from quality audit

The figure below shows the biodiversity score for each open space (from the quality audit), overlain with the nature recovery vision map. Out of the open spaces that were quality audited, 119 sites scored 6 or below for biodiversity which also fall within the nature recovery vision map (core habitat or expansion zones 1 or 2). Improving the biodiversity value of these open spaces can contribute towards the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.

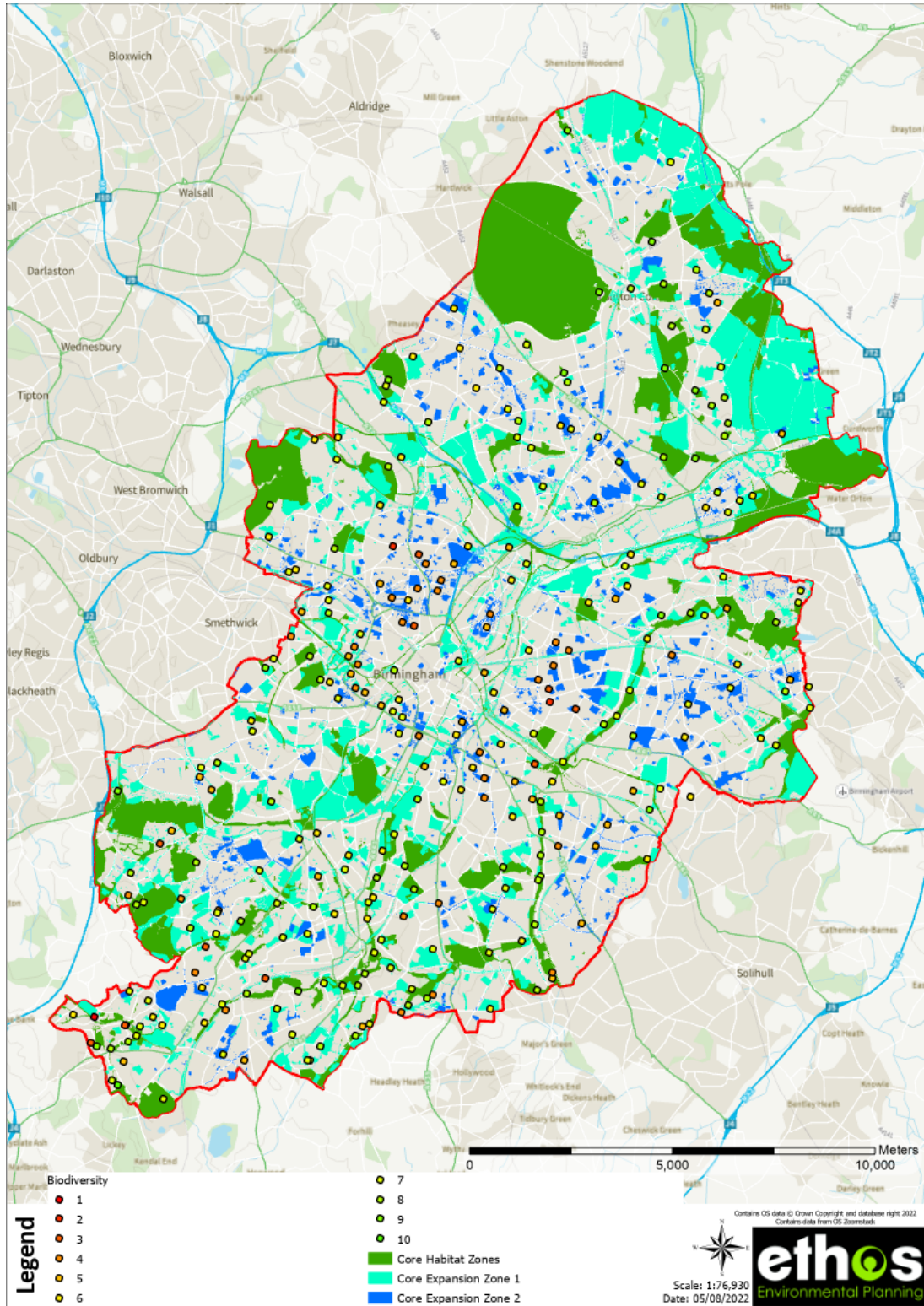


Figure 22 Biodiversity scores for open space and the nature recovery vision map

8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

8.1 Strategic Options

8.1.1 Introduction

The strategic options address six key areas:

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

8.1.2 Delivering Strategic Options

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

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

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

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

The information provided within this study will also form the basis for potential future strategies. The recommended policies within this study can also be used to help form the basis of any open space policies as part of the review of the existing Local Plan.

8.2 Existing provision to be protected

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

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

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

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

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

8.3 Existing provision to be enhanced

In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision but no accessibility issues, then increasing the quality/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 accessibility or quantity, **but**
- Scored poorly in the quality assessment.

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

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

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

Open Space Policy Direction (enhancing open space):

OS4	Where new housing development is proposed, and open space is not practicable on site, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the ward or neighbouring ward to which the development is located. Priority should be given to any sites scoring poor or adequate, or sites with identified issues as detailed in the quality audit database ¹⁸ .
OS5	New development should seek to follow best practice e.g., the Building with Nature ¹⁹ Standards for high quality Green Infrastructure, in order to ensure that green space delivered through new development is multi-functional, climate resilient, future proof, responds to policy (local and national) and is appropriate to the landscape context/ contributes to sense of place.
OS6	The findings of the assessment make recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the study area, including how this can contribute to wider priorities, such as the Nature Recovery Network (see Section 7.4). A long-term strategy for achieving improvements could be delivered through an open space strategy, green infrastructure strategy, play strategy, neighbourhood plans or design guidance.
OS7	Management plans (if not already established) should be developed for the main parks and recreation grounds. These priorities could also be considered in neighbourhood plans and by the local community.

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

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

The information provided within this study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision or replacement of open space.

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.

¹⁸ There may also be a demonstrated need to improve the quality of open spaces which were not included within the quality audits (due to resource limitations – see section 7.4.2), or even those sites which were assessed as being good quality – there may be local aspirations for sites which have not been identified within the quality audits.

¹⁹ <https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/how-it-works>

Spatial and Investment plans 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.

Table 18 below provides an example of applying the supply, accessibility and quality of open space in the ward of Balsall Heath West, in order to highlight potential opportunities for re-location or re-designation of open spaces or improvements to open spaces to help reduce existing shortfalls in quantity, accessibility and quality. It also considers those open spaces which may have potential to be considered as surplus to requirement. This is an example that could be used to guide the council in applying similar solutions to other wards as required.

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

Table 18 Example opportunities for re-designating open space

Ward	Current Provision	Opportunities
Balsall Heath West Ward	<p>Quantity: Sufficient supply of informal green space and parks and recreation grounds. Shortfalls in supply of allotments, play space (child and youth) and accessible natural green space.</p> <p>Access: Good access to parks and recreation grounds, informal green space and youth play space. Large gaps in access to allotments, children’s play space and accessible natural green space (including against the ANGSt standards).</p> <p>Quality: 3 open spaces were quality audited in the ward (2 informal green spaces and 1 park and recreation ground). One of the amenity green spaces was assessed as being good quality, and the other 2 spaces were assessed as adequate quality.</p>	<p>Potential for informal green space in the north of the ward to accommodate children’s play space or food growing areas, to reduce the shortfalls in supply and access to these typologies.</p> <p>There are also opportunities to improve the biodiversity value of existing open spaces and create/manage areas of semi-natural habitat, such as meadows and copse areas, to mitigate the lack of access to accessible natural green space within the ward.</p> <p>Due to the large shortfalls in allotments, play space and accessible natural green space, the existing sufficient supply of informal green space and parks should be used to mitigate these shortfalls and should therefore not be considered as surplus to requirement (also bearing in mind that the standards are for minimum guidance levels).</p> <p>Quality audit identifies potential to improve the quality of open space within the ward.</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, quality and access to open space. This study can be used as the basis for decision making, as follows:

Quantity

Within the study report, for each typology, there is an identified ‘sufficient supply’ or ‘under supply’ for each of the wards, as well as the overall study area. If a given geography has an existing under supply of any typology, there may be need for additional provision. This could

be delivered through developing a new site (for example as part of a housing development), acquiring land to extend the site or changing the typology of an existing space (which may be in over supply).

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

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

Access

This study considers how access to different types of open space varies across the study area against the proposed standards. The maps in Section 7 (and Appendix 2) show where there are deficiencies and potential over supply of facilities. This information can be used alongside the quantity statistics to determine if new provision or improved accessibility is required in an area. For example, if a new development is proposed, the maps should be consulted to determine if there is an existing gap in provision of a particular typology which could be met by the development.

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

Delivering new provision

There various opportunities for delivering new open space (and wider GI) through new development – developer contributions, biodiversity net gain and to a lesser extent through capital and grant funding. Consideration could also be given to adopting an Urban Greening Factor.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

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

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

off-site provision/enhancement. This is an example of how S106 agreements can be used alongside CIL.

Amendments to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations (2010) came into force on 1 September 2019. One of the key changes is the lifting of the ‘pooling restriction,’ due to the deletion of Regulation 123. This allows CIL and planning obligations (S106) to fund the same piece of infrastructure and accordingly remove what can be a barrier to development. The new Infrastructure Funding Statements (which replace the regulation 123 lists) required annually from 31 December 2020, will provide an appropriate audit trail of all contributions to receiving authorities and how they are spent, whether S106 or CIL.

Planning Obligations (S106)

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

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

New development will be required to provide on-site open space in accordance with Birmingham City Council policy requirements, as informed by the standards outlined in this study. Whilst not all developments will be of a size that will generate the requirement for on-site open space, when considering future requirements for Birmingham, there will be many that will. This study should be used to inform local decisions about where and when new on-site provision will be required.

Figure 22 below shows an example flow chart/decision making process to help developers/Council officers determine the need for on or off-site provision of open space. This is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case by case basis using the standards and assessment within this study. Where possible, this should be determined through pre-application discussions with the Council.

Biodiversity net gain

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

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain to compensate for loss of biodiversity through development is set to become a part of planning in late 2023 through requirements within the Environment

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

Capital and grant funding

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

The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) provide a summary of current opportunities to access funding for green infrastructure projects across the UK²⁰.

Urban Greening Factor

Urban greening factor (UGF) is likely to be advocated within the Natural England GI Standards Framework. UGF works well in higher density urban districts that generally struggle to significantly increase the quantum of green space but can benefit incrementally from the addition of greenery within development.

The London Plan 2021 includes the ‘Urban Greening Factor’. This is intended to accelerate the greening of London’s streets, buildings and public spaces. The policy will provide new areas of green space in the urban environment and to work alongside planning policies which protect existing green spaces. The policy encourages developers to approach urban greening as a fundamental element at the early stages so that opportunities to incorporate greening are maximised and integrated into the design process. To calculate the UGF, each surface type within a proposal is given a rating, these ratings vary between 0 and 1 depending on their contribution to greening. For example, an intensive green roof is rated 0.8, compared to permeable paving being rated 0.1. This rating is calculated against the total area and added together with all other surface types which results in a total site score. Typically, 0.3 is the

²⁰ <https://tcpa.org.uk/resources/funding-sources-for-green-infrastructure/>

minimum accepted rating although this varies depending on development type, for example a minimum rating of 0.4 is required for major residential developments.

Requirements for open space from new housing

Section 7.2 (Table 15) summarises the variation in supply of different typologies of open space across wards. As identified, every ward has a shortfall in at least two typologies of open space, therefore, the starting point for new housing (of a certain size - see Table 22 for recommended thresholds) is to assume that some form of on-site open space provision would be required.

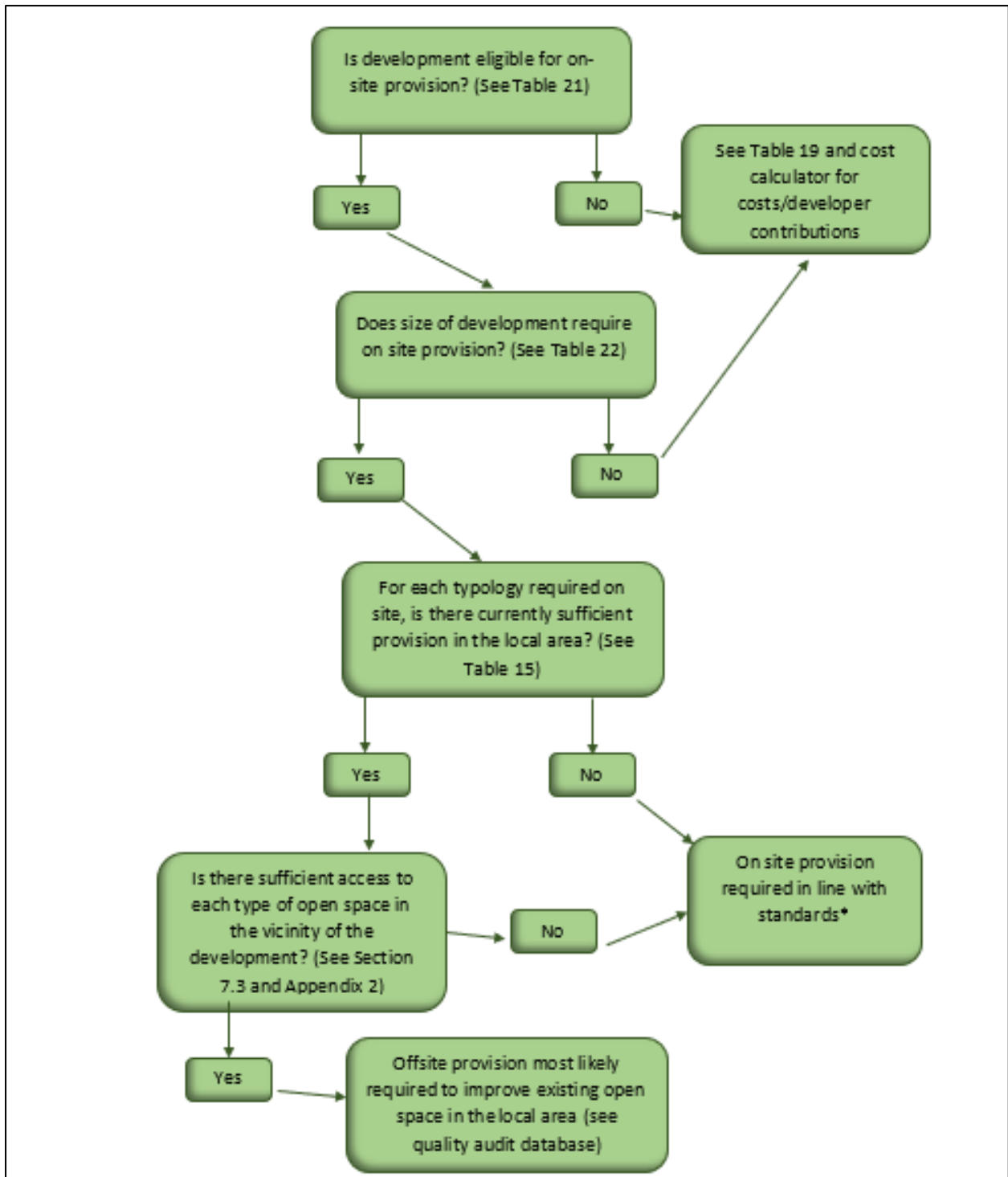


Figure 23 Decision making flow chart for on or off site provision

*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):

OS8	<p>New provision of open space will be required as part of new development. On-site provision should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards.</p> <p>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.</p>
OS9	<p>Improvements to existing open space will be considered first in the ward within which the development is located, then in open spaces in neighbouring wards. Open spaces requiring improvements will be identified using the results from the quality audit (those that are poor or adequate quality or having identified issues being the highest priority) and also from site management plans and the Councils' own knowledge of their sites.</p> <p>The Council could also consider the use of Urban Greening Factor (UGF) as part of Green Infrastructure Policy (this can work alongside Biodiversity Net Gain, especially on sites with zero existing biodiversity value). UGF works well in higher density urban districts that generally struggle to significantly increase the quantum of green space but can benefit incrementally from the addition of greenery within development.</p>

8.6 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

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

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

Figure 23 and the associated paragraphs below suggests an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development/alternative use of an open space can be

seriously contemplated. This is unlikely to be a consideration in Birmingham, due to the shortfalls in supply and access of open space across the study area.

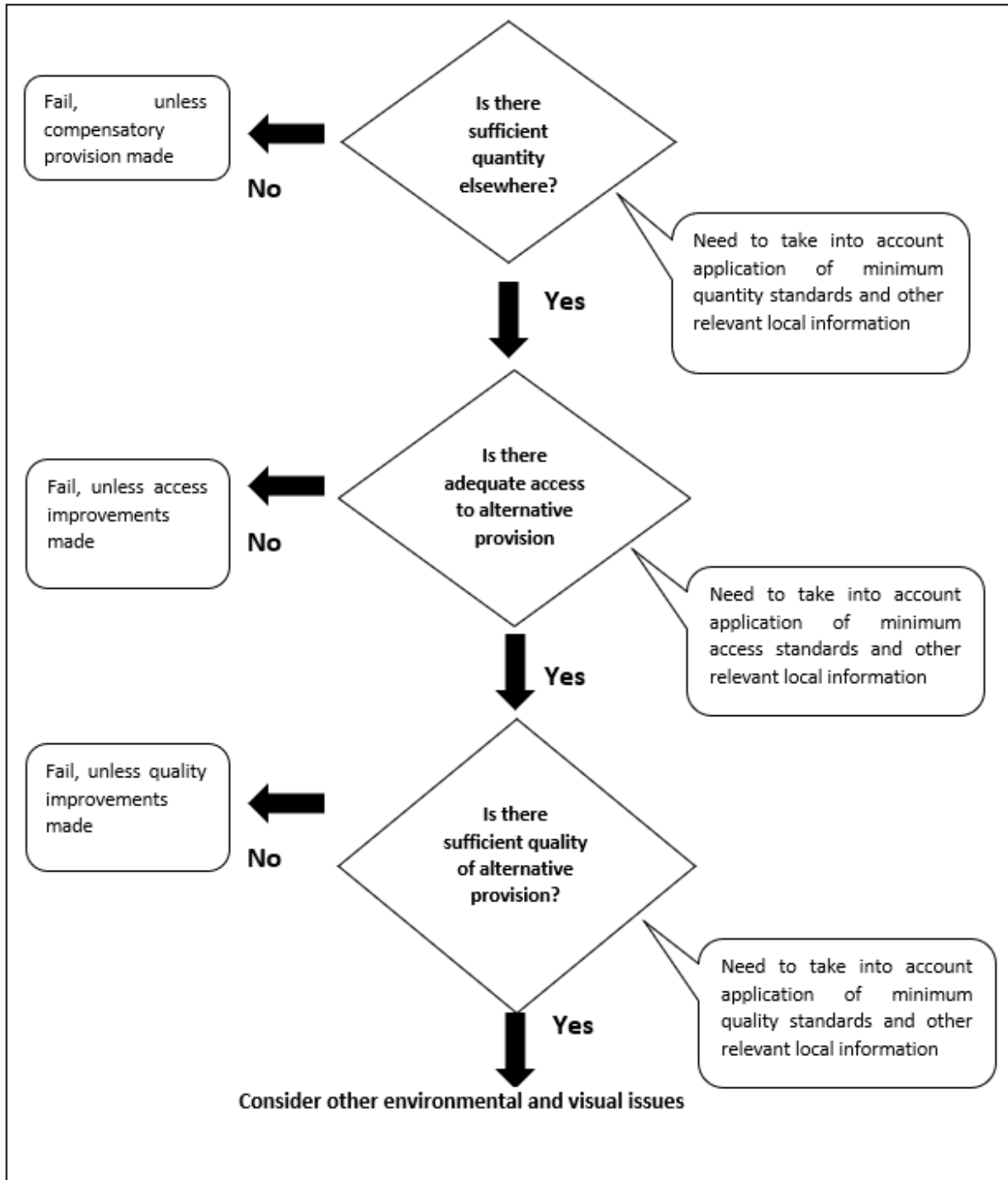


Figure 24 Outline of decision making process that should be followed before the alternative use of an open space can be considered

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

Example: Informal green space**Q. Is there sufficient quantity?**

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

Q. Is there adequate access to alternative provision?

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

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

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

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

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

8.7 Developer Contributions

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

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

In order to calculate developer contributions for facilities, a methodology has been recommended which calculates how much it would cost the Local Authority to provide them. These costs have been calculated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's²¹. A summary of the costs is outlined in Table 19 below. These costs are indicative and may be reviewed and updated by the Local Authority with localised information/costings from other sources.

Contributions towards the provision or improvement of open space are calculated using the capital cost of provision. The same charges apply to both provision of new facilities and the upgrading/improvement of existing facilities (where related to new development), which will normally include at least some new provision. Contribution per person is taken to be a reasonable approach to calculating the amount of money required and is an accepted approach used by many local authorities, irrespective of whether new provision or improvement of existing facilities is required. It ensures contributions are "in scale" as required by the CIL Regulations. The calculated costs have drawn on the standards of provision summarised in Section 6.7, Table 14.

Table 19 Costs for providing open space (excludes land costs)

Typology	Standard (m ²) per person (see Table 13)	Cost of provision Cost / m ²	Contribution per person
Allotments	2	£34.20	£68.40
Parks and Recreation grounds (Combined) ²²	9	£116.53	£1048.77
Play Space (Children and/or Youth)	2.5	£163.30*	£408.25
Informal green space/Accessible Natural Green Space	10	£16.40*	£164.00
Total	23.5		£1,689.42

*As provision can be mixed, the higher rate from the two typologies has been used in the cost calculator.

²¹ Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2021

²² The cost of provision for parks and recreation grounds does not include the cost of providing playing pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis and bowls, which are additional costs which would need to be agreed in addition to the open space costs, where new pitches or contributions to existing pitches are required. Sport England also set out facilities costs: <https://www.sportengland.org/media/13346/facility-costs-q2-18.pdf>.

This shows that it costs £1,689.42 per person to provide new open space to meet the Birmingham standards for open space if contributions are sought for all typologies. These calculations may be used to calculate developer contributions for on-site provision and where required, for off-site contributions. Costs should be updated at least annually to account for inflation based on the Bank of England inflation rate (“Index Linking”). Viability issues will be taken into account when considering the off-site contributions that would be required, on a case by case basis.

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

The cost calculator is based on the following assumptions:

- Average household size (2.65 persons/household)
- The open space quantity standards (see Table 14)
- The cost of open space per m2 (see Table 19)
- Thresholds for on-site provision (see Table 22)

Cost calculator: Example

A housing development of 65 dwellings in would generate the following minimum requirements for on-site provision of open space and contributions for off-site improvements:

On-site provision:

- 0.1722 ha (1722 sqm) of informal/natural green space (to be provided as a single space)
- 0.0430 ha (430 sqm) of children’s play space (toddler/tertiary play area)

Contributions for off-site provision/improvements required²³:

- £11,782 for allotments
- £180,651 for parks and recreation grounds

A screenshot from the cost calculator is provided below:

²³ Viability issues will be taken into account when considering the off-site contributions that would be required, on a case by case basis.

Number of dwellings	Enter number	Equivalent people	Open Space requirement	Required msq per person	Cost per msq	Total requirement (msq)	Cost of provision (£)	On site required?	Required quantity on site (msq)	Enter actual provision on site (msq)	Value of provision	Contribution required
1 bed		0	Allotments	2	34.20	344.50	£11,782	0	None	0	0	£11,782
2 bed		0	Informal/ Natural Green Space	10	16.40	1,722.50	£28,249	Y	1,722.50	1722.5	28,249	£0
3 bed		0	Parks & Recreation Grounds	9	116.53	1,550.25	£180,651	0	None	0	0	£180,651
4 bed		0	Play Space (Children and/ or Youth*)	2.5	163.30	430.63	£70,321	Y	430.63	430.63	70,322	-£1
5 bed		0										
Elderley 1 bed		0										
Elderley 2 bed		0										
TOTAL	65	172.25		23.50		4,048	£291,003		2,153		98,571	£192,432

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

Where new open space is provided, the developer would be expected to provide the open space and either maintain the open space through a management company, or, if the site is to be adopted by the Local Authority, then maintenance fees of at least 15 years will be included in the Section 106 legal agreement²⁴. If the open space is maintained by a management company, then the open space should be publicly accessible in perpetuity. It is expected that a management plan for the open space would be submitted and approved by the council as a planning condition or part of the legal agreement. Details of how the management company will be established and managed, and the provisions put in place should the management company fail etc. would also need to be approved by the council.

In the event that the open space would be adopted by the Council, they may be willing to accept a commuted sum and make arrangements for management of the open space. The amount payable for the commuted sum may be calculated using the figures in Table 20 below. These figures do not include professional fees, set up costs and admin etc. They also exclude tree establishment costs. The figures in Table 20 provide guidance on how much it costs to maintain open space per metre squared. The costs have been provided from maintenance costs estimated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's 2020²⁵, and include lifecycle replacement costs. An inflation rate based on the Bank of England inflation rate should be applied. As with the capital costs, these costs may be reviewed and updated by the Council.

Table 20 Maintenance costs for open space

Typology	Cost/m ² per annum
Allotments	£0.76
Play Space (Children)	£13.34
Play Space (Youth)	£9.21
Parks and Recreation Grounds ²⁶	£3.47

²⁴ 15 years is considered appropriate, as the maintenance costs provided at Table 8.3 include replacement costs.

²⁵ Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2020.

²⁶ Excludes pitches/sports facilities - Sport England have published information on sports capital and maintenance costs: <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/facility-cost-guidance>

Typology	Cost/m ² per annum
Informal Green Space/accessible natural green space	£0.77

3) Eligible types of development for on-site provision/contributions

Table 21 outlines the type of housing that will be considered eligible for making contributions towards open space to meet the needs of future occupants.

Table 21 Eligible types of residential development

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Affordable Housing	Older People's Accommodation	Purpose Built Student Accommodation	Permanent mobile homes
Play Space (Children and Youth)	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	On a case by case basis	✓
Parks and Recreation Grounds	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	✓	✓
Informal Green Space/ Accessible Natural Green Space.	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	✓	✓
Allotments	✓	✓	On a case by case basis	On a case by case basis	✓

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 either not needed (considering the analysis of supply, accessibility) or not possible/practicable.

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

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

The decision on whether facility provision is to be on-site, off-site or both depends on the following considerations²⁷:

²⁷ Also see flow chart at Figure 22.

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

Table 22 provides guidance on how to assess different scales of development sites that could generate a need for facilities in the categories listed to be provided on-site (also see the flow chart at Figure 22, which shows how the quantity, access and quality analysis needs to be taken into account). It should also be considered that where a development is of a size that could generate the need for provision of open space on-site, if there is sufficient provision (quantity and access) of an open space typology within the vicinity, then consideration will be given to improving existing facilities as an alternative to new on-site provision.

The minimum size of accessible informal/natural green space considered acceptable as part of new development is 0.15ha, i.e., for developments that require on-site provision, but which would result in less than 0.15ha of amenity/natural green space against the standard contributions to off-site provision/improvements rather than on-site provision will be sought. This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. The minimum size for a ‘toddler’ or ‘tertiary’ play area (with 5 pieces of equipment) is 400sqm. The minimum size for a ‘junior’ or ‘secondary’ play area (with 7 pieces of equipment) is 900sqm.

While Table 22 acts as a useful guide to the recommended types of provision in relation to the size of a scheme, each proposal will still be considered on a site by site basis, with on-site provision always to be considered as the first solution. The enhancement of existing facilities (including improving access to facilities) will also be key to meeting unmet demand.

Table 22 Potential open space requirements based on scheme size

Type of Provision	10-19 dwellings	20-59 dwellings	60-134 dwellings	135 – 199 dwellings	200+ dwellings
Allotments	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site	On-site
Informal Green Space/Accessible Natural Green Space	Off-site	On-site	On-site	On-site	On-site
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site
Play Space (children)	Off -site	Off-site	On-site (toddler/tertiary play)	On-site (junior/secondary play)	On-site
Play Space (Youth)	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site

9.0 CONCLUSION

This study provides a robust analysis of the status of open space within Birmingham as of August 2022. It includes an audit of provision and a local needs assessment (stakeholder consultation and policy/strategy review) with findings used to produce new recommended standards for quantity, accessibility and quality of open space. The study also includes a suite of policy recommendations and methodologies for interpreting and informing the needs for the assessed open space typologies over a period up to 2042, as well as a process for calculating developer contributions. It should be read in conjunction with the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (2022).

The role and value of open space in contributing to the delivery of national and local priorities and targets, including the climate and nature emergency is clear from this assessment. It is important that the policies and recommendations included within this assessment are considered for inclusion as statutory planning policy, associated guidance and other council strategies and policy documents. Council officers and elected members play a pivotal role in adopting and promoting the recommendations within this assessment and ensuring that key stakeholders such as councillors, developers and community groups are suitably informed and engaged in the open space process.
