

## **Brief Executive Summary**

The study indicates that open space makes a very significant contribution to local quality of life, and is regarded very highly by local people, even when quality is below expectation. Local people are anxious about the implications of new residential development on existing open space and fear loss of amenity as a consequence.

Parks are essentially a local resource, to be accessed on foot, and there are areas in Thurrock where provision is insufficient to allow this.

Country parks are very positively regarded, but tend to exclude those who have no independent transport, as there is no alternative means of reaching them.

Natural greenspace is not evenly distributed across the borough and the central area is especially deficient. The riverside is an important, but under-utilised resource that could address this shortfall.

Amenity spaces tend to be quite small in scale and several areas are deficient in provision, not least Chafford Hundred where development has allowed for an insufficient allocation of open space.

Although it is acknowledged that there are some excellent play areas in Thurrock, residents are critical of both the quality and the quantity of some children's play space, with significant concern about the condition of equipment.

Outdoor sports provision is variable and the best sites are in private ownership. Football in particular is creating a significant demand for pitches and there are times when supply is insufficient. Local authority pitches are generally of better quality than those provided by the leisure trust or through secured community use of school pitches. Changing rooms are often poor and fail to provide adequately for female participation.

Allotment demand is not quantifiable as the Council does not maintain a waiting list, but there are plans to change the use of allotment sites and this may lead to pressure for new provision.

There is an ongoing need for burial sites.

All types of open space are likely to come under pressure as population in Thurrock increases in line with the draft East of England Local Plan, and the Council must address this as a priority in its spatial planning.



*Plate 1: Grays Beach*

## Summary of proposed standards

Typology	Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Parks, gardens and country parks	0.7Ha per 1000 population	Quality score of 45.4%  Higher scoring parks should aspire to the Green Flag standard	Satellite park within 0.4Km Local park typically within 0.7Km Community park over 1.0Km  Ideally each person should be within the catchment of each element of this hierarchy.  Country parks – no accessibility standard is set
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	2.0Ha per 1000 population, according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit	Quality score of 42.8%	No person should live more than 300m from a natural accessible greenspace; There should be at least one accessible 20Ha site within 2Km of their home There should be at least one accessible 100Ha site within 5Km There should be at least one accessible 500Ha site within 10Km
Green corridors	PPG17 Companion Guide suggests that standards cannot be expressed but reference should be made to Greengrid Strategy		
Amenity Greenspace	0.8 Ha per 1,000 population	Quality score of 64.5%	Space within 100m of home and without the need to cross a road.

Typology	Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Children's Playing Space	1 piece of equipment for every 33 children aged 5 – 16, augmented by good quality amenity greenspace	Play space should be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonably close to home</li> <li>• Within sight of walking or cycling lines or main travel routes</li> <li>• In spaces with informal oversight from neighbours</li> <li>• In locations identified by children and young people as appropriate</li> <li>• Capable of being used for a variety of play activities</li> <li>• Embedded in the community</li> <li>• Providing encounters with the natural environment</li> </ul>	Toddler play space with 1-4 items within 1 minute walk  Small equipped play space with 5-8 items within 5 minutes walk  Large equipped play space with 9 or more items within 15 minutes walk
Outdoor sports	Grays and Tilbury areas 1.0 Ha per 1000 population Aveley and Stanford-le-Hope areas 1.3 Ha per 1000 population Rural area 2.3 Ha per 1000 population	As determined by the appropriate sport governing body in relation to the type of sport and the level at which it is being played or aspired to	Guidance from Sport England and the main sports governing bodies suggests that the development of sport hubs and partnership agreements with existing teams and providers is the direction that should be pursued.

Typology	Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Allotments	15 plots per 1000 households	Quality score of 60%	<p>Everyone should live within at least one catchment area, dependent on site size:</p> <p>Over 100 plots – 1200m            50-100 plots – 900m            10 – 49 plots – 600m            1 – 9 plots – 300m</p>
Churchyards and cemeteries	Sufficient to meet a demand for 150 - 175 graves per annum	<p>Quality score of 51.5%</p> <p>Charter for the Bereaved standards of quality and service</p>	None.

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## **1 Introduction and background**

Thurrock Council administers an area of South Essex within the Thames Gateway, which is a Government priority area for regeneration. An important element of this regeneration is the provision of a network of parks and other recreational space to provide for the needs of existing and new communities in respect of leisure and recreation, and to link these communities with the neighbouring countryside and riverside areas. Open space offers significant benefits to the resident population, and sustaining and improving the local environment are important contributors to quality of life, as well as attracting people to live and work in South Essex; green space and recreational opportunity contribute significantly to perceptions of the attractiveness of a locality.

This report is a technical study that has been formulated from community consultation and an open space audit. Standards for open space provision have been formulated to enable an assessment of current and future provision. The report will also support further work on the standards for different types of open space, the Council's Open Spaces Strategy, future development plan policy, and contribute to the delivery of the Thames Gateway South East Greengrid Strategy.

Thurrock's Green Space strategy is currently being prepared, following the CABE<sup>1</sup> guidance and involving a comprehensive audit of existing provision. In accordance with the PPG17 guidance, and in recognition of best practice in this area, the Council has also undertaken a comprehensive research study of the needs and aspirations of its community in relation to local open space of various types. The results of this study will contribute to the Council's Green Space strategy by identifying unmet and under-met need, providing information about usage, attitudes and values in relation to parks and open spaces, and allowing the development of a vision and strategic objectives that reflect these across the whole of the diverse community that makes up the

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<sup>1</sup> CABE, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, is the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space

Council's population. The study will also inform the Council's wider development plans, and the regenerative development planning of the Thurrock Development Corporation, including the provision of open space within areas scheduled for regeneration and future housing development.

The authors of this report are grateful to all those whose information, co-operation and participation has made this comprehensive document possible. In particular, we thank those officers at Thurrock Council (Isabel Baxter, Greg Pitt, Peter Golding, Peter Scott, Grant Greatrex and others) whose support and availability has been invaluable. Also, of course, we thank the residents whose participation in the community consultation has so greatly informed our conclusions, and also the stakeholders and council members who took part in the workshops. Without this feedback, community-based standards would not have been achievable.

## **1.1 The brief**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To provide information about existing community needs and aspirations in relation to local parks and open spaces, covering both qualitative and quantitative aspects, and exploring the views of users and non-users of the existing provision;
- To analyse how these results vary according to the different demographic characteristics of different groups and communities within Thurrock, including segmentation by age, geography, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic background;
- To research the standards of provision that are promulgated and advanced by different organisations in relation to parks and open spaces;
- To develop an appropriate standard for Thurrock, giving a hierarchy of provision that would meet the need of the local community as determined in the community needs analysis.

- To enable an assessment of current and future provision, based on the housing and growth population figures for Thurrock set out in the draft East of England Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy up to 2021.

The community needs assessment aimed to determine a number of issues:

- The extent to which local residents use different types of open space within Thurrock
- Which ones they use, and why they choose to use those spaces and not others
- Which people don't use open space, and why that is
- The distances they travel, or are prepared to travel, to use different types of open space
- The modes of transport they use when accessing different types of local open space
- Their views, both positive and negative, about the open spaces they currently use
- Their expectations about levels of provision of different types of facilities in those open spaces
- Their expectations and hopes in relation to improving open space provision, in terms of the types of space available and accessible to them, and the quality of those spaces
- The barriers which prevent people making more (or indeed any) use of existing local space provision
- The ways in which the results of these questions vary according to the demographic, geographic, and socio-economic characteristics of the respondent

A detailed explanation of the research methodology, and a detailed account of the research findings, are provided as **Appendix 3**.

The study also required the research to be set in the context of a review of existing policy and guidance such as English Nature's Accessible Natural

Green Space Standard, the National Playing Fields Association's Six Acre Standard, and planning guidance such as PPG17, The Draft East of England Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS14) (with particular reference to housing development and sustainable communities), and RPG9a (Thames Gateway).

The study has therefore

- Reviewed relevant national and regional strategies, including those mentioned in your brief, to ensure that the report includes and recognises the major changes that influence parks, play and open spaces provision.
- Reviewed existing policies and standards in relevant local strategies including the Council's corporate plan and the Thurrock Community Strategy ASPIRE, identifying any tensions between guidance, strategic direction, and the results of the community needs assessment.
- Identified those areas that are served by existing provision by mapping the catchment areas for each type of provision, taking into account barriers and severance factors.
- Identified areas of shortfall or under-used pitches for each pitch sport.
- Identified those areas lying outside the average distance that people are willing to travel to open spaces or outdoor sports facilities.
- Identified deficiencies in the quantity of provision.

From this, the study has established:

- areas where there is a deficiency in terms of accessibility.
- areas where there is a quantitative deficiency.
- sites where quality fails to meet the established standard.

The study has also explored future needs taking account of:

- The future demographic profile of the local population, adjusted to reflect local housing allocations.
- Trends in participation for different activities and the use of various forms of provision.

- The impact of policies to promote activity that may lead to increased participation in the medium to long term.

We have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the current provision and the views and aspirations of local people, to develop an appropriate **set of local standards** for Thurrock's parks and green spaces.

We have also examined our conclusions in the light of the Council's Landscape Capacity Study, which tests the sensitivity of the different landscape capacity areas of the borough to a generalised increase in development and then specifically tests the capacity of the landscape to accommodate various development options around key settlements.

### ***Standards of Provision for informal Open Space***

We have

- Developed standards for the quantity of provision of open spaces and appropriate elements within the typology of open space, outdoor play spaces and outdoor recreation facilities. These take into account the location of existing provision, community views and levels of use.
- Determined quality standards for provision based on community expectations as expressed in the research. We have established appropriate quality benchmarks for different forms of provision, where appropriate reflecting quality standards set nationally or between comparable authorities.
- A hierarchy of open space accessibility has been established based on size, purpose and function, and distance thresholds based on current patterns and the evidence of the maps developed in the quantitative component, and recognising the barriers to movement that exist within the borough.

### ***Standards of Provision for Playing Pitches***

We have

- Identified shortfalls or under-used pitches for each sport.
- Calculated the area of land required for playing pitch use.
- Compared the total area to the total future active population of the study area to give a 'hectares per thousand active population' figure.

### ***Standards of Provision for Children's Play Space***

We have

- Developed standards for the quantity of provision of children's play space.
- Determined quality standards for provision based on records of visual inspection and the quality feedback from the research.
- Explored the impact of barriers to movement on existing and future provision of play space.

A detailed analysis of the policy and strategic context of this report is provided as **Appendix 1**, and the audit forms, data and other material used in the assessment and to support standards development can be found in **Appendix 2**.

An Urban Capacity Study (UCS) exploring possible design and density options for possible housing sites for the period up to 2021 has recently been completed, based on population projections set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14).

The Open Spaces study explores the implications of the UCS as one possible scenario for growth, but the methodology used is transferable to other growth options. In the Open Spaces study we have predicted the provision or shortfall for each typology of open space in relation to both the sites and the phasing of development suggested in the UCS, and offered potential solutions to shortfalls with reference to the Council's Landscape Capacity Study. Clearly, alterations in spatial patterns, or in development proposals, will affect this and these projections should be reviewed periodically.

## **1.2 Comparison with other authorities**

At various points in this study, we compare Thurrock to other selected local authorities. Selection of these authorities is somewhat arbitrary but is essentially determined by

- those authorities which have published relevant comparable data.
- those authorities that are close neighbours.
- those authorities whose nature makes them a good comparator for Thurrock and thus a reasonable benchmark.



*Plate 2: Skatepark at Blackshots*

### **1.3 A Typology of Open Space**

Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground.

Government Guidance indicates that open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

The typology for Thurrock largely follows that set out in PPG 17 and the Companion Guide. This is shown in **Table 1**. It does include additional types of open space, namely common land, water-based green space, and indoor sports provision. There are some types of open space which have been deliberately excluded including:

- ‘SLOAP’ (space left over after planning) – this term describes spaces that are incidental to development, too small or irregular in shape to be usable, but which may nevertheless create maintenance and other obligations.
- Other incidental areas of land that do not have a specific use.
- Farmland.
- Areas of natural and semi-natural greenspace for which there is only restricted public access.

**Table 1: Typology of Open Spaces**

<b>Types of Open Space</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Urban Parks and Gardens	Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden.	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.

<p>Amenity Greenspace</p>	<p>Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons i.e. road verges, large roundabouts or greenspace in business parks. Areas of grass within housing areas that are used for a variety of informal or social activities such as informal play.</p>	<p>Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.</p>
<p>Playspace for children and teenagers</p>	<p>Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.</p>	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.</p>
<p>Outdoor Sports Facilities</p>	<p>Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports i.e. playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts, bowling greens; areas which are generally bookable.</p>	<p>Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.</p>

Green Corridors	Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together.	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration.
Natural/semi-natural Greenspaces	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas.	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
Allotments	Areas of land in or just outside a town that a person rents for growing vegetables, fruits or flowers. Allotments can be temporary or statutory.	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
Churchyards and Cemeteries	Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Common Land	Common land is land owned by one person over which another person is entitled to exercise rights of common (such as grazing his animals or cutting bracken for livestock bedding), and these rights are generally exercisable in common with others. Common land is defined under the Commons Registration Act, 1965.	The main feature of common land is that it is generally open and unfenced. Village greens are usually areas of land within defined settlements over which local inhabitants can use for recreation including organised or ad-hoc games, picnics, fetes and other similar activities.
Civic space	Squares, streets and waterfront promenades, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and make connections for people and for wildlife, where trees and planting are included.	Providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.
Water-based green space	Areas of water and their immediate surroundings.	Water-based recreation such as water sports, boating, or land-based recreation such as fishing.
Indoor sports facilities	Purpose-built facilities such as leisure centres, swimming pools and other indoor facilities, and also other indoor space such as village halls and community centres.	Indoor sports such as swimming, aerobics, racket sports, indoor football and bowling, fitness centres etc.

## **1.4 Methodology**

### **Audit of Open Space Provision**

The audit of open spaces was partly undertaken by officers from the Park Ranger Service and the Planning Sections of Thurrock Council and partly by the consultancy team. The division of responsibilities was as follows:

**Table 2: Audit of Open Spaces**

<b>Type of Open Space</b>	<b>Audit Responsibility</b>
Urban Parks and Gardens	Thurrock Council Parks and Planning Sections
Amenity Greenspace	Consultancy Team
Playspace for children and teenagers	Playsafe Database and Parks Section
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Consultancy Team
Natural/semi-natural Greenspaces	Thurrock Council Parks and Planning Sections
Allotments	Thurrock Council Parks Section
Churchyards and Cemeteries	Thurrock Council Parks and Planning Sections
Common Land	Thurrock Council Parks and Planning Sections
Civic space	Thurrock Council Planning Section

Open space that had been identified in a previous open space audit undertaken in 1998/99 had been logged in the Council's GGP Geographical Information System. This audit used a different typology of open space based on the NPFA definitions. In addition, information relating to open spaces maintained by the Parks Section had been entered into the system. It was therefore necessary to re-classify the open spaces in accordance with the agreed new typology.

Site visits were undertaken by the Thurrock Ranger Service to verify and check the audit and to undertake detailed site inspections. Each site was scored against a predetermined set of criteria for quality and value assessments. The details of the criteria are in **Appendix 2**, and site scores can be found at **Appendix 4**.

The consultancy team undertook the site visits to amenity greenspaces in two phases. The first phase covered all spaces over 0.3 ha., but it became apparent that this did not encompass many areas of housing amenity land, which were being excluded by the size limitation. It was therefore decided to assess housing amenity land by visiting sample sites over 0.2 ha within housing areas and to take a view on the quality and value of amenity land within those areas. The criteria used for these assessments was different to those used for the larger open spaces.

A quality assessment of outdoor sports provision, namely sports pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens was undertaken separately by the consultancy team. This employed the Sport England Visual Quality Assessment (VQA) toolkit for the sports pitches together with a telephone interview survey of local sports teams. A bowling green assessment sheet that has been developed in association with the English Bowling Association (EBA) was used to assess bowling greens. These forms can be found at **Appendix 2.5**.

## **1.5 Geographical Information System Mapping and Database Development**

Each open space has been digitised using GIS software and its associated attributes have been recorded on a linked database. This will enable the Council to update the database and undertake further analysis. Individual sites can then be reviewed as necessary. In addition, relevant community consultation data has been linked to GIS sites.

Early data inconsistencies between records held in different areas of the authority have been addressed by standardisation of data into the Council's GIS. This has been our authoritative source of base data for the study, and will serve as such for all council departments for future reference.

### **Analysis Areas**

The analysis of the audit, and the community consultation, have been undertaken at different geographical levels. Data is reported at the level of the local authority, but because of geographical variation is also reported at lower levels. Following advice from the council, the basic level at which data is reported and standards are set is as shown in **Table 3** below. Where it is helpful (and meaningful) to look at data at a level lower than this, for example in relation to the community consultation, we do so.



*Plate 3: Dilkes Park*

**Table 3: Areas of Analysis**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Wards</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	West Thurrock and South Stifford
	Stifford Clays
	Little Thurrock Blackshots
	Little Thurrock Rectory
	Chafford and North Stifford
	Grays Thurrock
	Grays Riverside
	South Chafford
Aveley/Ockendon	Aveley and Uplands
	Belhus
	Ockendon
Tilbury/Chadwell	Chadwell St Mary
	East Tilbury
	Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park
	Tilbury St Chad's
Stanford /Corringham	Stanford East and Corringham Town
	Stanford-le-Hope West
	The Homesteads
	Corringham and Fobbing
Rural	Orsett

These areas are shown geographically on Maps 1 and 2.

## 1.6 Population

Where population figures are given, these are drawn from the 2001 census unless otherwise stated, and are aggregated by ward into the geography outlined in table 3 above. Projected populations used to forecast demand and deficiencies for open space are derived from dwelling projections for Thurrock set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14). In detail, these figures are:

**Table 4: Population projections, 2001-2016**

	<b>Grays &amp; West Thurrock/Purfleet</b>	<b>Aveley/Ockendon</b>	<b>Tilbury/Chadwell</b>	<b>Stanford/Corringham</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>All areas</b>
Dwellings census 2001	22,685	11,353	11,196	11,975	2,204	59,413
Population census 2001	52,982	26,056	28,124	30,339	5,627	143,128
Dwellings census 2006	26,265	11,437	11,415	12,147	2,255	63,520
Population census 2006	59,744	25,565	27,927	29,972	5,608	148,816
Dwellings census 2011	30,181	11,535	11,626	12,237	2,334	67,913
Population census 2011	66,769	25,076	27,663	29,366	5,644	154,518
Dwellings census 2016	33,737	12,807	11,643	12,392	2,334	72,913
Population census 2016	72,230	26,944	26,810	28,780	5,462	160,226
Dwellings census 2021	37,389	13,133	12,541	12,516	2,334	77,913
Population census 2021	77,948	26,905	28,120	28,305	5,319	166,598
Dwelling change all phases	14,704	1,780	1,345	541	130	18,500
Population change all phases	24,966	849	-4	-2034	-308	23,470

It will be noted that the projections forecast a reduction in population for two of the five areas (in spite of increased housing provision) with a significant increase in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet. Population in the Tilbury and Chadwell area is forecast to remain static.

## **2 Parks and Gardens**

### **2.1 Definition**

Urban parks and gardens are areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as public parks or gardens, and do not therefore include informal open space, or parkland not normally accessible for public enjoyment. They are intended to provide accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.

### **2.2 Strategic context**

Good quality open space is a key factor in making our urban areas attractive and viable places in which to live work and play.

It has been claimed that parks attract a broader spectrum of the population than other services (e.g. art galleries, museums and libraries)<sup>2</sup>, and recent survey work in connection with Best Value Performance Indicators would confirm this, with much higher levels of usage of parks than of selected other council-run amenities such as museums and concert halls. Further, their local and accessible nature permits them to function as important social venues for individuals and small groups. The flexibility of urban parks enables a wide variety of uses, providing suitable venues for medium and large-scale events, which can help to provide a focus for wider community groups.

Urban parks contribute to a sense of place and help define local communities which can help to reduce social isolation and increase social cohesion. For many people, parks provide continuity because in times of rapid change urban parks stay the same and provide a “key symbolic feature in the local sense of

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<sup>2</sup> Park Life: Urban Parks and Urban Renewal, a study of 1,211 users of urban parks and 295 local residents, Greenhalgh and Worpole (1995)

place”<sup>3</sup>. It has been suggested that benefits are maximised where urban parks provide for a range of needs and where wide-open, featureless spaces are avoided.<sup>4</sup>

Urban parks and open spaces have an important amenity value, by providing a contrast to the built environment and adding to the quality of life. Urban parks have the potential to provide attractive environments, which, by providing an antidote to the stresses of urban living can contribute to a sense of well-being and improved mental health. Parks and trees have proven ecological value in urban areas by removing toxins from the air. Parks are used for a wide range of sports and physical activities and this has positive fitness and physical health benefits. However, there are fears about public safety, particularly after dark; these threaten the broader social role of urban parks and may have contributed to the decline of the public park as a central feature of community life.

There are a number of potential economic benefits that are derived from high quality parks. These include an enhanced image helping to attract both visitors and inward investment and retain existing businesses, facilities for employees and opportunities to train local young people and the long-term unemployed.

### **2.3 The Need for Urban Parks and Gardens**

The size, distribution and nature of urban parks and gardens in Thurrock were determined a long time ago. Since that time there have been many changes to where and how people live, how they move around, the expectations of access for people with disabilities or pushchairs, the access for dog owners, and the population, size and density of the settlements within the area. Some parks may no longer be in the most appropriate locations in relation to where people actually live, and the facilities within them may be less relevant to people's needs and expectations than when they were first built.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> People Parks and the Urban Green, Burgess et al (1988) and Greenhalgh and Worpole (1995)

The loss of urban parks would be likely to arouse significant local public and political opposition and there is therefore a general policy presumption against their redevelopment. In these circumstances the required level of current provision of parks is largely pre-determined and supply-led. However, the expected growth in housing provision that has been outlined in the review of strategic plans for the Thames Gateway suggests that the development of new parks will need to be considered as part of the master planning of new settlements. The Landscape Capacity Study presents opportunities for the development of green infrastructure, including potential open space development, in locations adjacent to a number of possible settlement options that are being tested.

Whilst changes in the supply of parks and gardens are a longer term strategic consideration, it is appropriate to review the extent to which parks are relevant to current needs. Where existing parks are well located in relation to where people live, and clearly meet, or have the potential to meet, local needs, it may be desirable to enhance them. However, the expected growth in housing provision that has been outlined in the review of strategic plans for the Thames gateway suggests that the development of new parks will need to be considered as part of the master planning of new or expanded settlements.

## **2.4 Consultation – key findings in relation to parks**

### **2.4.1 General**

Almost eight in ten local people (78%) say they make use of their local park, and well over half the local population (57%) uses their park at least once a month. This compares very favourably with a finding in a national survey<sup>5</sup> that just under two-thirds of adults used their parks in the course of a year, and suggests that take-up of parks in Thurrock is substantially above the national average.

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<sup>5</sup> The use of Public Parks in England, 2003 (Sport England/Countryside Agency/English Heritage)

One in five (22%) of adults in Thurrock use a park less than once a year. This again compares very favourably with the national study, in which 38% of adults had not visited in the past twelve months.

Parks are seen as making an important contribution to overall quality of life. 73% of people locally say that “parks make a big positive difference to my local area”, and this includes a number of people who are not personal users of these spaces. They provide important social, physical health, mental health, live ability, community cohesion and environmental benefits, and are a focus for family life in providing space, which can be shared by parents and children.

#### **2.4.2 Quantity of provision**

Park catchments are by and large local, and these spaces are significantly accessed on foot, so there is an expectation in the community that parks should be sufficiently commonplace to be accessed by a short walk.

Approximately half (49%) of all local people are happy with the number of parks and open spaces, but a substantial minority (31%) are unhappy with the quantity of provision. There are, however, significant geographical variations in this result. Contentment is highest in Aveley/Ockendon and Stanford/Corringham, where over 60% of people are happy, but discontent is high in Grays (where 39% are unhappy, and just 36% happy) and in the rural area, where 36% are dissatisfied with the quantity of provision. West Thurrock in particular is poorly served by current provision.

Nevertheless, non-use of parks is not usually because of their absence. Most non-users (38%) say they don't visit parks through lack of time. However, 11% of non-users say they don't visit because of the distance they need to travel, and 3% because it's too hard to get to their park. These results vary significantly by geography: 20% of rural non-users, 14% of Grays non-users, and 13% of

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Tilbury non-users, claim the nearest park is too far away; these proportions fall to just 7% in Aveley/Ockendon and 5% in Stanford/Corringham.

This is borne out by other results, which indicate a majority (54%) who are happy with the convenience of their local park, but a substantial minority (23%) who are not. Convenience was much more positively viewed outside Grays, but a third of Grays residents (32%) express some dissatisfaction with the convenience of parks for their needs. This is essentially a comment about quantity as well as accessibility.

Overall, three in five residents (60%) say there is a good variety of parks and open spaces in the area, and just under one in five (18%) disagree with this assessment. Agreement on this issue is much stronger in Aveley/Ockendon (70%), and Stanford/Corringham (66%), than in Grays, however (52% agree), and a third of Grays residents (31%) disagree.

Residents have real, live concerns about the threat they perceive to existing open spaces, including parks, from housing and road development, both in terms of land needed for these purposes and the pressures these developments may create by increasing the numbers of users.

### **2.4.3 Quality**

Parks are seen as important for exercise, for family activities, for outdoor games, for recreation, and for socialising, and park quality is assessed in the light of these various, and overlapping, needs. Even poor quality parks contribute positively to people's quality of life.

The overall appearance of the local park is rated as good or excellent by just under half (49%) of local people, but four out of five people (81%) think it is at least average. There is a small minority (17%, or one in six) who think their park is below average or poor in overall appearance, but these are not particularly concentrated geographically.

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Mean scores<sup>6</sup> on different aspects of quality in local parks are

Quality of trees and shrubs	0.44
Quality of grassed area	0.41
Cleanliness and litter	0.36
Quality of fencing	0.21
Quality of footpaths	0.18
Quality of flowerbeds	-0.12
Litter bins	-0.21
Catering facilities	-0.39
Dog mess	-0.40
Seating facilities	-0.52
Toilet facilities	-0.65

Opinions on planting vary. Whilst there are generally positive views on quality of grassed area, trees and shrubs, flowerbed quality gets a more mixed view that tends slightly to the negative side. Cleanliness attracts a positive score, but there are clearly issues regarding dog mess and the provision of litter bins. The biggest problem areas – where scores are influenced by absence as much as by poor quality – include seating, catering and toilet facilities.

There are some geographical variations. Quality of grassed area, and quality of flowerbeds, score less well in Aveley/Ockendon and in the rural area than elsewhere; grass in Tilbury/Chadwell attracts a score well above the average. Trees and shrubs score well in Aveley/Ockendon, but not in the rural area or in Tilbury/Chadwell. Catering scores much more highly (though still negatively

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<sup>6</sup> A mean score is calculated by assigning a points value to each answer, with +2 for a strong positive and +1 for a positive response, and -1 for a negative and -2 for a strong negative response. “Average” responses are scored as 0. The mean of these scores, which can lie between +2 and -2, is then calculated, to show the relative strength and weakness of each aspect examined.

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overall) in Grays, as do toilet facilities in Tilbury/Chadwell; catering in Stanford/Corringham gets a very strong negative score.

Safety is a concern for some people, but half of all residents (50%) think their park is excellent or good for safety during the day. Daytime safety concerns are more prominent in Aveley/Ockendon (mean score 0.3) than elsewhere (overall mean score is 0.47). After dark, however, perceptions change dramatically and just 7% rate their park safety as excellent or good, while 39% say it is below average or poor. Again, Aveley/Ockendon (mean score -1.09) and the rural area (mean score -1.22) raise the strongest concerns over safety; Grays residents score this negatively (-0.66), but much less so than their counterparts elsewhere. Safety concerns are shared by young people, who would welcome increased staffing to help counter “problem users” such as drunks and homeless people.



*Plate 4: Delafield Park, Little Thurrock*

#### **2.4.4 Accessibility**

The relatively high take-up of parks, with 57% of residents visiting at least monthly and 36% weekly, suggests relative ease of access. Most parks are essentially local provision, and their patterns of use reflect this with visitor distributions fairly densely packed around the park's immediate vicinity (**maps 4 – 11**). There are nevertheless major parks such as Grays Beach and Coalhouse Fort that have wider catchment areas.

Over half of residents (54%) say parks are convenient for their needs; a quarter (27%) say otherwise. Grays residents are much less likely to be happy with convenience (they score convenience at 0.10, against an overall score of 0.33); Stanford/Corringham residents have a much more positive view of convenience (they score it at 0.58).

Most people (58%) access their local park on foot; the rest use private cars. Use of public transport to access parks is negligible. This means that unless there is a local park, people without private transport are unlikely to use the facility. A small minority of residents (11%) say they do not use their park because it is too far away, and 3% say it is too difficult to get to.

Within the park itself, the lack of toilets poses more of a problem for disabled people, and particularly for people from the BME communities; safety concerns are also stronger for BME community users than for white users.

For most people (63%), using a park costs nothing at all; even where there is a cost, it is low at less than £2 per visit. Parks are thus an important contributor to social inclusion.

Accessibility is more problematic for disabled people and for the BME communities, with both showing lower levels of take-up than their counterparts. This reflects the results from the national study, which also showed lower levels of participation from disabled and BME communities.

## 2.5 Audit

### 2.5.1 Quantity

The total area of urban parks and Gardens in Thurrock is 62.12 hectares, which equates to 2,304 persons per hectare. However, there are differences between provision by settlement as can be seen in **Table 5**.

**Table 5: Population per Hectare of Urban Park.**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Population (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Gardens (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Persons per Hectare</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	52982	18.58	0.35	2852
Aveley/Ockendon	26056	18.29	0.70	1425
Tilbury/Chadwell	28124	15.43	0.55	1823
Stanford/Corringham	30339	9.82	0.32	3090
Rural Area	5627	0	0	0
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>143128</b>	<b>62.12</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>2304</b>

This compares with a London average of 426 persons per hectare of urban park. Defined as those parks within the GLDP hierarchy between Small Local Park and Metropolitan Park<sup>7</sup>. Perhaps a more meaningful comparison, though, is with Thurrock's neighbouring authority of Chelmsford, where the ratio is 1,066 persons per hectare of park overall (this excludes the two designated country parks and a third park which functions as a country park), and 1,881 persons per hectare in urban Chelmsford. Thurrock is comparatively under-provided with parks.

Urban park provision can also be expressed in terms of the amount of urban park per 1000 population. For Thurrock as a whole this equates to 0.43 hectares per 1000 population. This compares to the London average of 0.234 hectares of urban park per 1000 population, and the Chelmsford average of 3.12 hectares

<sup>7</sup> Data obtained from Open Space Planning in London 1992, Llewellyn-Davies Planning for LPAC.

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per 1000 overall, with an average for the urban area of 0.53 hectares per 1000, a comparison which again sees Thurrock as under-provided.

**Table 6** shows that the distribution is variable by geography, with Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet having twelve urban parks, Aveley/Ockendon six and Tilbury/Chadwell and Stanford/Corringham five each. There are no parks and gardens in the Rural Area.

There are 28 sites that have been defined as being parks and gardens. These range in size from Elm Road Open Space (0.11 ha) to the largest, which is Dilkes Park (6.32 ha). The full list is given below, grouped by geography.

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**Table 6: Size and Location of Urban Parks and Gardens in Thurrock**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Delafield Road	1.66
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Elm Road Open Space	0.11
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Grays Beach Play Area	4.36
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Grays Town Park	2.54
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Hillside	1.19
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Woodview Play Area	2.16
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	High House Play Area	0.44
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Palmerston Gardens	0.43
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Purfleet Garrison B River Site	1.34
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Purfleet Recreation Ground	0.43
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Spider Field	0.72
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	West Thurrock Memorial Ground	3.2
Aveley/Ockendon	Uplands Play Area	0.33
Aveley/Ockendon	Usk Road	1.45
Aveley/Ockendon	Bonnygate Wood	3.28
Aveley/Ockendon	Culver Field	2.56
Aveley/Ockendon	Dilkes Park	6.32
Aveley/Ockendon	South Ockendon Recreation Ground	4.35
Tilbury/Chadwell	St Francis Way Field	3.87
Tilbury/Chadwell	Coalhouse Fort	5.3
Tilbury/Chadwell	Gobions Park	3.77
Tilbury/Chadwell	Koala Park	0.68
Tilbury/Chadwell	Thomas Bata Memorial Park	1.81
Stanford/Corringham	Corringham Town Park	3.66
Stanford/Corringham	Fobbing Recreation Ground	1.67
Stanford/Corringham	Hardie Road Park	2.02
Stanford/Corringham	Park Road Playing Field	1.73
Stanford/Corringham	Rose Valley Crescent Play Area	0.74

A more detailed understanding emerges from **Map 3**, however, which shows that in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, the parks are concentrated in the Grays Town area, and provision in West Thurrock appears to be both more limited and

of lower quality – a finding which explains, and is consistent with, the variations in the community consultation. Moreover, Chafford Hundred (also in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet) has no parks at all, and nor does the rural area. Aveley/Ockendon, on the other hand, is better served with more of this type of open space per 1000 population compared with the average for Thurrock.

### **2.5.2 Quality and Value**

A quality and value assessment was undertaken for urban parks and gardens following the methodology set out in **Appendix 2.2**. The purpose of the assessment is to identify those spaces that need enhancement and the form that this enhancement should take. This could point to a need for improved management and maintenance or even re-landscaping of the park. The assessment will inform the determination of relative priorities within a programme of enhancement.

Following discussion with the council, it was agreed that the quality benchmark should be set at the scores achieved by Bonnygate Wood, which scored 45.4% for quality. “High” and “Low” quality scores in the table below are in relation to this benchmark. The median score for value is the true median, namely Hardie Road Park.

**Table 7: Quality and Value Scores for Urban Parks and Gardens**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value</b>
Bonnygate Wood	High	High
Coalhouse Fort	High	High
Corringham Town Park	High	High
Delafield Road	High	High
Dilkes Park	High	High
Gobions Park	High	High
Grays Beach Play Area	High	High
Grays Town Park	High	High
Koala Park	High	High
Palmerston Gardens	High	High
Rose Valley Crescent Play Area	High	High
Fobbing Recreation Ground	High	Low
Hillside	High	Low
Hardie Road Park	Low	High
Elm Road Open Space	Low	High
Spider Field	Low	High
Culver Field	Low	Low
High House Play Area	Low	Low
Park Road Playing Field	Low	Low
Purfleet Garrison B River Site	Low	Low
Purfleet Recreation Ground	Low	Low
South Ockendon Recreation Ground	Low	Low
St Francis Way Field	Low	Low
Thomas Bata Memorial Park	Low	Low
Uplands Play Area	Low	Low
Usk Road	Low	Low
West Thurrock Memorial Ground	Low	Low
Woodview Play Area	Low	Low

These scores are mapped in **Map 3**. Almost half the urban parks and gardens (11) have been assessed as being both of high quality and high value. However, a similar number (12) have been assessed as being low both in terms of quality

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and value. The top four sites for quality and value have significantly higher scores than other sites considered to be high in quality and value criteria. The quality and value scores together with the ranking of the combined scores are set out in **Table 8** below.

**Table 8: Urban Parks and Gardens Ranking**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Quality Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Value Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Combined score %</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Dilkes Park	63.4	92.6	78.0	1
Grays Beach Play Area	72.3	81.5	76.9	2
Coalhouse Fort	60.4	88.9	74.6	3
Grays Town Park	68.3	70.4	69.3	4
Palmerston Gardens	58.4	66.7	62.5	5
Gobions Park	58.4	63.0	60.7	6
Corringham Town Park	54.5	66.7	60.6	7
Rose Valley Crescent Play Area	46.5	59.3	52.9	8
Koala Park	46.5	59.3	52.9	8
Delafield Road	49.5	55.6	52.5	10
Bonnygate Wood	45.5	59.3	52.4	11
Spider Field	32.7	66.7	49.7	12
Hardie Road Park	40.6	55.6	48.1	13
Hillside	49.5	44.4	47.0	14
Elm Road Open Space	28.7	63.0	45.8	15
Thomas Bata Memorial Park	36.6	51.9	44.2	16
South Ockendon Recreation Ground	39.6	44.4	42.0	17
Culver Field	38.6	44.4	41.5	18
Purfleet Garrison B River Site	34.7	48.1	41.4	19
St Francis Way Field	37.6	44.4	41.0	20
Park Road Playing Field	37.6	44.4	41.0	20
West Thurrock Memorial Ground	29.7	51.9	40.8	22
Usk Road	27.7	44.4	36.1	23
Purfleet Recreation Ground	33.7	37.0	35.4	24
High House Play Area	33.7	37.0	35.4	24
Fobbing Recreation Ground	46.5	22.2	34.4	24
Uplands Play Area	29.7	37.0	33.4	27
Woodview Play Area	26.7	33.3	30.0	28

The assessment reveals a wide range of scores with the lowest quality score being Woodview Play Area (26.7%) and the highest, Grays Beach (72.3%). The lowest scoring site for value was Fobbing Recreation Ground (22.2%) and the highest, Dilkes Park (92.6%).

### **2.5.3 Accessibility**

Accessibility of parks is a key attribute because if a particular park is inaccessible it will be irrelevant to those who want to use it.

Consultation with local residents has revealed that visiting a park is essentially a local activity and that most people walk to their local park. It has been possible to determine the distance thresholds for different types of open space, taking into account barriers or severance factors such as major roads. The distance thresholds do not give an accurate indication of the “catchment” of a particular open space, but do provide an “effective catchment” i.e. the distance that is travelled by around 75% of users, which is the threshold suggested by PPG17. This effective catchment is indicated in **Maps 4 - 11**.

We discern a hierarchy of provision for Thurrock that reflects the way in which local people use their parks. This is shown in **Table 9**.

**Table 9: Hierarchy of provision**

<b>Type &amp; Main Function</b>	<b>Approx Size and Maximum Distance from Home</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>Community Park</b>		
Weekend and occasional visits mainly by foot but also by car e.g. Grays Beach	Size = over 4.4 ha Distance = over 1 km	Open Space with varied landscape and general facilities for active and passive recreation. Children's playing space with a good range of equipment for all age groups. Car parking provision, toilets and possibly catering facilities.
<b>Local Park</b>		
For pedestrian visitors including residents and workers e.g. South Ockendon Recreation Ground	Range Size typically 3.5 ha Distance typically 0.7 km	Providing children's play area, sitting out areas and some outdoor recreation.
<b>Satellite Parks</b>		
Pedestrian visits especially by the elderly, parents with young children particularly in areas of high density housing, and for workers in employment areas e.g. Grays Town Centre	Size = up to 2.5 ha Distance = up to 0.4 km	Small children's play area, sitting out areas, grass and shrubbery planting.

This hierarchy is based on the findings of the questionnaire survey. The distances travelled to individual urban parks are shown on **Maps 4 - 11**, which also show the point of origin for 75% of visitors to each of the parks.

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The hierarchy is applied to urban parks and gardens in Thurrock in **Table 10**.

**Table 10: Hierarchy for Urban Parks and Gardens in Thurrock.**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Distance</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Delafield Road	1.66	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Elm Road Open Space	0.11	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Grays Beach Play Area	4.36	Community	Over 1km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Grays Town Park	2.54	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	High House Play Area	0.44	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Hillside	1.19	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Palmerston Gardens	0.43	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Purfleet Garrison B	1.34	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Purfleet Recreation	0.43	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Spider Field	0.72	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	West Thurrock Memorial	3.2	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Woodview Play Area	2.16	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Aveley/Ockendon	Bonnygate Wood	3.28	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Aveley/Ockendon	Culver Field	2.56	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Aveley/Ockendon	Dilkes Park	6.32	Community	Over 1km
Aveley/Ockendon	South Ockendon Rec	4.35	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Aveley/Ockendon	Uplands Play Area	0.33	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Aveley/Ockendon	Usk Road	1.45	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Tilbury/Chadwell	Coalhouse Fort	5.3	Community	Over 1km
Tilbury/Chadwell	Gobions Park	3.77	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Tilbury/Chadwell	Koala Park	0.68	Satellite	Under 0.4 km

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Tilbury/Chadwell	St Francis Way Field	3.87	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Tilbury/Chadwell	Thomas Bata Memorial	1.81	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Stanford/Corringham	Corringham Town Park	3.66	Local	0.4 km to 1 km
Stanford/Corringham	Fobbing Recreation	1.67	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Stanford/Corringham	Hardie Road Park	2.02	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Stanford/Corringham	Park Road Playing Field	1.73	Satellite	Under 0.4 km
Stanford/Corringham	Rose Valley Crescent	0.74	Satellite	Under 0.4 km

There is a Community Park in each of Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, Tilbury/Chadwell and Aveley/Ockendon, but not in Stanford/Corringham or the Rural area. In addition, Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet has a reasonable range of different size parks with 9 Satellite Parks and 2 Local Parks. In Aveley/Ockendon there are 3 Local Parks and fewer small parks with just 2 Satellite Parks. Similarly Tilbury/Chadwell has 2 Local and 2 Satellite Parks whilst Stanford/Corringham has 4 Satellite Parks and a Local Park.



*Plate 5: Grays Park*

## **2.6 Country Parks**

### **2.6.1 Definition**

Although anyone can set up and designate a country park, the general understanding is that these are larger open spaces provided (usually) by local authorities to enable residents and visitors to enjoy a natural, countryside atmosphere with the benefit of amenities and organised activities not normally available in the open countryside. Typically, country parks will provide car parking, interpretation, paths and trails, and educational or participative events designed to increase awareness and enjoyment of the countryside. They may be linked to heritage sites, or nature conservation activities.

### **2.6.2 Strategic context**

Thurrock's Country Parks provide a link between town and country physically because of their urban fringe location. Country parks have an important function in the urban fringe, both in conserving strategically important greenspace and in providing recreational opportunities. Their principal users comprise people living in the urban or suburban areas of Thurrock who wish to visit the countryside.

## **2.7 Consultation – key findings in relation to country parks**

### **2.7.1 Quantity**

In terms of the country parks, the population divides on geographical lines, as is clear from **maps 4 and 10**. The majority of users of Belhus come from the west of the borough; the majority of users of Langdon Hills are from the east of the borough. Although Grays residents visit both country parks, their presence in the user population is not nearly as strong as the population of Grays would

initially suggest, and we conclude that Grays is not especially well served by the existing provision.

### **2.7.2 Quality**

Quality in the country parks is very highly rated. Three-quarters of residents (73%) say that cleanliness is excellent, and 94% say it is at least good, a very high score indeed. Opinions of the country parks are very positive, on the whole, and the parks score well on most attributes, with high scores on planting, maintenance, events, space, and for daytime safety. Where reservations exist, they are about facilities: people want to see more toilets, and improved seating facilities in particular, and 48% say that shelter from bad weather at the country parks is insufficient. These issues, together with improved play equipment for children, are the areas most likely to be identified as needing improvement.

### **2.7.3 Accessibility**

Ease of access is very different for the country parks, as might be expected in an area of provision that is not normally very local. Although the main reason given for non-use of country parks is time, rather than accessibility, it is noticeable that accessibility problems are identified by 18% of residents, against just 11% of local park non-users, so almost one in five non-users attributes this to accessibility. We also note that access to the country parks is almost entirely by car (84% of visitors arrive in cars), with almost everyone else visiting on foot from nearby settlements, and virtually no one using public transport. There is little or no public transport serving the parks and this effectively means that those without their own independent transport are effectively being excluded from using them.

Cost is not an especially important factor overall, and a typical visit to a country park is a low-cost activity, with 69% of users citing a cost of less than £2. It is

noticeable, though, that Aveley/Ockendon users are more sensitive to the cost of parking (33% view this negatively, against just 16% overall).

Disabled people view the parks highly, but use them less; accessibility within the parks is less positive for disabled people, and 23% rate this below average.

## **2.8 Audit – country parks**

### **2.8.1 Quantity**

There are two Country Parks in Thurrock totalling 210.95ha and these are shown on **Map 12**. This equates to a provision of 1.47ha per 1000 population, although the provision is concentrated exclusively in Aveley/Ockendon and the rural area. Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, Stanford/Corringham and Tilbury/Chadwell have no direct provision, although the population concentration of Stanford/Corringham is very close to Langdon Hills and can be considered as well served by this facility.

**Table 11: Area of country parks**

<b>Country Park</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>2001 Population</b>	<b>Area (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>
Langdon Hills	Rural Area		134.72	
Belhus Woods	Aveley/Ockendon		76.23	
<b>Total</b>		143128	210.95	<b>1.47</b>

#### *Belhus Woods Country Park*

The site is jointly owned by Thurrock Council and Essex County Council and is located within Thames Chase Community Forest. It includes Warwick Wood and White Post Wood, has a visitors' centre and attracts an estimated 146,000 visitors per year. The area contains woodland, lakes and a pond and includes a

small area designed by "Capability" Brown as a setting for Belhus House. Most of the parkland forms Belhus Leisure Centre's grounds and there is also a golf course. The main activities are fishing, walking and other recreational activities. Belhus Woods covers 76.23 hectares and is located in Aveley/Ockendon, there is further adjoining space across the authority boundary.

### *Langdon Hills Country Park*

This country park is jointly owned by Thurrock Council and Essex County Council, and is managed by Thurrock Council. It includes Westley Heights and Northlands Wood. The Country Park contains a surfaced horse riding route and footpaths. It is a site of nature conservation interest with a number of woods, large tracts of meadowland and ancient meadows, which is a designated Site of Specific Scientific Interest. Langdon Hills is 134.72 hectares in size and is located in the Rural Area, again extending across the authority boundary into Basildon District.

The two parks attract visitors from a wide area as can be seen in **Maps 4** and **10**, which show the points of origin of visitors to the two parks.

### **2.8.2 Quality**

**Table 12** shows the quality and value scores for the elements that make up the two country parks, with "high" and "low" referenced to a median of Belhus Woods, which scored 65.3% on quality.

**Table 12: Quality and Value Scores for the Country Parks**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Value</b>
Westley Heights	Low	High
Belhus Woods Country Park	High	Low
Warwick Wood	High	Low
White Post Wood	High	Low
Langdon Hills Country Park	Low	High
Northlands Wood	Low	High

These results indicate that Belhus Woods has low value but high quality. Langdon Hills Country Park has high value and low quality apart from Westley Heights, which scores highly for both quality and value.

### **2.8.3 Accessibility**

A key message that emerged from the consultation was that it is very difficult to access either of the country parks by public transport. Only people with access to a car can enjoy the facilities that these two sites offer. The visitor distribution maps from the community consultation indicate that, although there are visitors from Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet to both country parks, Grays in particular is not well served by either of the existing country parks, and especially those people without independent transport.

## **2.9 Standards**

### **2.9.1 Quantity**

The results of consultation indicate that the current levels of provision of parks in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and the Rural Area do not meet the expectations of the local community. People living in Aveley/Ockendon and

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Stanford/Corringham are broadly satisfied with levels of provision, even though this varies widely, from 0.7Ha in Aveley/Ockendon to 0.32 Ha in Stanford/Corringham. This creates a quandary; a standard based on Stanford/Corringham will certainly not meet expectations in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, which already exceeds this level of provision but where people are not satisfied.

We believe that the problem lies in classification. There are sites in Stanford/Corringham which function at least in part as parks but which are not classified as such, including two substantial private sector, easy-access sites, and the recreation ground, all of which are counted as sports facilities rather than parks. We also note that the parks in Stanford/Corringham are better located to meet local need, and of generally better quality, than those in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.

In rural Thurrock, there is currently no provision of parks at all. However, this is offset by the presence of natural and semi-natural greenspace, by playing fields, and by the proximity of a country park. The community consultation indicates that more people (43%) are happy with the level of provision than are unhappy, although the people who disagree are a significant minority of 36%. Our approach to setting a quantity standard for the rural area recognises that the playing fields provide a multi-purpose recreation area, and subtracting the actual pitch space from the total recreation ground area leaves a residual space of 4.12Ha, or 0.7 Ha per 1000 population in rural Thurrock. We suggest that this level of provision is adequate to meet current community expectations based on the outcome of the consultation, but should not be reduced further.

**We conclude therefore that the quantity standard for urban areas of Thurrock should be commensurate with the level of provision in Aveley/Ockendon, at 0.7 Ha per 1000 population, and the quantity standard for rural areas should be 0.7 Ha per 1000 population.**

## **2.9.2 Quality**

The main emphasis in terms of standards relating to urban parks and gardens should generally be on their protection and enhancement.

There are twelve urban parks and gardens in Thurrock that have been assessed as being of high quality and value. Consideration has been given to which park represents a reasonable level of quality that can be used as a benchmark. Bonnygate Woods was selected and this achieved a score for quality of 45.4%. This should be the benchmark for improvements to parks with lower scores.

A standard that could be pursued for some of the higher scoring parks is the Green Flag Standard.

### **The Green Flag Awards: Standards for Parks**

This scheme was launched in 1996, and aims to raise standards in public parks by providing a benchmark by which the quality of parks and open spaces can be measured. It provides clear goals for parks managers and community groups. The main partners in the awards scheme are the Pesticides Trust, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) and English Nature. (This grouping of partners serves to demonstrate the wide range of interests in parks and open spaces.)

There are eight key criteria by which applications for the award are judged:

- a A welcoming park.
- b A healthy, safe and secure park.
- c A clean and well maintained park.
- d Sustainability.
- e Conservation and heritage.
- f Community involvement.

g Marketing.

h Management.

The success of this scheme may be judged by it being highlighted in the Urban White Paper as an example of good practice, which should be developed as a contribution to urban renaissance.

PPG17 recommends that quality standards should not be absolute measures but reasonable aspirations and benchmarks upon which to measure the quality of any existing open space in order to determine the need for enhancement.

The Aspiration for Urban Parks and Gardens is :

Thurrock Council will aspire to create a network of high quality Urban Parks and Gardens that will serve the whole community now and in the future. The Council will seek to ensure that the following are achieved:

- No obvious signs of graffiti and vandalism.
- All of Urban Parks and Gardens will have signage.
- Facilities will be of high quality.
- There will be a good range of facilities.
- The main landscaping feature of a park should be in a good condition with the rest of the parks landscaping maintained to a fair condition.

### **2.9.3 Accessibility**

The hierarchy of provision shown in **Table 9** defines the role and significance of parks in Thurrock. This is based on the size and function of each individual park. The catchment for each of these parks (**Map 13**) has been informed by the finding of the community needs assessment that visiting a park is, generally speaking, a local activity undertaken fairly frequently, usually on foot. The catchments shown also reflect significant geographical barriers (motorways,

main roads, rivers, railways) that effectively cut people off from parks that lie within reach as the crow flies.

Following the pattern indicated by the community consultation, the distances people are prepared to travel locally, and the barriers to access, we have calculated accessibility standards for urban parks and gardens in Thurrock as shown in **Table 13** below.

**Table 13: Catchment areas for Urban Parks and Gardens based on the Hierarchy of provision**

<b>Type &amp; Main Function</b>	<b>Approx Size</b>	<b>Maximum Distance from Home</b>
<b>Community Park</b>	Over 4.4 ha	Over 1 km
<b>Local Park</b>	Typically 3.5ha	Typically 0.7km
<b>Satellite Parks</b>	Up to 2.5 ha	Up to 0.4 km

The aim of these standards is to ensure that people have access to good quality urban parks. Ideally, everyone should be within the catchment for each level of the hierarchy. A key element of the strategy will be a consideration of how the deficiencies revealed by the mapping of buffer areas can be alleviated or reduced.

The accessibility standard in relation to country parks is different. Here there is no particular expectation as to distance travelled that would dictate location. What is apparent from the community consultation is the need to overcome the social exclusion that currently operates against those with no car. There are two possible solutions here; one is the creation of a new facility in closer proximity to Grays, where needs are least well met by existing provision; the other is a better deployment of public transport, especially from the Grays and West Thurrock

areas where car ownership is lowest, to enable access at peak times to the country parks.

## **2.10 Deficiencies**

### **2.10.1 Quantity**

The quantitative deficiencies for Urban Parks and Gardens in reference to the recommended standard are shown in **Table 14 below**.

**Table 14: Deficiencies in relation to the standard**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Area of Parks &amp; Gardens (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000 population</b>	<b>Deficiency Ha per 1000</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	18.58	0.35	-0.35
Aveley/Ockendon	18.29	0.70	0
Tilbury/Chadwell	15.43	0.55	-0.15
Stanford/Corringham	9.82	0.32	-0.38
Rural Area	0	0	-0.7
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>62.12</b>	<b>0.43</b>	<b>-0.27</b>

With the notable exception of Aveley/Ockendon, all the settlement areas are thus currently deficient in terms of the quantity of provision.

### **2.10.2 Accessibility**

The application of effective park catchments on a park by park basis, taking into account natural barriers to personal movement (such as major roads, watercourses, railway lines and so on), has been undertaken in order to determine areas of deficiency where walking distances exceed reasonable expectations. **Map 13** shows the catchment areas for parks at all three levels of the hierarchy; the analysis of deficiency needs to be undertaken in the context of the individual levels of the hierarchy of provision.

### ***Satellite Parks***

**Map 14** shows the catchment areas for all the parks that function as Satellite Parks. This includes all the parks at the higher levels of the hierarchy because for people who live within 0.4 km they also fulfil the satellite park function.

The most significant areas of deficiency are located in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, particularly in Grays where there is just one park that is accessible to local people. The other two areas of deficiency are Aveley in Aveley/Ockendon and Tilbury in Tilbury/Chadwell.

### ***Local Parks***

**Map 15** shows the catchment areas for all the parks that function as Local Parks. This includes parks all the higher level Community Parks. Areas of deficiency at this level of provision are similar to those for Satellite Parks, but with the addition of West Thurrock and Purfleet in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and Stanford– le-Hope in Stanford/Corringham.

### ***Community Parks***

**Map 16** shows the catchment areas for all the parks that function as Community Parks. Significantly, the areas that have access to the parks are severely limited by the main barriers to movement, showing how important this dimension of the analysis is. The two Community Parks along the river, Grays Beach and Coalhouse Fort, serve areas with relatively small areas of population. The remaining Community Park, Dilkes Park, serves Ockendon but not the wider area.

The provision of amenity greenspace could potentially offset some of the deficiency of parks, but in fact makes no significant contribution to the lack of open space in the areas of deficiency, as can be seen on **Map 17**. For instance, in Aveley, three of the amenity greenspace sites are either roundabouts or roadside verges, with only three other small sites in housing areas. In Grays, however, there is some mitigation through the provision of amenity greenspace.

Natural and semi natural greenspace has a rather more significant impact on the availability of open space in general in Grays. Here there are two significant sites, Warren and Lion Gorge, although these currently remain largely inaccessible to the public and do not therefore fulfil a mitigating role at present.

### ***Country Parks***

There is no standard of provision for Country Parks. However, the location of the existing Country Parks makes it difficult for the majority of people living in the built up areas of Thurrock to access these facilities without a car. This would suggest that the main areas of deficiency are in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and Tilbury/Chadwell.

## **2.11 Projections**

The Urban Capacity Study allows us to examine the potential impact of proposed new development on existing provision of Urban Parks and Gardens and in particular on the areas of current deficiency.

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**2.11.1 Quantity**

Overall (and not surprisingly) the impact of new development will be to make the existing quantitative deficiencies worse.

**Table 15a: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2006)**

<b>Settlement 2006</b>	<b>2006 Population</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	59744	18.58	0.31	-0.39	-23.24
Aveley/Ockendon	25565	18.29	0.72	0.02	0.39
Tilbury/Chadwell	27927	15.43	0.55	-0.15	-4.12
Stanford/Corring- ham	29972	9.82	0.33	-0.37	-11.16
Rural Area	5608	4.12	0.73	0.03	0.19
Thurrock	148816	66.24	0.45	-0.25	-37.93

**Table 15b: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2011)**

<b>Settlement 2011</b>	<b>2011 population</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	66769	18.58	0.28	-0.42	-28.16
Aveley/Ockendon	25076	18.29	0.73	0.03	0.74
Tilbury/Chadwell	27663	15.43	0.56	-0.14	-3.93
Stanford/Corring- ham	29366	9.82	0.33	-0.37	-10.74
Rural Area	5644	4.12	0.73	0.03	0.17
Thurrock	154518	66.24	0.43	-0.27	-41.92

**Table 15c: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2016)**

<b>Settlement 2016</b>	<b>2016 population</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	72230	18.58	0.26	-0.44	-31.98
Aveley/Ockendon	26944	18.29	0.68	-0.02	-0.57
Tilbury/Chadwell	26810	15.43	0.58	-0.12	-3.34
Stanford/Corring- ham	28780	9.82	0.34	-0.36	-10.33
Rural Area	5462	4.12	0.75	0.05	0.30
Thurrock	160226	66.24	0.41	-0.29	-45.92

**Table 15d: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2021)**

<b>Settlement 2021</b>	<b>2021 population</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	77948	18.58	0.24	-0.46	-35.98
Aveley/Ockendon	26905	18.29	0.68	-0.02	-0.54
Tilbury/Chadwell	28120	15.43	0.55	-0.15	-4.25
Stanford/Corring- ham	28305	9.82	0.35	-0.35	-9.99
Rural Area	5319	4.12	0.77	0.07	0.40
Thurrock	166597	66.24	0.40	-0.30	-50.38

These tables show that, using the estimated population projections, the deficiency in hectares per 1000 population for the whole of Thurrock increases from 0.25 Ha per 1000 in 2001 to 0.30 Ha per 1000 in 2021, an increase in spatial terms from 38 Ha in 2001 to 50 Ha in 2021.

With Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet being the only area with a significant population change over the time intervals, this area is the only one which will

have a large change in deficiency, but the shortfall here almost doubles from 19 Ha in 2001 to 36 Ha in 2021, due to the large expected growth in population.

### **2.11.2 Potential Solutions**

The review of the Urban Capacity Study includes an analysis of the sites that were considered but subsequently rejected to examine whether there were any potential sites that could be used to redress the quantitative deficiencies. A summary of this analysis is shown in **Table 16** below.

**Table 16: Analysis of rejected sites**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Total No. Sites</b>	<b>Open Space</b>	<b>Built</b>	<b>Retain Employment</b>	<b>Other</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	141	15	21	35	70
Aveley/Ockendon	26	8	4	4	10
Tilbury/Chadwell	37	7	7	13	10
Stanford/Corringham	9	2	1	0	6

The majority of sites considered fell within the Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet area. Of the 141 sites reviewed in this area, 15 (10%) are existing open space sites, 21 were already developed and 35 in employment use. The remainder of the sites were in a variety of uses which rendered them unavailable and none appeared to have potential as open space sites.

The number of sites considered for the other settlement areas was considerably fewer, although again a significant proportion of those sites are existing open spaces. Again, none of the sites offered opportunities for additional open space provision.

### ***Landscape Capacity Study***

The Landscape Capacity Study identifies green infrastructure opportunities in specific urban fringe and settlement edge locations. Those, which offer opportunities for new urban parks and gardens, are identified in **Table 17**. It is

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not possible, from the information available to us, to quantify the amount of potential space that these sites would contribute.

These represent potential solutions that will require more considered investigation and appraisal; it is also possible that good urban design may enable densities to be achieved that remove the need to use these options to secure the necessary quantity of open space.

**Table 17: Green Infrastructure Opportunities – Urban Parks & Gardens**

<b>Urban Fringe Landscapes</b>	
<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Parkland Green Infrastructure Opportunities</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Fairfield Avenue adjacent to ALNCS
Aveley/Ockendon	West of Love Lane East side of disused workings to the south of Sandy Lane
Tilbury/Chadwell	Extend existing open space south of Wickford Road Create new open space linking open space to west of Tilbury with Tilbury Marshes.
<b>Settlement Edge Landscapes</b>	
<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Parkland Green Infrastructure Opportunities</b>
Aveley/Ockendon	West of Cheelson Road and Wilsman Road North of School ground on Erriff Drive Create new parkland linking water bodies to the east. Linear Parkland to the east of Dennis Road.
Tilbury/Chadwell	Extend Recreation Ground between Linford and East Tilbury Create high quality parkland, with extensive tree cover, between the Bata Conservation Area and the railway line.
Rural	South of Woodside Farm Horndon – south of and adjacent to railway line West of Thorndon Avenue adjoining existing open space New public open space adjoining Horndon Recreation Ground.

Green infrastructure opportunities do therefore have some capability of addressing at least part of the current level of deficiency in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, Tilbury/Chadwell and the Rural Area.

### **2.11.3 Accessibility**

#### ***Satellite Parks***

**Map 18** shows the relationship between possible development scenarios and existing Satellite Parks. Areas that will be well served and where development is proposed are:

- Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet - West Thurrock and Purfleet, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock, Little Thurrock Rectory and part of South Chafford.
- Aveley/Ockendon - South Ockendon.
- Tilbury/Chadwell – Northeast part of Chadwell St Mary, west part of Tilbury and East Tilbury.
- Stanford/Corringham – Stanford-le-Hope and major part of Corringham Town.

**Map 19** shows the area of good provision in Stanford/Corringham where people living in new developments will have reasonable access to satellite parks.

The most significant impact of proposed development is in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, particularly in Grays where a significant proportion of the new development will take place in areas outside the catchment areas of existing Satellite Parks. The only park that performs this function is Grays Town Park. This is shown in detail on **Map 20**.

Green infrastructure opportunities could address accessibility deficiencies for Satellite Parks in the northeast part of Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, Aveley/Ockendon, Tilbury/Chadwell and Horndon in the Rural Area.

### **Local Parks**

**Map 21** shows the relationship between new development and existing Local Parks. Areas that will be well served where development is proposed are:

- Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet - Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock, Little Thurrock Rectory and South Chafford.
- Aveley/Ockendon - South Ockendon.
- Tilbury/Chadwell – North East part of Chadwell St Mary.
- Stanford/Corringham – Major part of Corringham Town.

The most significant impact of development can be seen in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, particularly in Grays/Chafford Hundred (See **Map 22**) and in West Thurrock/Purfleet where there is no current provision and where a significant proportion of the new development will take place in areas outside the catchment areas of existing Local Parks. Other areas without access to Local Parks and where development will take place are:

- Aveley/Ockendon - Aveley
- Tilbury/Chadwell - Tilbury
- Rural – Orsett and Horndon-on-the -Hill
- Stanford/Corringham – Fobbing/Corringham area

As with Satellite Parks, green infrastructure opportunities could address accessibility deficiencies for Local Parks in the north east part of Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, Aveley/Ockendon, Tilbury/Chadwell and the Rural Area.

### **Community Parks**

**Map 23** shows the relationship between new development and existing Community Parks. Areas that will be well served and where development is proposed are:

- Aveley/Ockendon - South Ockendon.

- Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet – Grays Riverside
- Tilbury/Chadwell – Tilbury Riverside and East Tilbury.

All other areas, which include most of the development sites, have no access to Community Parks. As a consequence the current level of deficiency will worsen considerably.

It is difficult to determine whether there is potential to develop a further Community Park on the sites identified as having green infrastructure opportunities. In any event, the location of these sites means that barriers to movement will seriously truncate potential catchment areas, with the result that the main areas of development will remain in deficiency.

### ***Country Parks***

There are a number of existing locations that could be developed into Country parks including Davy Down Riverside Park. However, none of the green infrastructure sites have the potential to be developed as a Country Park. The major issue with country parks is their accessibility, however, and there are other potential solutions here through the transport network.

## **2.12 Actions and recommendations**

The results of the consultation exercises together with the findings of the audit, revealed a number of key issues that the Open Space Strategy will need to address.

A clear vision for Urban Parks and Gardens is required, and should reflect the vision set out in *Aspire*, the Community Strategy, which is to protect the environment and provide adequate access to open space.

Urban Parks and Gardens should enrich the quality of life for everyone in Thurrock. The Council should seek to work in partnership with the local community to provide safe, attractively designed, well used, well maintained

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Urban Parks and Gardens for the benefit and enjoyment of the whole community.

A number of specific recommendations have been identified with the aim of improving the quality, range, usage and management of provision. These recommendations relate to some of the key issues identified by the community needs assessment.

### *Recommendation One:*

Policies in the Local Development Framework should seek to protect all existing Urban Parks and Gardens.

### *Recommendation Two:*

The quantity standard of provision should be used to address deficiencies in the provision of Urban Parks and Gardens across the Borough and more specifically in the settlements where there are current and future deficiencies. Priority should be given to the development of new parks in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and more particularly in Grays and West Thurrock, in order to improve opportunities for local people to access parks at all levels of the hierarchy.

### *Recommendation Three:*

The sites identified in the Landscape Capacity Study should be the subject of further appraisal to consider their potential to provide additional space for Urban Parks and Gardens.

### *Recommendation Four:*

The Council should take steps to improve the quality of Urban Parks and Gardens including measures regarding dog mess and the provision of litter bins, and should consider the provision of seating, catering and toilet facilities particularly on those urban parks and gardens which achieved a low quality

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score. The Council should consider Green Flag Awards as means of ensuring better quality provision.

### *Recommendation Five:*

The Council should address issues relating to low value and develop measures to enhance the value of sites that achieved low value scores.

### *Recommendation Six :*

Measures should be considered to create safer open park environments, which can be enjoyed by all sections of the community. This could include measures to increase the number of on-site dedicated staff in parks to enhance the public's enjoyment of parks.

### *Recommendation Seven:*

Access both to and within Urban Parks and Gardens should be improved, and consideration given to ways of improving public transport access to the Country Parks to enable more members of the community to enjoy the experience of using a park.

### *Recommendation Eight:*

The Council should ensure that the whole community: residents, public, private and voluntary organisations, is involved in the preparation and implementation of individual park management plans. In addition, we recommend the introduction of 'Friends Groups' to facilitate community involvement in the future of Urban Parks and Gardens.

### *Recommendation Nine:*

Consider how the further development of a range of opportunities and facilities for active and passive recreation might contribute to improve the mental and physical health and well-being of people living in Thurrock.

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### *Recommendation Ten:*

Parks should be managed and developed to promote inclusivity and usage by all members of the community, particularly for disabled people, and people from the BME communities.

### *Recommendation Eleven:*

The development of an increased range of opportunities and events for people to enjoy cultural experiences and activities in parks and gardens.

### *Recommendation Twelve:*

The promotion of biodiversity within Urban Parks and Gardens to promote the conservation, protection and enrichment of species and habitats.

### *Recommendation Thirteen:*

That further work beyond the scope of this study take place to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

## **Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
0.7Ha per 1000 population	Quality score of 45.4%  Higher scoring parks should aspire to the Green Flag standard	Satellite park within 0.4Km Local park typically within 0.7Km Community park over 1.0Km  Ideally each person should be within the catchment of each element of this hierarchy.  Country parks – no accessibility standard is set

### **3 Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace**

#### **3.1 Definition**

Natural and semi-natural greenspaces have been defined as “land, water and geological features which have been naturally colonised by plants and animals and which are accessible on foot to large numbers of residents.”<sup>8</sup> Natural greenspaces are mostly areas of undeveloped land with limited or no maintenance, which have been colonised by vegetation and wildlife. Natural greenspace therefore includes woodland, railway embankments, river and canal banks, motorway verges and derelict land. The primary function of natural greenspaces is to promote biodiversity and nature conservation, but they are also important for environmental education and awareness.

#### **3.2 Strategic context**

The importance of natural and semi natural greenspaces is succinctly summarised in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which states that ‘we conserve species and habitats because they are beautiful or because they otherwise enrich our lives, and a culture that encourages respect for wildlife and landscapes is preferable to one that does not’.<sup>9</sup>

English Nature believes that accessible natural greenspaces have an important contribution to make to the quality of the environment and to quality of life in urban areas. The community values such sites and they are beneficial to public health and wellbeing. There are established mechanisms for the recognition and designation of sites with special value for biodiversity, and this model does not

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<sup>8</sup> Harrison, C, Burgess, J, Millward, A and Dawe, G (1995) *Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities* (English Nature Research Report 153), English Nature

<sup>9</sup> The UK Biodiversity Action Plan, para 1.27, p13 HMSO, London, Jan 1994

seek to replace them, but to provide a broader, more inclusive approach to ensuring that people in urban areas have the opportunity to experience nature.

Maintaining and increasing access to natural greenspace has a number of well documented benefits.<sup>10</sup> They have an important contribution to make to the quality of the environment and to quality of life in urban areas. They are valued by the local community and provide important refuge for wildlife.

- **Health benefits:** access to nature provides psychological, and health benefits. Studies have shown that people living in a greener environment report fewer health complaints, have better perceived general health and better mental health. The British Heart Foundation and the Countryside Agency have promoted access to the countryside and natural greenspaces as part of the 'Walking the Way to Health' initiative.
- **Economic benefits:** natural open space acts as a green magnet, attracting people to live and work in the area. Greening also plays an integral role in regeneration initiatives and new and existing infrastructure, the public realm, and other developments. Biodiversity adds value to a site, and ecological management practices can save money. However, there are potential conflicts with economic development, which have to be addressed if biodiversity is to be successfully integrated.
- **Educational benefits:** the use by local schools of natural greenspaces for nature study. Visiting such sites provides hands-on experience of plants and animals. They provide children and adults with opportunities to learn about and understand nature, potentially leading to a respect for living things and a desire to conserve them.
- **Functional benefits:** vegetated surfaces help to slow water runoff and so reduce the risk of flooding. Vegetation provides local climatic benefits and

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<sup>10</sup> Connecting with London's nature The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy, Greater London Authority, July 2002

helps to prevent erosion, ameliorate ambient noise and absorb some pollutants.

- **Sustainable development:** the natural world provides a range of sustainability benefits. Natural greenspaces provide valuable wildlife habitats and help to create habitats that will contribute to the conservation of threatened species.

### **3.3 The need for natural and semi natural greenspaces**

English Nature believes that local authorities should consider the provision of natural areas as part of a balanced policy to ensure that local communities have access to an appropriate mix of greenspaces providing for a range of recreational needs. English Nature recommends that provision should be made of at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit (these are described more fully under **accessibility** below).

The purpose of the model is to provide an approach to the assessment of current provision of accessible natural greenspace and to assist with the production of local standards and targets. The model can be considered to be the point of reference against which to assess the natural greenspace provision in Thurrock.

Thurrock has many different areas of natural and semi natural greenspace including areas of flat, open marshland, as well as woodlands, meadows, wetlands, other habitats of nature conservation value and ten Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Background research for the Thurrock Community Strategy found that 'green spaces' and 'peace and quiet' featured highly among things residents most value about life in Thurrock.

Thurrock also has 67Km of ecological corridors. These are routes, which provide continuous habitats, which allow plants and animals to migrate from site to site and survive, in non-hostile conditions. During the winter months the flooded

grasslands of Rainham and Aveley Marshes provide a feeding habitat for flocks of migratory wild birds including ducks, swans, geese and waders.

The most important wildlife or other natural heritage sites in any area should already have a formal designation, which protects them from development, for example as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Thurrock has a great number of such sites and these are summarised below.

### ***Sites of Special Scientific Interest***

SSSIs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and are designated for their interest in terms of their flora, fauna, geological or physiographic features.

### ***Special Protection Areas***

Outer Thames Marshes is a Special Protection Area (SPA); these are classified under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. The Mucking Flats and Marshes SSSI is included within this designation, which is one of international importance. It is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive, whose primary purpose is the protection of sensitive or migratory birds.

### ***Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation***

There are 54 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) identified in the local plan, of which 23 are woodlands, 18 are grasslands, 6 are a mosaic of habitat types, 5 are freshwater, 1 coastal and 3 are geological. Not all of these are of a significantly large scale, to be included in the table below.

### ***Local Nature Reserves***

Local authorities establish Local Nature Reserves (LNR) in consultation with English Nature. They make a contribution to conservation and are valuable for the public's education and enjoyment. There are currently two LNRs in Thurrock, located at Grove House Wood and Stanford Marshes.

### **Areas of Local Nature Conservation Significance**

ALNCSs are sites that are important for their local nature conservation value and valued because they can provide people with experience of nature. Many are located in areas that otherwise have few sites of any significance in nature conservation terms. There are 40 such sites across the borough.

All the designated sites are listed at **Appendix 4.2**.

### **3.4 Consultation – key findings in relation to natural and semi-natural green space**

Two thirds of local residents (64%) say the countryside is easy to get to, but there are concerns about drainage that can prevent access at times. Just two in five residents (38%) say that public footpaths in and through the countryside are well-signposted, and there is a substantial minority (23%) who disagree on this point. Less than a third say that footpaths are well-maintained and easy to use, and again a quarter disagree, suggesting that there are some genuine concerns about the quality and usability of public rights of way in the Thurrock countryside.

Specific observations were made by equestrian interests, concerning the inadequacy of bridleway access to the countryside, and the need for areas dedicated to equestrian pursuits. There were also common and strongly expressed concerns about misuse of countryside access routes, especially in the marshes, by off-road motorcyclists, causing damage to the footpaths and their environs as well as making life difficult for walkers and local residents. There would be strong support, we suggest, for measures to control or prevent motorcycle access to the countryside.

Consultation indicates that the riverbank is enormously valued as an area of natural and semi-natural green space – a quarter of the local population (23%)

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visit the riverside area at least monthly, and over 60% visit at least occasionally. Although, as might be expected, the riverbank is more popular with riverside dwellers, in that those living nearest tend to visit more often, the area is accessed from all quarters of the borough. **(Maps 24 and 25).**

The riverbank is primarily used for walking (74% of users) but is also an important facility for relaxation and exercise. There is a strong appreciation of the riverfront as a linear open space offering peace and quiet, although there are substantial misgivings concerning its safety and accessibility. 85% of residents said they valued the tranquility of the riverbank, and similar proportions were positive about the views (85%) and the open-ness of the space (78%). Safety after dark, however, is a major concern, with half of all those commenting on this issue saying that safety was below average or poor after dark. In this context, it is important to note that residents wanted to see improved seating, whilst safety concerns are clearly discouraging female visitors to the area and accessibility limits the riverbank's value for people with disabilities and those pushing buggies.

Footpath quality on the riverbank is reasonable, with 78% describing this as at least average. Maintenance in this area, however, is viewed more circumspectly, and a quarter of users describe riverbank maintenance as poor, with a similar proportion criticising cleanliness.

## **3.5 Audit**

### **3.5.1 Quantity**

As with urban parks, it is more appropriate to use a supply-led approach to natural greenspaces. The design process should encourage the setting aside or creation of areas within a site that are important for flora and fauna. Good design should encourage biodiversity and habitat creation, even though colonisation by plants and wildlife cannot always be guaranteed. Accordingly, a supply-led methodology offers the best way of protecting established sites, in addition to promoting biodiversity and wildlife habitats through appropriate management and maintenance regimes.

The supply of natural greenspaces has been determined by whether sites are accessible by the general public and whether or not they have been included under a different, more predominant typology. The sites are shown on **Map 26** and **Table 18** below; the map also shows a number of sites (indicated specifically) which currently cannot be included in this category because there is only restricted access to the general public.

The table below lists the principal natural and semi-natural greenspace sites in Thurrock, together with any designations that may apply to them. The catchment areas shown are derived from the English Nature ANGSt model (Accessible Natural Green Space in Towns and cities)<sup>11</sup> which defines catchment in relation to size of site and typical distance travelled by visitors. ANGSt also sets a quantity standard of 1 Ha of LNR per 1000 population.

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<sup>11</sup> Accessible Natural Green Space in Towns and Cities: A review and toolkit (English Nature, 2003)

**Table 18: Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Area (Ha)</b>	<b>Catchment</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Ron Evans Memorial Field	Rural	20.51	2	Ecological corridor
Gibbs Wood	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	1.82	0.3	County Wildlife Site
Grays Chalk Quarry	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	19.70	0.3	SSSI
Hangmans Wood (Deneholes)	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	5.19	0.3	SSSI
Lion Gorge	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	10.14	0.3	SSSI
Purfleet Chalk Pits	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	11.34	0.3	SSSI
Rookery Hill	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	3.51	0.3	Not Classified
Terrels Heath	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	2.81	0.3	SINC/County Wildlife Site
The field of peace	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	11.56	0.3	Ecological corridor
Warren Gorge	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	24.77	2	County Wildlife Site
West Thurrock Marshes	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	117.16	5	SSSI
Belhus Chase	Aveley/Ockendon	61.91	2	SINC
Brannetts Wood	Aveley/ Ockendon	10.67	0.3	SINC/County Wildlife Site

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Cely Woods	Aveley/ Ockendon	58.13	2	Not Classified
Davy Down	Aveley/ Ockendon	15.10	0.3	Not Classified
Great Palmers Shaw	Aveley/ Ockendon	1.94	0.3	SINC/County Wildlife Site
Hangman's Wood	Aveley/ Ockendon	3.78	0.3	SSSI
Kenningtons Park	Aveley/ Ockendon	10.65	0.3	Not Classified
Little Palmers Shaw	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.88	0.3	SINC/County Wildlife Site
Millards Garden	Aveley/ Ockendon	9.13	0.3	SINC/County Wildlife Site
Oak & Ash Plantation	Aveley/ Ockendon	26.59	2	SINC/County Wildlife Site
Purfleet Road Aveley	Aveley/ Ockendon	3.95	0.3	Not Classified
Rainham and Aveley Marshes	Aveley/ Ockendon	128.08	5	SSSI
Godman Road	Tilbury/ Chadwell	2.06	0.3	Not Classified
Heronry Shaw	Tilbury/ Chadwell	14.92	0.3	County Wildlife Site
Linford Wood	Tilbury/ Chadwell	7.79	0.3	SINC/County Wildlife Site
West Tilbury Marshes	Tilbury/ Chadwell	5.64	0.3	SSSI
Corringham Marshes	Stanford/ Corringham	206.88	5	SINC
Fobbing Marsh	Stanford/ Corringham	197.41	5	SSSI
Grove House Wood	Stanford/ Corringham	2.48	0.3	LNR
Stanford Marshes	Stanford/ Corringham	65.42	2	LNR
Stanford Warren	Stanford/	11.66	0.3	SINC

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	Corringham			
Mardyke River Valley	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet and Aveley/ Ockendon	110.10	5	Ecological Corridor
Outer Thames Marshes	Tilbury/ Chadwell and Stanford/ Corringham	293.79	5	SPA

The sites listed include a number of sites that already have a designation as well as some that fall outside any designation. The status of each site is indicated.

**Table 19: Population per Hectare of natural and semi-natural green space**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Population (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Natural &amp; Semi – Natural Greenspace (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Persons per Hectare</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	52982	235.52	4.45	225
Aveley/Ockendon	26056	413.38	15.87	63
Tilbury/Chadwell	28124	128.33	4.56	219
Stanford/Corringham	30339	679.71	22.40	45
Rural	5627	20.51	3.64	274

The total area of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace Sites is 1477.45 hectares, including six sites that are over 100 ha in area. However, sites that are unclassified, or that are designated as ecological corridors, do not meet LNR standard, and it is therefore appropriate to exclude these from a calculation of existing provision. On this basis there are 1241.9 Ha of space that meet the ANGSt model definition.

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This equates to 10.32 ha per 1000 population for all sites, and 8.67 Ha of qualifying sites under the ANGSt model. English Nature recommends that provision should be made of at least 1ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population. Current provision is therefore well in excess of this guideline.

### **3.5.2 Quality**

**Table 20** shows the value and quality scores achieved by each of these sites, based on the median score calculation.



*Plate 6: Warren Gorge, Chafford Hundred*

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**Table 20: Value and quality scores for natural and seminatural greenspace**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Quality % Score</b>	<b>Value % Score</b>	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Purfleet Chalk Pits	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Millards Garden	91.2	84.0	87.6	1
Warren Gorge	95.3	76.0	85.7	2
Davy Down	81.8	76.9	79.4	3
Rainham and Aveley Marshes	86.0	72.0	79.0	4
Belhus Chase	89.2	60.0	74.6	5
Fobbing Marsh	59.5	80.0	69.7	6
Brannetts Wood	62.5	76.0	69.3	7
Cely Woods	83.3	52.0	67.7	8
Stanford Warren	75.0	60.0	67.5	9
West Tilbury Marshes	76.7	56.0	66.4	10
Mardyke River Valley	51.2	80.0	65.6	11
Corringham Marshes	95.8	34.6	65.2	12
Oak & Ash Plantation	55.0	72.0	63.5	13
The field of peace	58.1	68.0	63.1	14
Hangman's Wood (Deneholes)	57.5	68.0	62.8	15
Grays Chalk Quarry	80.6	44.0	62.3	16
Stanford Marshes	57.5	64.0	60.8	17
Terrels Heath	55.0	64.0	59.5	18
Outer Thames Marshes	61.3	56.0	58.6	19
Lion Gorge	80.0	34.6	57.3	20
Linford Wood	51.4	60.0	55.7	21
Ron Evans Memorial Field	55.0	56.0	55.5	22
Hangman's Wood	42.4	64.0	53.2	23
Kenningtons Park	50.0	53.8	51.9	24
Little Palmers Shaw	55.9	44.0	49.9	25
Grove House Wood	47.5	52.0	49.8	26
West Thurrock Marshes	51.3	48.0	49.6	27
Great Palmers Shaw	51.6	44.0	47.8	28
Mucking Marshes	58.1	28.0	43.0	29
Gibbs Wood	43.2	36.0	39.6	30

## ***Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council***

Of the 31 sites that were assessed, 11 (36%) scored high for both quality and value and 12 (38%) scored low for both quality and value. Six (20%) scored high for value but low for quality and only two (6%) scored low for value but high for quality.

Four of the sites that scored high for both quality and value are SINCs, one is the SPA site at Outer Thames Marshes and one is an LNR. None of the SSSIs achieved a high score for both quality and value. Three SSSIs, Little Palmers Shaw, Hangman's Wood (Deneholes) and Grays Chalk Quarry achieved low scores for both quality and value. Five of the sites scoring low for both quality and value are SINCs.

Two sites were considered to be low in value but high in quality. One is the SINC at Lion Gorge and the other is the SSSI at West Tilbury Marshes.

The emergence of poor scores for sites that are protected and designated raises some concerns. The quality criteria for assessing these sites should be reviewed to determine whether the right criteria is being used for assessment purposes; if the scores are justified, remedial action may be called for.

Larger sites of over 100 ha are likely to attract people from a wider area. However, only Rainham and Aveley Marshes scored highly for both quality and value. Two sites scored poorly for both quality and value, Corringham Marshes and Outer Thames Marshes. The remaining three large sites, Fobbing Marsh, Mardyke River Valley and West Thurrock Marshes scored highly for value but low for quality. Again, these are issues which will need to be addressed in the final strategy.

### **3.5.3 Accessibility**

Quantity is not the only test of the adequacy of provision because English Nature also specifies a requirement according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

## ***Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council***

- no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace;
- there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home;
- there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km;
- there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.

### ***300m criterion***

**Map 27** shows the 300 m catchment for each of the natural and semi natural sites. These sites are predominantly in the east and west of the borough. However, the main areas of settlement are predominantly in the central area of the borough. This would therefore suggest that many people in Thurrock do not live within 300 m of a natural and semi natural site.

### ***2km criterion***

**Map 28** shows the 2km catchment around 20 ha sites. This again shows that the areas with access to sites with a size greater than 20 ha are in the eastern and western parts of the borough away from the areas of higher housing density.

### ***5km criterion***

**Map 29** shows the 5km catchment around 100 ha sites. There are 6 such sites, which are:

- Corringham Marshes
- Fobbing Marsh
- Outer Thames Marshes
- Mardyke River Valley
- Rainham and Aveley Marshes
- West Thurrock Marshes

The first three of these are located in the east of the borough and the remaining three in the west. The map shows that as a consequence of this geographic spread, most of the borough lies within the 5 km catchment area.

### ***10km criterion***

There is only one site which meets the 500 ha size threshold and that is Rainham and Aveley Marshes, although most of this lies outside the borough boundary. Most of the borough lies within this catchment area.

Whilst there appears to be a satisfactory amount of provision of natural and semi natural greenspace in Thurrock overall, this disguises the fact that the distribution of sites is not evenly spread across the area. Most of the sites identified are located towards the eastern and western boundaries, leaving the central area, where most people are resident, outside the recognised catchment areas for smaller areas of this type of open space. However, whilst many people in Thurrock do not have access to smaller sites of natural and semi natural greenspace, there are a number of larger sites which are of sufficient size and attractiveness to be accessible to most people living in the borough.

## **3.6 Standards**

### **3.6.1 Quantity**

**Table 21** shows the current level of provision of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace. On the basis of the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards Model, the only settlements that are deficient are Chadwell St Mary, Tilbury and Grays.

**Table 21: Levels of Provision of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Population (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Natural &amp; Semi – Natural Green space (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Persons per Hectare</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha)</b>	<b>Shortage/surplus</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	52982	235.52	4.45	225	105.96	129.56
Aveley/Ockendon	26056	413.38	15.87	63	52.11	361.27
Tilbury/Chadwell	28124	128.33	4.56	219	56.25	72.08
Stanford/Corringham	30339	679.71	22.4	45	60.68	619.03
Rural	5627	20.51	3.64	274	11.25	9.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>143128</b>	<b>1477.45</b>	<b>10.32</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>286.26</b>	<b>1191.19</b>

It is therefore recommended that Thurrock Council adopt the principles of the English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards Model. Thurrock already meets some of these requirements but the standard should address the identified shortfalls in provision, notably in Grays, Tilbury and Chadwell St Mary.

The standard is:

**Provision should be made of at least 2ha of accessible natural greenspace per 1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit.**

### **3.6.2 Quality**

The median score for the quality assessment for Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace was 28.7% and was achieved by Fobbing Marsh and Oak and Ash Plantation. However, following a review of the assessment criteria to give due weight to nature conservation designations, the median score has been raised to 42.4%.

### **3.6.3 Accessibility**

The Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards Model proposes the following hierarchy with appropriate buffer zones:

- no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace;
- there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home;
- there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km;
- there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km.

## **3.7 Deficiencies**

### **3.7.1 Quantity**

In quantitative terms, there is no overall deficiency of provision in any of the settlement areas.

### **3.7.2 Accessibility**

The principal concerns in terms of accessibility relate to the 300m and 2km levels of access.

***300m Criterion***

The main areas of deficiency are:

Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet – Purfleet, South Chafford, Grays Riverside, Little Thurrock Rectory, Little Thurrock Blackshots

Aveley/Ockendon – Parts of Aveley and South Ockendon.

Tilbury/Chadwell – Tilbury and parts of Chadwell St Mary.

Rural Area – the whole area lies outside the catchment of a natural and semi natural greenspace but has access to a country park.

***2km Criterion***

The main areas of deficiency are:

Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet – Purfleet, parts of Grays Riverside,

Tilbury/Chadwell – Tilbury and parts of Chadwell St Mary.

Rural Area.

**Map 30** shows the impact of development in relation to areas of deficiency and it can be seen that new development is concentrated in those areas that are currently deficient.

**3.8 Projections**

Analysis of the Urban Capacity Study reveals the impact of new development in relation to the existing provision of natural and semi-natural green space and to the areas of current deficiency.

**3.8.1 Quantity**

Overall the impact of new development will be to erode the surplus, but without triggering a quantitative deficiency against the recommended standard of provision.

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**Table 22a: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2006)**

<b>Settlement 2006</b>	<b>2006 Population</b>	<b>Natural &amp; Semi-natural Greenspace (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha)</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	59744	235.52	3.94	119.49	116.03
Aveley/Ockendon	25565	413.38	16.17	51.13	362.25
Tilbury/Chadwell	27927	128.33	4.60	55.85	72.48
Stanford/ Corringham	29972	679.71	22.68	59.94	619.77
Rural Area	5608	20.51	3.66	11.22	9.29
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>148816</b>	<b>1477.45</b>	<b>9.93</b>	<b>297.63</b>	<b>1179.82</b>

**Table 22b: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2011)**

<b>Settlement 2011</b>	<b>2011 population</b>	<b>Natural &amp; Semi-natural Greenspace (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha)</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	66769	235.52	3.53	133.54	101.98
Aveley/Ockendon	25076	413.38	16.49	50.15	363.23
Tilbury/Chadwell	27663	128.33	4.64	55.33	73.00
Stanford/ Corringham	29366	679.71	23.15	58.73	620.98
Rural Area	5644	20.51	3.63	11.29	9.22
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>154518</b>	<b>1477.45</b>	<b>9.56</b>	<b>309.04</b>	<b>1168.41</b>

*Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council*

**Table 22c: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2016)**

<b>Settlement 2016</b>	<b>2016 population</b>	<b>Natural &amp; Semi-natural Greenspace (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha)</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	72230	235.52	3.26	144.46	91.06
Aveley/Ockendon	26944	413.38	15.34	53.89	359.49
Tilbury/Chadwell	26810	128.33	4.79	53.62	74.71
Stanford/ Corringham	28780	679.71	23.62	57.56	622.15
Rural Area	5462	20.51	3.76	10.92	9.59
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>160226</b>	<b>1477.45</b>	<b>9.22</b>	<b>320.45</b>	<b>1157.00</b>

**Table 22d: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2021)**

<b>Settlement 2021</b>	<b>2021 population</b>	<b>Natural &amp; Semi-natural Greenspace (Ha)</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha)</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (Ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	77948	235.52	3.02	155.90	79.62
Aveley/Ockendon	26905	413.38	15.36	53.81	359.57
Tilbury/Chadwell	28120	128.33	4.56	56.24	72.09
Stanford/ Corringham	28305	679.71	24.01	56.61	623.10
Rural Area	5319	20.51	3.86	10.64	9.87
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>166597</b>	<b>1477.45</b>	<b>8.87</b>	<b>333.19</b>	<b>1144.26</b>

Across the time frame of the study all areas remain in surplus for natural and semi-natural greenspace. In Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet the surplus decreases from 116 Ha in 2001 to 80 Ha in 2021 with all other areas remaining relatively static.

### **3.8.2 Potential Solutions**

The review of Urban Capacity Study sites did not reveal any opportunities to create additional natural and semi natural greenspace sites.

#### ***Landscape Capacity Study***

The Landscape Capacity Study found a significant number of opportunities to create new natural and semi natural greenspace sites as can be seen in **Table 23** below.

These represent potential solutions that will require more considered investigation and appraisal; it is also possible that good urban design may enable densities to be achieved that remove the need to use these options to secure the necessary quantity of open space.

**Table 23: Green Infrastructure Opportunities – Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace**

<b>Urban Fringe Landscapes</b>	
<b><i>Settlement</i></b>	<b><i>Natural Green Infrastructure Opportunities</i></b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Wildlife wedge linking new parkland with ALNCS.
Aveley/Ockendon	New woodland to the north of Aveley by pass to link in with existing woodland Create woodland to the north of the roundabout that connects Aveley by pass with Stifford Road Create woodland on the south side of Aveley by pass where it emerges from the eastern edge of Aveley. New wetland feature to south of Sandy Lane Woodland Planting south of roundabout at Sandy Lane. Create parkland landscape at entrance to northern gateway to Aveley.
Tilbury/Chadwell	Opportunity to enhance the Old House Wood ALNCS by additional planting to increase the size of the woodland.

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<b>Settlement Edge Landscapes</b>	
<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Natural Green Infrastructure Opportunities</b>
Aveley/Ockendon	<p>Create new water feature and woodland planting to north west of Brandon Groves.</p> <p>Plant new woodland adjacent to the railway to the north of South Ockendon.</p> <p>Expansion of woodland adjacent to the existing pond to the east of the M25.</p> <p>Creation of meadows and community woodland to the south of the existing pond.</p> <p>Creation of linear woodland immediately to the west of Arisdale Avenue.</p> <p>Creation of new linear woodland alongside the railway to the north of West Road.</p> <p>Creation of new woodland to the north of the track leading to Field House.</p> <p>New woodland to the east of Dennis Road.</p>
Tilbury/Chadwell	<p>Wetland feature within green wedge to north of Muckingford Road.</p> <p>Create new woodland to the west of the railway line opposite Bata Conservation Area.</p>
Stanford/Corringham	South of roundabout on A13.
Rural	<p>Create grassland habitat in the vicinity of Round Shaw (County Wildlife Site) to the east of West Horndon Road.</p> <p>New wetland features to the south and west of West Horndon, south of the railway line.</p> <p>New green wedge running north-south to south of West Horndon.</p> <p>Create new woodland shaw adjacent to footpath running north from Field House.</p> <p>Create new green wedge or informal parkland to the east of Nulty's Farm.</p>

These green infrastructure opportunities will contribute towards addressing the accessibility issues for Aveley/Ockendon, parts of Tilbury and parts of the Rural Area. However, these opportunities will do little to address the problems of

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accessibility for Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet where the majority of the proposed new development is concentrated.

English Nature recommend that the value of ancillary greenspace should be considered, especially in respect of conserving biodiversity. The assessment of open space provision excludes open space with restricted access (including privately owned areas of open space). These areas, which include greenspace associated with brownfield land, offer possibilities with high biodiversity value if they can be utilised to overcome existing deficiencies in urban areas, not least because some restricted access spaces lie close to areas that are currently deficient.



*Plate 7: Woodland near South Ockendon*

### **3.9 Actions and recommendations**

There are many ways of increasing the amount of accessible natural greenspace. High quality footpaths and other facilities can enhance accessibility; creative management can develop natural areas within formal parks; linear features such as railway corridors can be given natural features and used to connect greenspace networks together; new accessible natural greenspace can be created in association with large development projects; and, in areas where no other action is immediately feasible, street greening can improve the natural quality of the urban form. The Greengrid strategy develops these ideas further and highlights ways in which they can be implemented.

The planning system has the potential to ensure that natural and semi-natural greenspaces are protected and to achieve improvements in levels of provision. Local planning authorities have a responsibility to help achieve the targets set in national and local Biodiversity Action Plans. Some new provision could exploit opportunities to create multifunctional features which could, in addition, provide recreational and amenity benefit. PPG 17 para.3 expressly states that this could include:

“havens and habitats for flora and fauna: sites may also have potential to be corridors or stepping stones from one habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in local biodiversity action plans”.

There is also potential for improvements to be made through the enhancement of existing greenspaces and this may be the most immediately useful approach to improving provision. Enhancement of existing features of wildlife interest, such as ponds and hedgerows which have been degraded can often be accomplished quickly and with little effort, resulting in significant improvements to overall environmental quality. Derelict and/or damaged land can benefit from this approach. The establishment of Local Nature Reserves clearly identifies an

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areas importance to wildlife and the community; and ensures continuity of management.

Planning policies in the Local Development Framework should therefore aim to achieve the following objectives in relation to new development:

- Protect existing natural and semi-natural greenspaces, important habitats and species.
- Enhance existing environments and create new where possible.
- Mitigate against potentially adverse impacts to natural and semi-natural greenspaces, habitats and species.
- Compensate for losses to natural and semi-natural greenspaces, habitats and species where damage is unavoidable.
- Monitor and enforce conditions / agreements.

### *Recommendation One:*

Policies in the Local Development Framework should seek to protect all existing Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace.

### *Recommendation Two:*

The Council should adopt the principles of the English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards Model, should address demand through the development process, especially in Chadwell St Mary, Tilbury and Grays, and should examine ways in which sites identified in the Landscape Capacity Study can be safeguarded for Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace.

### *Recommendation Three:*

Promote the provision of more ecologically functional urban landscapes through the creation of habitat, both woodland and open ground, and through appropriate management of the existing urban green space.

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### *Recommendation Four:*

Explore opportunities to address the issue of increasingly isolated and fragmented natural and semi natural greenspace sites through the development of networks of open space building on the Greengrid framework.

### *Recommendation Five:*

Take steps to improve the quality of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace particularly for sites which achieved a low quality score.

### *Recommendation Six*

Seek the designation of additional Local Nature Reserves.

### *Recommendation Seven:*

Measures should be considered to create safer and easier access to sites including the riverbank so that they can be enjoyed by all sections of the community.

### *Recommendation Eight:*

Explore measures to improve the access both to and within Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace through the improvement of public footpaths and bridleways, ensuring that these are well-signposted and well-maintained.

### *Recommendation Nine:*

Manage and develop Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace in order to promote inclusivity and usage by all members of the community, particularly for disabled people, and people from the BME communities.

*Recommendation Ten:*

Adjust the criteria for the assessment of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace to ensure that the appropriate attributes are measured in future audits of open space.

*Recommendation Eleven:*

Development and implementation of Nature Conservation Management Plans for all areas of acknowledged importance for biodiversity. In addition, consideration should be given to enhancing the biodiversity of areas whose principal function is not nature conservation.

*Recommendation Twelve:*

Proposals for development should, where appropriate:

- introduce new habitats which would enhance the natural interest in Thurrock, and/or;
- enhance existing habitats which would improve the natural interest in Thurrock, and/or;
- mitigate against potentially adverse impacts to the natural interest in Thurrock, and/or;
- compensate for losses to the natural interest in Thurrock.

*Recommendation Thirteen:*

That further work beyond the scope of this study be undertaken to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

In relation to the above we recommend that you consult *Biodiversity by Design: a guide for sustainable communities*, which provides some useful guidance on how green spaces can be integrated into urban environments. The guide can be downloaded from the English Nature website at <http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/publication/PDF/TCPAbiodiversityguide.pdf>.

**Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
2.0Ha per 1000 population, according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit	Quality score of 42.8%	No person should live more than 300m from a natural accessible greenspace; There should be at least one accessible 20Ha site within 2Km of their home There should be at least one accessible 100Ha site within 5Km There should be at least one accessible 500Ha site within 10Km

## **4 Green Corridors**

### **4.1 Definition**

Access and transport networks, as well as natural features, create a variety of linear landscape components, including paths, railway lines, roads, rivers, streams and areas of open space. These features, and often the adjoining land, create a network, which provides links for people and wildlife. They can connect different areas within an urban area as part of a designated and managed network used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. They may also link other typologies of green space to one another, to create a “Greengrid”.

This potential is especially important in the context of the Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy, which is being developed to connect places in the Thames Gateway through the development (and connection) of a living green network of accessible open space. This in turn will contribute to sustainable future development, and environmental enhancement, of South Essex.

### **4.2 Strategic Context**

The major green corridors and links are valued for recreation and/or wildlife. Some are identified solely because they assist the movement of wildlife, for example the existing railway lines, while others assist the movement of both people and wildlife. The need for green corridors also arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling within urban areas.

#### ***The Thames Gateway South Essex Greengrid Strategy***

This document (the “Greengrid Strategy”) observes that the value of a park or open space increases exponentially when it is easily accessible and connected to a larger system. It is therefore important that existing open spaces, wherever possible, be incorporated into an overall network. The creation of new strategic parks in deficient and new development areas will

add value if they also enable and enhance a network threading through the urban and rural landscape, connecting places that are attractive to people, wildlife and business.

The Greengrid Strategy delineates four Strategic Corridor types:

- Parkways and urban green roadways - major highways that will need to be upgraded and provide the opportunity for a design-led, multi-functional approach rather than a purely engineering one
- Riverways - as multi-functional corridors and sequences of spaces and places
- Railways - as multi-functional corridors, a window on the landscape, and with stations recognised as gateways to the Greengrid; and
- Greenways - national, regional and sub-regional footpaths/cyclepaths.

The Greengrid is therefore not just about green spaces. It is about connecting people from their front door, via a safe, clean and attractive street to their local park within walking distance, and then into the wider network of larger parks, town and village centres, and onto country parks, the marshes and estuaries via the strategic network.

The Strategy identifies a broad range of open spaces that could and should contribute to the Greengrid including parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces, outdoor sports facilities, amenity greenspace, provision for children and teenagers and green corridors - including river and canal banks, cycleways, and rights of way.

The Strategic Framework for Thurrock notes that:

- There is a relatively comprehensive network of designated public footpaths, although quality of provision particularly in urban areas is often poor
- There is generally poor provision of bridleways and byways
- The proposed National Cycle Routes will provide better links to and through most urban areas

The Strategy identifies a range of opportunities that could be reflected in the Open Space Strategy for Thurrock including:

- Increase in high quality connections from 'doorstep to countryside/marshes/estuary' would encourage inclusiveness and use of the environment for informal recreation contributing to healthy living and a sense of well-being
- Transport corridors which incorporate functional green infrastructure would contribute to improved water management, and increased urban and rural biodiversity
- Improved accessibility to archaeological, historical and cultural resources would enhance sense of place and sense of community
- Increased access providing opportunities for experiencing the variety of local cultural and environmental and educational destinations would encourage exploration
- A connected network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways that is safe, attractive and well publicised would create a tremendous leisure and recreational resource
- Access and movement through the Strategy Area should exploit the potential for a sequence of views and landmarks
- Improved access would raise the profile of South Essex as a place to live, visit and work, thereby attracting investment and people
- Alternative and safe routes to work, schools, sports facilities, retail areas, nature reserves, parks and other destinations would enhance live ability; and
- Easy access to information about routes and integration of various types of transport would encourage better use of existing and future transport.

#### **4.3 Consultation – key findings in relation to green corridors**

The consultation focuses primarily on the needs of people, rather than wildlife. It highlights the weaknesses of current provision in relation to rights of way and countryside access, and in particular the issue of bridleways which was raised in the stakeholder workshop by equestrian interests. It also highlights the importance of the riverbank as a corridor resource for recreational purposes. Full details are set out in **section 3.4** above and need not be repeated here.



*Plate 8: Riverside Path near Grays*

Other consultation carried out in 2002<sup>12</sup> found that one of the area's most important greenways, the Mardyke Valley, was relatively unknown to much of Thurrock's population. Nearly 60% of respondents were unaware of the Mardyke Valley greenway, and a further 24% said they had not visited because of safety concerns. However, there was considerable enthusiasm about the project to conserve the area with 34% of those questioned wanting a more active involvement in the project.

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<sup>12</sup> Cited on the Greengrid website, but with no methodological details to establish provenance

## **4.4 Audit**

### **4.4.1 Quantity**

**Map 31** shows the green corridors in Thurrock. In total, this amounts to 143 kilometres in length and 860 hectares in area (assuming an average width of 60m). It should be noted that two sites mentioned in the table of natural and semi-natural greenspace (Mardyke Valley and the Field of Peace) are also included in this quantity calculation.

The Thurrock Strategic Area Framework for the South Essex Greengrid identifies a number of existing Greenways. These are:

- Purfleet – Watts Wood - Blackshotts
- Two Forts Way in the Tilbury area and north to Stanford-le-Hope
- A route northwest from Grays towards Belhus and on to Hornchurch Country Park
- A route north from Grays through the Mardyke Valley
- A route from Stanford le Hope through Orsett to the Mardyke Valley

Potential Greenways are identified along the riverside at Grays, and from Stanford-le-Hope across the marshes towards Canvey.

## **4.5 Standards**

The Companion Guide to PPG 17 expresses the view that there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard for green corridors. Policy should promote the use of green corridors to link housing areas to the Sustrans national cycle network, town and city centres, places of employment and community facilities such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities. Opportunities to use established linear routes, such as disused railway lines, roads or canal and river banks, as green corridors should be exploited. In addition links to the wider area need to be established.

## **4.6 Projections**

New development will create further demands on the natural environment. Existing and new residents will increasingly expect to be able to gain access to natural areas and the countryside of the urban fringe.

### **Greengrid**

Thurrock has a set of environmental assets, including open spaces, natural greenspace, green corridors, marshland, woodlands, and the River Thames. The Greengrid will build on these assets to create a network of interlinked high quality open spaces, wildlife habitats, and will provide connectivity to and between town centres, public transport nodes, the Green Belt, the River Thames and major employment and residential areas as part of a sustainable transport network. It will help to improve Thurrock as a place to live, work and visit. It will also make a contribution to the challenge of climate change, through biodiversity conservation, flood management and alleviation, microclimate improvement, and inclusive access to spaces that sustain communities and improve health.

All these public spaces will need to be properly maintained, and the Council will need to ensure that developers contribute to their establishment and sustainability.

The Greengrid Strategy seeks to promote high quality environmental infrastructure that in turn promotes high quality development. The strategy considers that:

‘High quality environments yield, over time, higher property values.’

All new developments will increase demands on the environmental infrastructure. The developer will therefore be expected to contribute towards new provision or the enhancement of existing provision to serve needs arising from their development.

It is therefore appropriate that the Local Development Framework and accompanying policy for the Greengrid should require developers to contribute not only to the capital investment of creating the environmental infrastructure but also to its long term management and maintenance. Development should therefore only be permitted when agreement has been

reached between the relevant parties on the total funding and programmed implementation of required improvements to the Greengrid infrastructure.

***Landscape Capacity Study***

The Landscape Capacity Study identifies a range of improvements, which would enhance the provision of green corridors. **Table 24** provides some details of the opportunities that are available but this is by no means an exhaustive list, since no assessment has been undertaken within the main populated areas.

These represent potential solutions that will require more considered investigation and appraisal; it is also possible that good urban design may enable densities to be achieved that remove the need to use these options to secure the necessary quantity of open space.

**Table 24: Green Infrastructure Opportunities – Green Corridors**

<b>Urban Fringe Landscapes</b>	
<b><i>Settlement</i></b>	<b><i>Green Corridor Infrastructure Opportunities</i></b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Strengthen hedgerows. Create wildlife wedge that links the existing ALNCS with new parkland .
Aveley/Ockendon	Strengthen existing hedgerow pattern within the area. Plant trees within new and existing hedges. New hedgerows to the south of Hall Road. Enhance footpath between Mollands Lane and Buckles Lane. Enhance vegetation to drainage ditch connecting Little Palmer’s Shaw with Hill Farm Cottages. Create hedgerow along right of way between drainage ditch and track leading east from Hill Farm.

	Enhance South Road Corridor by planting trees.
Tilbury/Chadwell	<p>Strengthen hedge that runs north from Old House Wood along the public right of way to Murrells Cottages.</p> <p>Create a green link connecting Hornsby Lane with the north of Chadwell St Mary.</p> <p>Create a green wedge by extending open space to the south of Wickham Road.</p> <p>Create green corridors along A1089 and A126 through planting of woodland.</p>
<b>Settlement Edge Landscapes</b>	
<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Green Corridor Infrastructure Opportunities</b>
Aveley/Ockendon	<p>Strengthen existing hedgerow pattern.</p> <p>Create new footpath connecting centre of South Ockendon with countryside to the north.</p> <p>Strengthen and extend existing hedgerows to connect with water bodies to the east of South Road.</p> <p>Strengthen and extend existing hedgerows to enhance connectivity between the pond, woodland and the ancient woodland adjacent to Hamble Lane.</p> <p>Create new footpath linking ponds to urban area and footpaths that link with West Road.</p>
Tilbury/Chadwell	<p>Strengthen existing hedgerows along Low Street Lane leading to Low Street.</p> <p>Create linear belts of woodland within the open landscape to the west of Linford and East Tilbury.</p> <p>Potential to create riparian habitat along existing</p>

	<p>watercourse to west of A13 and west of railway.</p> <p>Enhance permeability and access to the Thames Estuary from East Tilbury.</p> <p>Create new footpath to connect extended recreation ground with rights of way to the south and west.</p> <p>Create new hedge between new recreation ground and Gobions Lake County Wildlife site.</p> <p>Create new hedges linking to hedge network north of Muckingford Lane.</p>
Stanford/Corringham	<p>Strengthen existing hedgerow network to the east of Horndon Road.</p>
Rural	<p>Strengthen and extend existing hedgerows to the east of Thorndon Road.</p> <p>Create new hedges running east west.</p> <p>Create green wedge running north-south to south of West Horndon.</p>

#### **4.7 Recommendations**

English Nature believes that the greenspace network should provide multifunctional benefits beyond the traditional recreational function of parks. These include: facilitating the distribution of wild plants and animals; providing conduits for walking and cycling routes; encouraging access to the natural environment; and, promoting significant environmental benefits such as habitat provision, healthy living and the amelioration of flooding and pollution.

A more thorough assessment of the ecological function of the greenspace network especially in relation to: the provision of wildlife habitats; contribution to flood alleviation and pollution control; and amelioration of the adverse

effects of urban micro-climates is therefore recommended. A network of greenspaces, designed and managed to emulate natural processes, can provide services and deliver benefits which are greater than those provided through spaces managed as unconnected plots.

Specific recommendations from the Thurrock Strategic framework include:

- Create Chadwell St.Mary Greenway associated with chalk rock outcrop feature through Purfleet and Tilbury
- Create A13 Parkway Corridor between outer London, Thurrock and Basildon, and build distinctive pedestrian/cycle bridges reconnecting urban areas to the Mardyke Valley, Thames Chase Community Forest and the South Essex countryside
- Maintain ecological value of C2C Railway Corridor, improve visual and environmental qualities of, and connectivity to stations at Lakeside, Purfleet, Grays, Tilbury, East Tilbury.

*Recommendation One:*

Thurrock Council should examine opportunities to implement the Thames Gateway South East Greengrid Strategy exploring opportunities to connect the network of parks and green spaces, river corridors, woodland and tree lined streets, with a comprehensive footpath and cycle network.

*Recommendation Two:*

Thurrock Council should explore the opportunities presented in the Landscape Capacity Study for developing green corridors that link green spaces into an attractive and well-managed network that is an integral part of the urban environment.

*Recommendation Three:*

Thurrock Council should be aware of and seek to achieve, through positive policies in its Local development Framework, provision of green corridors through developer obligations.

*Recommendation Four:*

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that have made suitable arrangements for the improvement or provision of environmental infrastructure made necessary by the development. Arrangements for provision or improvement to the required standard will be secured by planning obligations or in some cases conditions attached to planning permission.

*Recommendation five:*

That further work beyond the scope of this study be undertaken to take forward these recommendations in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

### **Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
PPG17 Companion Guide suggests that standards cannot be expressed but reference should be made to Greengrid Strategy		

## **5 Amenity Greenspace**

### **5.1 Definition**

Amenity greenspace is a generic description for green space and planting which softens the urban fabric, allows for informal leisure, and provides a setting for buildings. Amenity greenspaces may also be used, incidentally, as wildlife habitats. They are public open spaces, which are provided to improve and enhance the appearance of the local environment.

### **5.2 Strategic context**

The provision of amenity space to meet the needs of new development is important in promoting the well being of residents, and enhancing the quality of the urban environment.

Amenity space has a number of roles in terms of providing opportunities for recreation and leisure and contributing to the quality of the townscape. The measurable benefits include improved public health, reduced stress levels, child development through creative play, interaction with nature and economic prosperity.

### **5.3 The need for Amenity Greenspace**

All amenity space has a vital role in creating a more attractive townscape and pleasant living environment, the benefits of which are measurable in terms of public health and economic prosperity.

A factor in considering the amount of amenity space provided in residential development is the fact that there is often overlap in the character and location of communal amenity space and casual play areas for children. Both are often relatively small parcels of green space which are closely related to homes, and both are to the benefit of local residents, whether for play or for general amenity.

Amenity open space is an element within the NPFA's Six Acre Standard in relation to children's playing space. This standard provides for 0.8 ha per 1000 population for outdoor playing space by providing equipped playing space in the form of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs with the balance as casual playing space within areas of amenity open space. A fuller description of this standard is provided in section 4.5.

The need for amenity greenspace therefore relates to the nature of a development. A development where houses have large gardens will have a reduced need compared to flatted developments or areas of sheltered housing where gardens are not appropriate. However, where a housing area is likely to contain a significant number of children, amenity greenspace also functions much of the time as space for children's play.

In 'Rethinking Open Space',<sup>13</sup> Kit Campbell suggests that the need for amenity greenspace will vary according to:

- the proportion of children in the development and the need for children's play space
- proximity to existing parks
- the average size of gardens linked to houses or flats
- the safety of roads
- the availability of substitutes such as ready access to large areas of countryside

The need for amenity greenspace is not limited to housing areas. The landscaping associated with many non-housing developments, for example business parks and even some industrial estates, should be included in the consideration of need. In these areas quality is as important as quantity.

The current Council standard requires 10% of the gross site area of any new development of 30 dwellings, or 0.8 hectares or more, to be set aside as open space. This is in order to ensure that adequate play areas and amenity open spaces are provided for the benefit of the new residents. The 10%

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<sup>13</sup> Rethinking Open Space, Kit Campbell Associates, Scottish Exec Research findings No 108, 1999

formula is based on the NPFA standard of 1.2 ha per 1000 population for Children's Play and Non-pitch Sport as follows:

A 12 hectare site would provide 1.2 hectares of open space at 10 per cent. If the remaining 10.8 hectares were developed at a housing density of 40 dwellings per hectare and the resulting 432 dwellings occupied at an average household size of 2.38 persons per household (with a 3 per cent vacancy rate), the development would generate a population of about 1,000.<sup>14</sup>

However, it should be noted that in fact the NPFA's recommendation for 0.6-0.8 ha of children's play space per thousand population is based on the following assumptions:<sup>15</sup>

- average number of houses per hectare 62
- average number of people per household 2.36
- average number of children 4-14 per household 0.48
- therefore, children/hectare =  $62 \times 0.48 = 30$

Clearly, if the Council's assumption is based on a density that is only two thirds of that assumed by the NPFA, the current requirement is in excess of the NPFA standard.

#### **5.4 Consultation – key findings in relation to amenity greenspace**

Opinions of the quality of amenity greenspace vary widely, and reflect the diversity of condition identified in the audit. What is noticeable, though, is the value that people ascribe to this space; even the low quality space can have high value simply by virtue of it being the only space available locally, and residents in some areas were very concerned that a space with low quality might be vulnerable to development. In fact, 86% of residents say that this type of space is at least fairly important to them (just 11% say it isn't important), and there is little or no variation in this result by either the personal characteristics of the respondent or their broad geographical

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<sup>14</sup> Thurrock UDP para 10.4.17

<sup>15</sup> The Six Acre Standard, NPFA 1992 paras 5.35 and 5.42.

location – at least 80% of residents in all parts of the borough said this space was important to them.

This importance is by no means reflected in quality, however. Although three quarters of residents (74%) say their areas are at least fairly well maintained, most of these are tending towards a more qualified view that suggests a variable level of quality, and one in four residents (23%) say their area is not well maintained. Quality perceptions are rather higher in Aveley/Ockendon (82% say their area is at least fairly well maintained) than elsewhere (72-75% of residents in other urban areas say their area is at least fairly well maintained). Rural residents have a much lower perception, but the numbers are small and less reliable.

## **5.5 Audit**

### **5.5.1 Quantity**

The total area of amenity greenspace has been calculated on the basis of the information available from the Council's GIS. **Table 25** below shows that the total amount of Amenity Greenspace is 78.81 hectares which is 0.42% of the total area of the borough. However, it is not unreasonable to determine amenity greenspace in terms of the settled or built-up area of the borough, since PPG17 relates the provision of amenity green space to the presence of population. The table also breaks down the amount of greenspace by settlement and demonstrates a considerable, but not unexpected, variation.

**Table 25: Amenity Greenspace by Settlement Area**

	<b>Amenity Green (ha)</b>	<b>Settlement area (ha)</b>	<b>% of Total area</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	20.59	2894	0.71%
Aveley/Ockendon	20.30	2825	0.72%
Tilbury/Chadwell	27.12	4083	0.66%
Stanford/Corringham	8.09	3860	0.21%
Rural	1.82	4707	0.04%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.93</b>	<b>18369</b>	<b>0.42%</b>

The audit of amenity greenspace initially examined sites in excess of 0.3 ha. The realisation that this filter excluded large areas of housing amenity land resulted in a revised cut off point of 0.2 ha.

Amenity greenspace in excess of 0.3 ha largely comprises:

- grass verges
- roundabouts
- larger areas of amenity space adjacent to housing areas
- isolated plots of land

Sites that were clearly not amenity greenspace e.g. derelict land awaiting development, were removed from the database.

### **Case studies**

It is helpful to examine the differences in supply of amenity greenspace in specific locations. Three examples have been selected for this purpose; one is Brandon Groves, which we consider to be an example of good practice; one is Belhus, which we and the council consider to be an area of reasonable supply that might serve as a quantity benchmark, and the third is Chafford Hundred, an area of limited supply which has been criticised for lack of provision.

*Brandon Groves*

Brandon Groves is a housing development built on the site of the former South Ockendon Hospital. The development was completed in 2000 and 688 houses have been built. The development brief acknowledged the fact that the site would have an impact upon the Green Belt. The Council therefore only took account of the extent of buildings on site and their character and dispersal. Redevelopment could not exceed the end "footprint of the existing present buildings".

The resulting development provides a large amount of amenity space. There is no equipped children's playing space but the site is adjacent to South Ockendon Recreation Ground.

There is 10.27 hectares of amenity greenspace in Brandon Groves. The total size of the area is 39.13 hectares which means that 26% of the area of development comprises amenity greenspace. This equates to a level of provision of 6.41 hectares per 1000 population and considerably exceeds the Thurrock standard of 10%, which would demand 3.91Ha.



*Plate 9: Brandon Groves*

*Belhus*

One area, which is agreed to have a reasonable supply of amenity greenspace, is the ward of Belhus, probably for historic reasons linked to the development of the area by the London County Council and applying their standards of spatial provision at the time. This area is shown on **Map 32**.

The amount of amenity greenspace identified on the map amounts to 6.35 hectares, which is equivalent to 0.73 hectares per 1000 population. However, this area does not include the smaller spaces below 0.2 hectares located adjacent to housing areas. It is therefore reasonable to assume that if these areas were to be included, the level of provision would be closer to 1 hectare per 1000 population. The Thurrock 10% standard would demand 6.28 hectares of amenity space, meaning that this area is exceeding the current standard.



*Plate 10: Chafford Hundred*

*Chafford Hundred*

In July 1986, planning consent was granted for the reclamation and development of a former chalk quarry of approximately 600 acres, northwest of Grays Town Centre, known as Chafford Hundred.

When completed, over 5,000 houses and flats will be developed on 143 hectares of housing land. Housing has been developed at a variety of densities and housing types and the locality includes sites for private sector housing as well as Registered Social Landlord housing and retirement homes. CABE has cited Chafford Hundred as an example of poor practice in urban design.

There are areas of special environmental and scientific interest including Warren Gorge, which contains lakes and waterways, and Lion Gorge which includes an area of woodland.

A review of the provision of housing amenity land shows that only 1.38 ha of amenity space has been provided in terms of substantive sites. Indeed, with the recent development of a nursery building, the area of one of these sites has been reduced by half. If all land identified in the Council's GIS is considered there is just 2.83 ha of amenity space in the whole of Chafford Hundred.

Overall provision has been calculated on the basis of area of greenspace per 1000 population. The population is calculated by multiplying the average household size by the number of houses, based on the final approved number of houses that are to be developed on the site; over 5,000 houses have already been built. This works out at 0.10 ha per 1000 population for the main sites and 0.21 ha for all sites in the GIS. This can be compared with the NPFA standard of 0.8 ha per 1,000 for children's playing space which includes housing amenity space.

Thurrock Council considers that 10% of the gross site area of any new development of 30 dwellings or more should be set aside as open space in order to ensure that adequate play areas and amenity open spaces are provided for the benefit of the new residents. This would equate to 14.3 ha for this development. In reality only 2.83 ha has been provided.

### **5.5.2 Quality and Value**

The criteria used to assess quality and value are provided in **Appendix 2.3**, and the scores achieved by individual spaces are in the table below:

Table 26: Location and Quality/Value Scores for Amenity Greenspace

Site Name	% Quality Score	% Value Score	Combined Score (%)	Combined Ranking	Settlement	Hectares
Parkway/ The Green	100.0	100.0	100.0	1	Rural	0.11
Cedar Rise	94.7	100.0	97.4	2	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.15
The Green, S. Ockendon	94.7	100.0	97.4	2	Aveley/ Ockendon	
Waverley Gardens	89.5	100.0	94.7	4	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.11
Canterbury Parade/ South Road	84.2	100.0	92.1	5	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.27
Crammavill Street	84.2	100.0	92.1	5	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.25
Holly Drive/Medlar Drive	96.8	83.3	90.1	7	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.59
Milford Road/ Kier Hardie House	83.8	95.8	89.8	8	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.05
Brandon Groves Ave ( S. of Comm. Centre)	100.0	79.2	89.6	9	Aveley/ Ockendon	1.60
Brandon Groves Ave/ Nordmann Place	100.0	79.2	89.6	9	Aveley/Ockendon	1.02

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Nursery Rd	78.9	100.0	89.5	11	Stanford/ Corringham	0.95
Sydney Rd	78.9	100.0	89.5	11	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.93
Birch Close	85.0	91.7	88.3	13	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.56
Deveron Gardens	86.7	88.9	87.8	14	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.07
Linford Rd- Cole Avenue	96.0	79.2	87.6	15	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.79
Meesons Lane/ Parker Road	82.5	91.7	87.1	16	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	1.47
Victoria Rd	73.7	100.0	86.8	17	Stanford/ Corringham	0.91
Coronation Avenue/ Colne	80.6	91.7	86.1	18	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.35
Stenning Avenue/ Beechcroft Avenue	80.0	91.7	85.8	19	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.77
Quarry Hill	78.9	88.9	83.9	20	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.48
Gatehope Drive	80.0	87.5	83.8	21	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.78

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Birch Crescent/ Ash Walk	87.5	79.2	83.3	22	Aveley/ Ockendon	1.98
Rainbow Road/ Felipe Road	77.5	87.5	82.5	23	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.54
Brandon Groves Ave/ Rowan Way	85.3	79.2	82.2	24	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.81
Cullen Square	81.1	83.3	82.2	24	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.94
Lenthall Avenue	80.0	83.3	81.7	26	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.56
Afton Drive/ Avon Green	84.2	77.8	81.0	27	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.23
Godman Rd	84.2	77.8	81.0	27	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.74
Stifford Rd/ Carnach Green	75.0	83.3	79.2	29	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.33
Claybourne Gardens	57.9	100.0	78.9	30	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.51
Corran Way	68.4	88.9	78.7	31	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.33
Thames Drive	68.4	88.9	78.7	31	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.32

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Church Rd	78.9	77.8	78.4	33	Rural	0.43
Rachel Clarke Close	78.9	77.8	78.4	33	Stanford/ Corringham	1.60
River Court	63.3	91.7	77.5	35	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.44
Drake Road - Drake Community Centre	88.0	66.7	77.3	36	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.14
Mollands Court (off Mollands Lane)	87.1	66.7	76.9	37	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.28
Blackthorn Rd	64.5	87.5	76.0	38	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	1.22
Laburnum Drive	73.7	77.8	75.7	39	Stanford/ Corringham	0.22
Queen Mary Ave/ Frome	55.0	95.8	75.4	40	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.76
Canberra Square	100.0	50.0	75.0	41	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.25
Dunstable Road	70.3	79.2	74.7	42	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.67
St John's Rd/ Furness Close	53.6	95.8	74.7	42	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.35

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Enbourne Green/ Elan Rd	65.0	83.3	74.2	44	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.35
South Rd/ Tamarisk Rd	81.1	66.7	73.9	45	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.30
Crannel Green	47.4	100.0	73.7	46	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.71
Mayflower Road	67.5	79.2	73.3	47	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.70
Rykhill	80.0	66.7	73.3	47	Tilbury/ Chadwell	
Canterbury Parade	68.4	77.8	73.1	49	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.15
Argent Street/ Thames Rd	62.5	83.3	72.9	50	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.98
Thames View	58.3	87.5	72.9	50	Tilbury/ Chadwell	1.18
Leuwen Rd/ Chilton Rd	78.9	66.7	72.8	52	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.60
Mill House, Mill Rd	61.8	83.3	72.5	53	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.52
Roundabout Mill Rd (B1335)	81.8	62.5	72.2	54	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.41

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Centurion Way	67.5	75.0	71.3	55	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.34
Ruskin Rd	53.3	88.9	71.1	56	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.51
Southgate /Watts Crescent	62.5	79.2	70.8	57	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.61
Russell Rd	63.2	77.8	70.5	58	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.20
Watts Crescent	63.2	77.8	70.5	58	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	
Broxburn Drive	73.7	66.7	70.2	60	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.20
Foxglove Road	73.7	66.7	70.2	60	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.25
Cherwell Grove/ Corran Way	67.6	70.8	69.2	62	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.45
Viola Close/ Mar Road	62.5	75.0	68.8	63	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.76
Alluric Close/ Camden Close	62.2	75.0	68.6	64	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.35
Peartree Close	61.8	75.0	68.4	65	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.07

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Callan Grove	57.5	79.2	68.3	66	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.57
Martin Rd	45.0	91.7	68.3	66	Aveley/ Ockendon	
Monrow Rd/ Monrow Green	57.9	77.8	67.8	68	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.46
Butler House, Shirfield Rd	68.4	66.7	67.5	69	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.33
Mulberry Drive/ Comet Close	60.0	75.0	67.5	69	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.18
Abbots Hall/ Corringham Rd	78.9	55.6	67.3	71	Stanford/ Corringham	0.48
London Rd/ Brennan Rd/ Hume Ave	56.8	75.0	65.9	72	Tilbury/ Chadwell	1.56
Portsea Road/ Fielding Avenue	65.0	66.7	65.8	73	Tilbury/ Chadwell	2.59
London Road/ Brennan Road	64.5	66.7	65.6	74	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.19
Chadwell Hill	72.7	58.3	65.5	75	Tilbury/ Chadwell	1.13
Chadwell Hill/ Thames View	72.7	58.3	65.5	75	Tilbury/ Chadwell	3.05

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Magnolia Close/ Juniper Drive	76.5	54.2	65.3	77	Aveley/ Ockendon	3.27
River View/ The Haven	75.0	54.2	64.6	78	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.46
London Road/ Parkside Avenue	53.6	75.0	64.3	79	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.61
Colne/ Solway (next to shops)	57.1	70.8	64.0	80	Tilbury/ Chadwell	
Saladin Drive/ Comet Close	42.5	83.3	62.9	81	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.20
The Manorway/ The Sorrells	62.2	62.5	62.3	82	Tilbury/ Chadwell	1.17
Marisco Close	70.0	54.2	62.1	83	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.91
Exmouth Rd/ Seabrook Rise	67.6	54.2	60.9	84	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.37
Derry Avenue/ Deveron Gardens	42.1	77.8	59.9	85	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.28
Gabborns Crescent	82.4	37.5	59.9	85	Stanford/ Corringham	0.67
The Manorway/ Silvertown Avenue	48.6	70.8	59.7	87	Stanford/ Corringham	1.68

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Morrison House	52.6	66.7	59.6	88	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.07
Maple Rd/ Oak Rd (Elm Rd Open Space	71.4	45.8	58.6	89	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	3.06
Alluric Close	52.9	62.5	57.7	90	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.36
Brentwood Rd/ Felicia Way	48.6	66.7	57.7	90	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.71
Parkside Avenue	77.4	37.5	57.5	92	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.46
St Thomas Place/ Henry St	64.9	50.0	57.4	93	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.27
Camden Close/ Vigerons Way	56.0	58.3	57.2	94	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.39
Silvertown Avenue	80.0	33.3	56.7	95	Stanford/ Corringham	0.19
Tern Close	78.9	33.3	56.1	96	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.92
Stratford Gardens	73.3	33.3	53.3	97	Stanford/ Corringham	0.28
Ward Broadway Roundabout	72.7	33.3	53.0	98	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.60

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Sandy Lane	28.6	75.0	51.8	99	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.47
Stifford Rd/ Fulbrook Lane	61.3	41.7	51.5	100	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.35
Blackshots Lane/ Lodge Lane	48.6	54.2	51.4	101	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.58
Moore Avenue/ Devonshire Rd	26.5	75.0	50.7	102	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	2.74
Northview Avenue/ Central Avenue	41.9	58.3	50.1	103	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.38
Claudian Way/ Brentwood Rd	54.1	45.8	49.9	104	Tilbury/ Chadwell	1.79
Aveley By pass/Stifford Rd	71.4	25.0	48.2	105	Aveley/ Ockendon	0.73
Severn/ Bure	61.3	33.3	47.3	106	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.26
Kipling Avenue	35.5	58.3	46.9	107	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.15
Crusader Close	47.4	44.4	45.9	108	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.52
Ruskin Road	54.1	33.3	43.7	109	Stanford/ Corringham	1.11

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Orsett Rd/ Dell Rd	32.1	50.0	41.1	110	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.61
Thameley/ St Clements Court	39.1	41.7	40.4	111	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.65
Dickens Avenue	35.7	41.7	38.7	112	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.72
Roundabout (North)	40.9	33.3	37.1	113	Rural	0.34
Roundabout (South)	36.4	33.3	34.8	114	Rural	0.94
Morant Rd/ Brentwood Rd	52.0	12.5	32.3	115	Tilbury/ Chadwell	0.51
Clockhouse Lane/ Cook Close	0.0	0.0	0.0	116	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.83
Warren Close/ Sherwood Mews	0.0	0.0	0.0	116	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.61
Water Lane/Tank Hill	0.0	0.0	0.0	116	Grays & West Thurrock/ Purfleet	0.60

These sites are mapped on **Map 33**, which highlights the concentration of amenity green space in certain parts of the Borough, and the lack of green space elsewhere. West Thurrock and Purfleet in particular have very little space of this description; Chadwell is comparatively well provided for.

The Council has determined that the space at Thames Drive, which scores 68.4% and is ranked at number 31 in this table, is the benchmark site against which others should be assessed. On this basis, 85 sites fall below the council's current quality threshold.

### ***Large Amenity Greenspaces***

The audit covered 81 sites that were 0.3 ha and above in size. Of these 27% (22) scored high for both quality and value; 25% (20) scored low for both quality and value; 23% (19) scored high for quality and low for value; and, 25% (20) scored low for quality and high for value.

The two highest scoring sites for quality are both in Brandon Groves, and both also score highly for value. Three sites failed to score for either quality or value because they were derelict land. Other low scoring sites included a number of roundabouts, which offer little more than visual amenity.

### ***Small Amenity Greenspaces between 0.2 ha and 0.3 ha.***

A total of 37 smaller sites were assessed. Of these 38% (14) scored high for both quality and value; 16% (6) scored low for both quality and value; 14% (5) scored high for quality and low for value; and, 32% (12) scored low for quality and high for value.

In the case of one site, Parkway, The Green scored 100% for both quality and value. Generally speaking scores were relatively high overall, reflecting the fact that these areas are reasonably well maintained and are located in areas that are otherwise deficient in open space.

The quality of amenity space varies widely throughout the borough, and most localities have amenity spaces of both high and low quality. However, the area of South Ockendon/Belhus has some of the best quality spaces including the Brandon Groves estate and the attractive Cullen Square, and many of the spaces in this area are of good

quality. Conversely both the areas of Purfleet and Tilbury contained low quality spaces and had some of the worst spaces in the borough. These include a site at the back of Water Lane in Purfleet next to the river, which was completely derelict, and a square behind houses at Northview Avenue, Tilbury which was devoid of grass cover, covered in tyre marks and sporting a dumped car. Another very large open space at the rear of houses in Moore Avenue in West Thurrock, is essentially derelict land used for fly tipping. Two sites in Chafford Hundred were very poor; one runs along the edge of a steep cliff and another is a strip of derelict land.

On the other hand some sites are well managed and offer considerable amenity value. Brandon Groves, a landscaped area in South Ockendon is a superb and well-managed site with many mature trees and a very spacious feeling. Of the ten highest scoring sites for quality in the borough, eight were in Brandon Groves. The site could be improved, however, by provision of more litter bins, especially dog bins, and some seating. Nevertheless this is a high quality site which also presents high value to local people.

Another excellent site representing high quality and high value is the amenity green at Parker Road, in Grays Riverside, ranked at 16. This is used extensively as a green corridor and has an attractive play area for children. Planting and grass cover were excellent as was the quality of seats and bins, but it was felt that the site needs a lighting scheme in the interests of safety.

Several sites in the borough represented high quality but their value was limited. One such site is Canberra Square in Tilbury, which scored 100% for quality, with an excellent planting scheme superbly maintained, but we understand that access is restricted to the volunteer who is responsible for maintaining it. The value of this site can only therefore be represented in visual terms; access is not permitted so it has no value for informal recreation. Similar situations exist with sites located in the centre of roundabouts, of which there are many across the borough, where planting and grass was of good quality but value can only be represented in visual terms.

Sites of low quality but high value include a site at Argent Street, Grays, near some high-rise flats. This (rank 50) is a locality that is clearly well-used, particularly as a kick about area, but is badly marred by poor quality grass and planting, extensive dog fouling, and the absence of lighting for an important pathway. This example illustrates that even space that

is of very poor quality can be highly valued (especially in the absence of alternatives). Such high value, low quality sites should be given high priority for improvements in order to maximise their potential.

Another site of low quality but high value is the site in Martin Road, Aveley (rank 66) which has play equipment and is well used by children. Vegetation and cleanliness are very poor and the only bins provided are for dog waste, which are not appropriate in an area used for children's play.



*Plate 11: Gatehope Drive Amenity Green Space, South Ockendon*

Amenity space is put under pressure by the need for space for car parking. Accommodating the private car, especially on larger estate developments, is a major problem. Some spaces have been surfaced to provide hard standing for cars, but parking on green space is a widespread problem limiting their wider amenity value and causing considerable damage to the surface. Even the best quality space such as The Green, South Ockendon has been damaged on one side by parking of vehicles. One solution might be to install wooden posts on the worst affected, although these would have a detrimental visual impact.

Some wide green areas alongside terraces of houses have suffered considerable damage and are practically bald as a result. A solution in an area affected badly, such as Ruskin Road, Chadwell St. Mary (ranked 56), would be to create a 'boulevard' with rationalised car parking and planting of trees.

To summarise, vegetation on amenity greens, though variable in quality over the borough, was often very good, with imaginative planting and winter colour much in evidence. Shrubbery is generally well maintained but often appearance is marred by blown-in litter, especially on sites adjacent to main roads. Improvements needed to amenity space include litter and dog bins, seating and, where appropriate, lighting.

### **5.5.3 Accessibility**

The majority of these sites are located in housing areas and are therefore easily accessible by foot to local residents and children in particular.

### **5.5.4 Conclusion**

The provision of amenity greenspaces is an important factor in the creation of individuality and a strong sense of place. Amenity open space provision is an essential part of any housing development, as it presents opportunities to introduce significant landscape elements necessary to produce visual relief and the softening of the built environment. It is important that amenity space is incorporated around development areas.

The provision of amenity greenspace in Thurrock is variable. The exemplar development is that of Brandon Groves, cited here as a case study. Some older housing areas retain significant areas of amenity space, which contributes to a strong sense of place. Elsewhere, the space has been eroded with some sites being used for development or being surfaced for car parking.

## **5.6 Standards**

### **5.6.1 Quantity**

The current Council standard requires 10% of the gross site area of any new development of 30 dwellings, or 0.8 hectares or more, to be set aside as open space, and equates this to 1.2 Ha per 1000 population. The Belhus case study, which is accepted as a reasonable level of provision, and which people seem to think adequate from the community consultation, has a provision of 0.73 Ha per 1000 people, but this excludes smaller spaces not surveyed in this study because they were below the size threshold. The NPFA standard suggests a combined spatial provision of 0.8 Ha per 1000 population including children's play space.

**We therefore recommend that the standard of provision for amenity greenspace is 0.8 Ha per 1000 people.**

### **5.6.2 Quality**

The quality standard for amenity greenspace is established as being the median score for the larger amenity sites and this is 64.5%. Two sites achieve this standard:

- Blackthorn Rd
- London Road/ Brennan Road

These sites should be seen as providing the benchmark of minimum levels of quality and sites below this level should be prioritised for improvement.

Thurrock Council's Aspiration for Amenity Greenspace is:

- Landscaping and maintenance should add enhancement to any existing or future community.
- Well maintained grass and trees.
- Space should be kept clean.

### **5.6.3 Accessibility**

The NPFA standard for Children's Playing Space includes the need for informal playing space within housing areas. The walking distance set for the smallest children's playing space (LAP) is 100 metres. The role and function of such spaces requires that no child under the age of 5 should have to cross a road to reach this type of space. This therefore sets the accessibility standard for amenity greenspace.



*Plate 12: Elm Road Amenity Green Space, Grays*

## 5.7 Deficiencies

### 5.7.1 Quantity

The deficiencies in provision of amenity greenspace for each settlement area, based on a standard of provision of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people, are shown in **Table 27** below.

**Table 27: Deficiencies in Amenity Greenspace by Settlement Area**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>2001 Population</b>	<b>Total Area (Ha) of Amenity Greenspace</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha) (@0.8)</b>	<b>Surplus/ Deficiency</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	52982	20.59	42.39	-21.80
Aveley/Ockendon	26056	20.3	20.84	-0.54
Tilbury/Chadwell	28124	27.12	22.50	+4.62
Stanford/Corringham	30339	8.09	24.27	-16.18
Rural Area	5627	1.82	4.50	-2.68
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>143128</b>	<b>77.92</b>	<b>114.50</b>	<b>-36.58</b>

### 5.8.1 Quantity

Deficiencies have been calculated for each phase of development up to 2021, based on the information about individual sites provided by the Urban Capacity Study and using the quantity standard for future provision of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people. This standard was applied to all the sites identified by the Urban Capacity Study. It should be noted that, in the Urban Capacity Study, density of development on each site was calculated on the basis of the previous standard of 10% of the site area, a standard that was applied only to sites that were above a particular size threshold.

Overall, the impact of new development is likely to result in an overall reduction in quantitative deficiencies; a deficiency of 37.85 Ha in 2006 decreases to a deficiency of 30.77 Ha by 2021. At the local level, provision in Tilbury/Chadwell remains in surplus throughout this period, but the situation in Grays/West Thurrock/Purfleet is relatively static with a deficiency of 24.35 Ha in 2006 reducing to only 23.43 Ha in 2021.

**Tables 28 a-d** show the additional area of amenity greenspace provided as a result of applying the proposed 0.8 Ha standard to the sites identified in the UCS for possible development. The new population-based standard calls for increased provision across Thurrock in all phases of development proposed by the UCS scenarios; this is particularly the case in the 2006-2011 development phase when applying the new standard to the UCS sites would call for an additional provision of almost 15 Ha.

It should be remembered that the total population for Thurrock will not simply increase by the influx of population that will be accommodated in new development. There is likely also to be a continuing trend towards smaller household sizes in the existing stock of housing and population increases during each phase of development will therefore reflect the balance between the influx of new population and changes in the existing population. In calculating the requirement for provision of amenity greenspace, the new standard of 8m<sup>2</sup> per person is applied to the projected population for each new development site. However, in assessing the overall impact of the new standard in terms of surplus/deficiency of provision, the standard is applied to the total population as derived from dwelling projections for Thurrock for the period 2006 to 2021 set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14).

Table 28a: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2006)

Settlement	2006 Population	Additional Area (Ha) Amenity Greenspace (8m <sup>2</sup> per person) <sup>16</sup>	Total Area (Ha) of Amenity Greenspace	Area standard (Ha) (@0.8) <sup>17</sup>	Surplus/ Deficiency
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	59744	2.85	23.44	47.80	-24.35
Aveley/Ockendon	25565	0.13	20.43	20.45	-02
Tilbury/Chadwell	27927	0.27	27.39	22.34	+5.05
Stanford/Corringham	29972	0.03	8.12	23.98	-15.86
Rural Area	5608	0.00	1.82	4.49	-2.67
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>148816</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>81.21</b>	<b>119.05</b>	<b>-37.85</b>

<sup>16</sup> The additional quantity of amenity greenspace has been calculated by applying the standard to the population that will be accommodated during this Phase on each of the new housing sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study.

<sup>17</sup> The total quantity of amenity greenspace required to meet the standard of 8m<sup>2</sup> per person. Projected populations used in this calculation are derived from dwelling projections for Thurrock set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14).

**Table 28b: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2011)**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>2011 Population</b>	<b>Additional Area (Ha) Amenity Greenspace (8m<sup>2</sup> per person)<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>Total Area (Ha) of Amenity Greenspace</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha) (@0.8)<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Surplus/ Deficiency</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	66769	10.90	34.34	53.42	-19.08
Aveley/Ockendon	25076	2.87	23.30	20.06	+3.24
Tilbury/Chadwell	27663	0.87	28.27	22.13	+6.14
Stanford/Corringham	29366	0.36	8.47	23.49	-15.02
Rural Area	5644	0.00	1.82	4.52	-2.70
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>154518</b>	<b>14.99</b>	<b>96.20</b>	<b>123.61</b>	<b>-27.42</b>

<sup>18</sup> The additional quantity of amenity greenspace has been calculated by applying the standard to the population that will be accommodated during this Phase on each of the new housing sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study.

<sup>19</sup> The total quantity of amenity greenspace required to meet the standard of 8m<sup>2</sup> per person. Projected populations used in this calculation are derived from dwelling projections for Thurrock set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14).

**Table 28c: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2016)**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>2016 Population</b>	<b>Additional Area (Ha) Amenity Greenspace (8m<sup>2</sup> per person)<sup>20</sup></b>	<b>Total Area (Ha) of Amenity Greenspace</b>	<b>Area standard (Ha) (@0.8)<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>Surplus/ Deficiency</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	72230	2.29	36.63	57.78	-21.15
Aveley/Ockendon	26944	0.12	23.42	21.56	+1.87
Tilbury/Chadwell	26810	0.44	28.70	21.45	+7.26
Stanford/Corringham	28780	0.11	8.58	23.02	-14.44
Rural Area	5462	0.00	1.82	4.37	-2.55
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>160226</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>99.16</b>	<b>128.18</b>	<b>-29.02</b>

<sup>20</sup> The additional quantity of amenity greenspace has been calculated by applying the standard to the population that will be accommodated during this Phase on each of the new housing sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study.

<sup>21</sup> The total quantity of amenity greenspace required to meet the standard of 8m<sup>2</sup> per person. Projected populations used in this calculation are derived from dwelling projections for Thurrock set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14).

Table 28d: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2021)

Settlement	2021 Population	Additional Area (Ha) Amenity Greenspace (8m <sup>2</sup> per person) <sup>22</sup>	Total Area (Ha) of Amenity Greenspace	Area standard (Ha) (@0.8) <sup>23</sup>	Surplus/ Deficiency
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	77948	2.29	38.92	62.36	-23.43
Aveley/Ockendon	26905	0.34	23.77	21.52	+2.24
Tilbury/Chadwell	28120	0.70	29.40	22.50	+6.91
Stanford/Corringham	28305	0.02	8.60	22.64	-14.05
Rural Area	5319	0.00	1.82	4.26	-2.44
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>166597</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>102.51</b>	<b>133.28</b>	<b>-30.77</b>

<sup>22</sup> The additional quantity of amenity greenspace has been calculated by applying the standard to the population that will be accommodated during this Phase on each of the new housing sites identified in the Urban Capacity Study.

<sup>23</sup> The total quantity of amenity greenspace required to meet the standard of 8m<sup>2</sup> per person. Projected populations used in this calculation are derived from dwelling projections for Thurrock set out in the draft East of England Plan (RSS14).

The tabulations include provision for two large releases of green space at Hillside Club and Treetops School which have already been allocated for extra green space in the Urban Capacity Study. These come into play between 2006 and 2011.

### **5.8.2 Potential Solutions**

New provision is only likely to be achieved through on-site provision as part of new development. Off-site contributions could nevertheless be used to address issues of quality and accessibility in relation to existing provision. It is important that these informal open spaces together with children's play provision are integrated into the overall layout of new development. As a guideline, 0.8 ha of amenity greenspace equates to approximately 20 square metres per household. Equipped play areas would need to be provided in addition to this requirement.

## **5.9 Actions and recommendations**

Amenity space should play a vital role in creating a more attractive townscape and pleasant living environment. Amenity greenspace to be used for informal active recreation should be designed into the overall housing layout and not proposed as an afterthought involving leftover land. These areas must be accessible to all members of the public.

### *Recommendation One:*

Thurrock Council should consider the development of amenity space criteria, which take into account the following factors:

- **Context** – design of amenity space should be appropriate, create a sense of place; and link to other green spaces both visually and physically for wildlife, pedestrians, cyclists, and in terms of urban design.
- **Townscape Value** – amenity space should play a positive role in providing a setting for adjacent buildings.
- **Accessibility** – the location of amenity space must consider access for all users. Where amenity space may also be used as casual play space,

developers should be required to consider how children will access the site from the wider area, taking into account dangers such as highways and turning areas for vehicles. Sites should be accessible directly from pedestrian routes and separated from roads.

- **Child Safety** - Where children will be required to cross a road within a residential development to access an amenity space, measures to reduce traffic speed and traffic calming such as Home Zones should be employed and raise awareness of drivers to the activity of children.
- **Landscaping** – is an integral aspect of the design of amenity spaces. Opportunities should be taken to introduce a more natural environment using natural features such as rocks and contouring to create more interesting spaces. The planting scheme must consider the overall security of the site, allowing unobstructed views into the site and restricting potential hiding places. Opportunities should be sought to protect, enhance and create wildlife habitats, enhancing biodiversity.
- **Safety and Security** – a safe and secure area of amenity space will be overlooked by adjacent properties and located on well used pedestrian routes, and where appropriate may be lit. The use of defensive planting techniques should be considered where these can assist in community safety and security.
- **Ownership** – amenity spaces should, wherever possible be designed in partnership with members of the community who will use it, to help foster a sense of ownership and local pride.
- **Public Art** – amenity spaces may provide an appropriate location for the display of public art.

*Recommendation Two:*

An appropriate amount of well located high quality amenity greenspace within new housing development should be secured through adherence to the standards proposed.

*Recommendation Three:*

That further work, beyond the scope of this study, be undertaken to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.



*Plate 13: The Green, South Ockendon*

**Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
0.8 Ha per 1,000 population	Quality score of 64.5%	Space within 100m of home and without the need to cross a road.

## **6 Children's Playing Space**

### **6.1 Definition**

'Play' has been defined<sup>24</sup> as freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated behaviour that actively engages the child. This definition is widely recognised and understood in the play sector. In lay terms it says that children are playing when they are doing what they want to do, in the way they want to and for their own reasons.

The term 'play provision' is used to describe settings whose primary aim is that children should play there. This report is concerned principally with play provision which is equipped although children often play in areas that are not equipped. In general, play provision can be seen as having open access where children can come and go as they please. In fact a study carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1996<sup>25</sup> indicates that just 12% of outdoor play by children occurs in equipped play areas; in contrast, nearly half of all play was at that time in the street or on the pavement, and 18% on public open space including amenity space, showing that this provision offers significant capacity for children's play. In a holistic sense, therefore, children's play provision is not just about equipped playgrounds, but also about enabling children to play within their immediate neighbourhood.

Playgrounds and play areas are located in parks, playing fields and other public open spaces or in housing estates, where they have been designed into the development plan, or included when the area has been re-developed or renovated.

### **6.2 Strategic Context**

In research carried out by the MORI Social Research Institute for the Audit Commission in 2001, adults ranked 'activities for young people' as the single

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<sup>24</sup> Children's Play Council (2002) Making the Case for Play

<sup>25</sup> Child's Play: facilitating play on housing estates; Rob Wheway and Alison Millward, JRF 1997

most requested improvement in local services. When asked what most needed improving in their local area, more than two in five people (43%) pinpointed 'activities for teenagers'. This was followed by 'Low level of crime' (29%), 'Public Transport' (27%) and 'Facilities for young children' (25%). These results were confirmed by the Best Value Performance indicator research exploring resident satisfaction and quality of life, which prioritised crime and anti-social behaviour, and activities for young people, among the areas most needing attention from councils.

The Children's Play Council cite the following emotional, educational and socio-psychological benefits of play:<sup>26</sup>

- Play promotes children's development, learning, creativity and independence.
- Play keeps children healthy and active - active children become active adults.
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities and their interests.
- Play is therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances, such as emotional stress or medical treatment.
- Play gives children the chance to let off steam and have fun.

Play is regarded as providing both immediate benefits to participants in terms of a sense of freedom, fun, and release of energy. There are also longer-term strategic individual and social benefits, such as ensuring successful development into adulthood.

For many years, play provision has been given low priority. Many play projects have been neglected. Playgrounds, like other green spaces, have become run down and degraded, and equipment has too often been removed rather than replaced. The last few years have seen a growing recognition of the need for more and better maintained play facilities and opportunities.

### **6.3 Assessing Children's Playing Space Needs**

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) has produced minimum standards for the provision of children's play facilities. These standards are recognised as one yardstick against which local authorities can judge the distribution and content of play areas.

The NPFA identify three categories of play area: -

- Local Area for Play (LAP) - approximately 100 sq m of unequipped space for young children under the age of about 6, for play activities close to home. A LAP may have limited facilities such as a sand pit, and should include measures to prevent dog fouling. Its catchment area constitutes 1 minute walking time for an accompanied child or approximately 100m walking distance
- Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) – A small play area, approximately 400 sq m, with about five pieces of suitable play equipment (e.g. slides) and safety surfacing. It is aimed at the needs of children over 4 and up to around 8 years of age. Its catchment area is 5 minutes walking time for an accompanied child, or approximately 400m walking distance.
- Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) - A larger play area, approximately 1,000 sq m with about 8 types of suitable play equipment (e.g. slides, basketball ring or ball wall) for 8-14 year olds. Facilities for wheeled and ball play should be provided. The ideal catchment area is 15 minutes walking time for either accompanied or unaccompanied children which is about 1000m walking distance.

The advantages of this "Standard" are considered to be that: -

- It provides a convenient and generally accepted basis for assessing local demand;
- It is simple to use in monitoring progress towards meeting a notional target; and,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid

- It removes uncertainty when negotiating appropriate levels of provision in new housing developments.

However, it also has some disadvantages: -

- It lacks flexibility by imposing uniform level of provision over widely differing population catchments, taking no account of the local characteristics.
- It takes little or no account of the quality of play provision nor, more importantly, play value within each site.
- It is based on purely gross population numbers and takes no account of the number of children who might wish to use a facility.

The NPFA's population-based children's playing space standard<sup>27</sup> comprises:

- Outdoor equipped playgrounds for children of whatever age; other play facilities for children which offer specific opportunities for outdoor play, such as adventure playgrounds: 0.2 - 0.3 hectares per 1,000 population;
- Casual or informal play space within housing areas: 0.4 - 0.5 hectares per 1,000 population.

The NPFA's 0.6 - 0.8 ha of children's play space per thousand population is based on a notional population density of around 32 children aged 4 – 14 per hectare.

Where play areas are provided, their equipment and surfacing should comply with European Standards BS EN 1176, Playground equipment, and BS EN 1177, Impact Absorbing Playground Surfacing. These Standards are used by the Health and Safety Executive in order to determine whether play area owners have taken reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children using them.

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<sup>27</sup> The Six Acre Standard, NPFA, 1992

## **6.4 Consultation – key findings in relation to children’s play space**

### **6.4.1 Quantity**

A majority of residents agree that there is “plenty of space where children can play”, but this majority is just 54% of residents, and a substantial minority (24%) disagree with this view. Residents of Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet are less likely to agree with this view (just 41% do so, in comparison with around 56-60% elsewhere), suggesting that Grays residents feel underserved in this respect; disagreement is highest in Grays (35%) and also in the rural area where one in three residents disagrees.

The most popular play areas are those at Grays Beach and Corringham, but the levels of use and the popularity of the main playgrounds suggest that the local provision of play facilities is inadequate. Around half of local residents (46%) have used a children’s playground in the past year, and this rises to three in five residents with children at home. Just one in seven (14%) use a playground once a week or more, though, indicating that playground visits are not an everyday activity, and implying that a special trip is needed for many residents. Playground visiting is a much less frequent activity for residents in rural areas, although the proportions who never visit do not vary much at all, suggesting that quantity and accessibility are the issues, rather than demand from rural children.

Younger children appear to be better catered for than older children, as the likelihood of visiting reduces as parents’ age increases. Older children also told us themselves that provision for their age-group was insufficient. There is a demand for both formal, equipped space and for less formal space, and also a demand among older children for more demanding and challenging equipment and activities.

Children themselves told us that their primary needs were for

- Space to play (including but not limited to space to play sports)
- Space to socialize
- Space to learn about the environment

- Spaces that are, and also feel, safe
- Space (for older teenagers) for reflection and reminiscence

Younger children are looking for a better mix of formal and informal play opportunities, with logs to play on, grassy hills to run up and down, and the like. Older children need more challenge in the form of age-appropriate equipment, such as that provided by adventure playgrounds. Older children want more local spaces to play sports, but also places where they can sit and talk with friends where they will neither intimidate younger children and adults, nor be vulnerable to intimidation themselves. They are aware that their collective behaviour can sometimes appear threatening.

#### **6.4.2 Quality**

Opinions of quality vary widely; one in three residents (33%) say the range of equipment is good or excellent, but one in five (22%) say this is poor, no doubt reflecting a variable quality of provision in their local facility. Higher opinions of range of equipment arise in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and Tilbury/Chadwell, where over 40% of residents say the range is excellent or good; this proportion falls to just 20% of rural residents, and 29% of rural residents say the range of equipment is poor.

The condition of equipment is a similar concern. One in three residents (33%) believes this is excellent or good, but a quarter (25%) challenge this. Equipment condition is a concern particularly in the rural area, where 39% of residents describe it as below average or poor, and less of an issue in Stanford/Corringham where less than a fifth (19%) do so. In fact, the small number of rural residents generally give lower scores on children's play than those in urban areas. Children we spoke to confirm the need for updating and renewal of a substantial amount of children's play equipment.

Cleanliness standards are also mixed. Overall, 36% of residents say their play area is excellent or good for cleanliness, but this falls to just 26% of

residents in Tilbury/Chadwell, in marked contrast to the 42% of Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet residents who score cleanliness highly.

Children and young people told us that they were concerned about the worn-out nature of much of their play equipment, about graffiti on the equipment and on other surfaces, litter and the lack of bins for dog poo.

Children are concerned about their safety when at play. They want an environment that is free of hazards such as broken glass, but which is also safe from adults who might threaten (such as strangers, and also “undesirables” using the spaces). Children want separated space where their activities do not impinge on younger children (this causes tensions with parents of younger children) and separation from dogs and their by-products. Some older children even want wardens, to act as referees in disputes with other space users.

### **6.4.3 Accessibility**

Children’s play facilities are used primarily by younger parents, but are also used by older people, presumably as grandparents of the users. There is a large proportion of users who only visit occasionally – 19% visit monthly or less often, but do visit – suggesting that there is an unfulfilled demand here. Accessibility seems to be a particular issue in the rural area, where visit frequency is rather lower than in the urban areas. Facilities for older children are especially limited and accessibility is a serious issue, but there is a strong desire emerging in the research study for more, and better equipped, play areas for all age-groups of children.

Younger children will tend to visit only space that is closer to home, unless accompanied by an adult. Older children tend to roam far and wide.

## 6.5 Audit

### 6.5.1 Quantity

The audit was limited to equipped play areas, and did not cover amenity space (which is addressed elsewhere in this report) or provision for older children such as the teenage shelters, which were highlighted by Thames Valley Police as an example of good practice in 1999<sup>28</sup>. The audit is not specific as to measurable area of play space and we have therefore examined play standards with regard to equipment rather than spatial area.

There are currently 69 sites with children's play equipment in Thurrock. These sites are identified on **Map 34**. The number of sites located in each settlement is shown here:

**Table 29: Play areas within each settlement**

Location	No. of play areas
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	31
Aveley/Ockendon	11
Tilbury/Chadwell	15
Stanford/Corringham	9
Rural	3
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>69</b>

The level of provision of play areas in Thurrock is broadly comparable with other local authorities. There is a tendency for there to be fewer play areas in more rural areas. The level of provision in neighbouring Chelmsford is slightly higher; Chelmsford has 88 sites in total.

It is perhaps more relevant to analyse this provision in relation to the number of children between the ages of 5 and 16. This is shown in **Table 30**. The number of children per play area is highest in Stanford/Corringham which suggests that this area is less well provided for than other areas, particularly

<sup>28</sup> Youth shelters and sports systems, Roger Hampshire and Mark Wilkinson, TVP, 1999

Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, and in comparison to Thurrock as a whole. The level of provision is highest in the Rural Area.

Measured in this way, play provision in Thurrock is relatively good in comparison with other local authorities. Whilst it is not as high as in the neighbouring authority of Chelmsford, it is at about the same level as the more rural authorities of Bridgnorth and Wyre Forest and is much higher than the urban authorities of Coventry and Dudley.

**Table 30: Children Aged 5 to 16 per Play Area**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Children per Play Area</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	269
Aveley/Ockendon	398
Tilbury/Chadwell	374
Stanford/Corringham	539
Rural	266
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>336</b>
Bridgnorth	340
Wyre Forest	340
Walsall	470
Coventry	1600
Bournemouth	285
Oxford	190
Dudley	834
Chelmsford	248
Wakefield	333
Maidstone	191

The current distribution of play provision has evolved gradually over time. There was a major investment in play equipment in 1991 and most of this equipment is still in use and forms a large proportion of the total existing

stock, although additional or replacement equipment has been installed subsequently.

It has not been possible to classify children's play spaces in terms of the NPFA classification, because the installation of play equipment has not usually been targeted to meet the needs of particular age groups. Children's play areas often have a range of equipment to meet the needs of younger age groups as well as older children.

All of the 25 parks identified within the audit have children's play areas. The remaining play areas can be found on smaller areas of open space or within residential areas.

Play areas vary in the numbers of items of equipment available. Grays Beach, which has 42 items of equipment, cannot reasonably be equated to Douglas which has 1 item. It is therefore appropriate to examine the availability of equipment in relation to the numbers of children who will use it. There are 712 items of play equipment in Thurrock. This equates to 1 piece of equipment for every 33 children aged 5 -16.

Provision of children's play space per child between the ages of 5 and 16 for the settlements is shown in **Table 31** below.

**Table 31: Play Equipment Per Child**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Children Aged 5 to 16 (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Equipment per Settlement</b>	<b>Children per Item</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	8338	287	29
Aveley/Ockendon	3977	104	38
Tilbury/Chadwell	5241	178	29
Stanford/Corringham	4853	118	41
Rural	799	25	32
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>23208</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>33</b>

Provision is better in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, Tilbury/Chadwell, and in the Rural Area, than elsewhere; the area that is least well provided for is Stanford/Corringham. This is interesting, as the pressure for improvement in play comes primarily from Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and the Rural area; in fact, the perceived quality of play provision in Stanford/Corringham is higher than elsewhere at least in the view of adults, although children in Stanford/Corringham took several photos of play space that was heavily criticised by them. Fewer children visit play areas unaccompanied nowadays, and parents' perceptions are perhaps more influenced by the quality of the provision than by its accessibility in terms of localness. This does not however obviate the need for good quality open space in close proximity to housing areas.

A breakdown of the supply of equipment on a settlement basis is shown in **Table 33**. This also seeks to develop a hierarchy of play provision based on the quantity of equipment in the playspace and its relative attractiveness to children. Buffer zones are shown for each playspace in a similar way to the NPFA's designations for different types of playspace. Children's playspaces in Thurrock do not conform to the principle of provision on the basis of age group so the level of hierarchy simply relates to the level of provision. The basis for the hierarchy is shown in **Table 32**.

**Table 32: Criteria for different categories of Children's Playing Space in Thurrock.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Items of Equipment</b>	<b>Buffer Zone<sup>29</sup></b>
Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 to 4	1 minute walk
Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 to 8	5 minutes walk
Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	9+	15 minutes walk

<sup>29</sup> Taking into account barriers to access such as major roads, railways, watercourses etc.

**Table 33: A Proposed Hierarchy of Play Provision for Thurrock**

<b>Play Area</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Number of Items of Play Equipment</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Catchment (Walking)</b>
Kilverts	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	0	Unclassified	N/A
Elm Road	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	0	Unclassified	N/A
Bruces Wharf	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	1	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Douglas	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	1	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Garrison B	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	1	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Plymouth	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	1	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Marine Court	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	2	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
North Stifford	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	2	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
River Court	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	2	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Seabrook	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	2	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Kier Hardie	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	3	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Southview	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	3	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Drake	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	4	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Felipe	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	4	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Martin Road	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	5	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Purfleet Rec	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	5	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Spider	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	5	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Garrison Shops	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	7	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes

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Gilbert	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	9	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
East Thurrock Rd	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	10	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Highhouse	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	10	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
East Street	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	12	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Hillside	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	12	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Long Lane	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	13	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Hathaway	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	14	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Dellafield	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	15	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Palmerston	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	17	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Grays Town Park	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	18	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Parker Road	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	19	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
West Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	19	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Blackshots Rec	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	29	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Beach	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	42	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Peartree	Aveley/Ockendon	1	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Cruik	Aveley/Ockendon	4	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Usk	Aveley/Ockendon	6	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Aveley Rec	Aveley/Ockendon	8	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Quince Tree	Aveley/Ockendon	10	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Bonnygate Woods	Aveley/Ockendon	10	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes

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Uplands	Aveley/Ockendon	11	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Brannets Wood	Aveley/Ockendon	16	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
South Ockendon Rec	Aveley/Ockendon	17	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Dilkes	Aveley/Ockendon	21	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
West Tilbury	Tilbury/Chadwell	3	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Colne	Tilbury/Chadwell	3	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Cowper	Tilbury/Chadwell	5	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Gooderham	Tilbury/Chadwell	5	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Coalhouse	Tilbury/Chadwell	6	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Frome	Tilbury/Chadwell	8	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Chadwell Rec	Tilbury/Chadwell	9	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
St Francis	Tilbury/Chadwell	9	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Koala Park	Tilbury/Chadwell	10	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
East Tilbury	Tilbury/Chadwell	11	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Tilbury Leisure	Tilbury/Chadwell	14	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Linford	Tilbury/Chadwell	16	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Gobions	Tilbury/Chadwell	17	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Tilbury Rec	Tilbury/Chadwell	23	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Aluric Close	Tilbury/Chadwell	39	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Billet Rec	Stanford/Corringham	3	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Fobbing	Stanford/Corringham	4	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute

Ruskin Road	Stanford/Corringham	5	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Park Road	Stanford/Corringham	10	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Rose valley	Stanford/Corringham	15	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Stanford Rec	Stanford/Corringham	15	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Corringham Rec	Stanford/Corringham	15	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Hardie Park	Stanford/Corringham	19	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Corringham Town Park	Stanford/Corringham	32	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes
Orsett	Rural Area	4	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	1 minute
Bulphan	Rural Area	7	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	5 minutes
Horndon	Rural Area	14	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace	15 minutes

**Table 34** shows that all the Urban Areas have a mix of types of play space. The majority of the sites in each Urban Area fall into the largest category apart from a relatively large number of Toddler Playspaces in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet. There are only three play areas in the Rural Area, one of each type.

**Table 34: Summary of Types of Play Space**

Settlement Area	Types of Playspace		
	Thurrock Toddler Playspace	Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace	Large Thurrock Equipped Playspace
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	12	4	14
Aveley/Ockendon	2	2	6
Tilbury/Chadwell	2	4	9

Stanford/Corringham	2	1	6
Rural Area	1	1	1

This data leads us towards an observation that there may be a shortfall of Small Thurrock Equipped Playspace across the board (especially in Grays, but not only there) and of Toddler Playspace beyond Grays. The deficiency maps clarify this further.

### **6.5.2 Quality and Value of Children’s Play Areas**

Children’s play areas in Thurrock are inspected on an annual basis using the Playsafe assessment criteria, which score children’s play areas according to Site Quality and Play Value. These scores have been used to define the Quality and Value of each play space. The methodology is specified in **Appendix 2.4**.

The assessment of both quality and value is determined by whether the score achieved is above or below the median and the results of this analysis is shown in **Table 35** below (where the spaces are listed by area, but the ranking shown is for Thurrock as a whole). A summary of the scores can be found in **Appendix 4.6**.

In addition, the quality and value scores were combined to give an overall score and these were then ranked to provide an indication of the best and worst scoring locations.

**Table 35: Quality and Value Assessment for Children’s Playing Spaces**

<b>Play Area</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Quality</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Beach	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	1
Hillside	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	4
Blackshots Rec (2)	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	5

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

West Thurrock (2)	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	7
Palmerston (2)	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	9
Plymouth	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	10
Gilbert	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	13
Garrison Shops	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	15
Garrison B	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	16
Spider	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	18
Felipe	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	19
Blackshots Rec (1)	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	23
Drake	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	25
Kier Hardie	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	26
Palmerston (1)	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	29
West Thurrock (1)	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	31
Grays Town Park	High	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	32
Parker Road	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	35
Douglas	High	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	41
Dellafield	Low	High	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	50
River Court	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	51
Marine Court	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	52
Southview	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	53

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Bruces Wharf	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	56
Highhouse	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	58
East Street	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	59
Hathaway	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	61
Long Lane	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	62
East Thurrock Rd	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	63
Martin Road	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	66
North Stifford	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	67
Purfleet Rec	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	69
Seabrook	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	70
Elm Road	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	71
Kilverts	Low	Low	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	73
Quince Tree (2)	High	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	8
Bonnygate Woods	High	High	Aveley/Ockendon	11
Quince Tree (1)	High	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	12
Cruik	High	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	20
Brannets Wood	Low	High	Aveley/Ockendon	27
Aveley Rec	High	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	28
Dilkes	High	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	33
South Ockendon Rec	High	High	Aveley/Ockendon	34
Usk	Low	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	45
Uplands	Low	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	46
Peartree	Low	Low	Aveley/Ockendon	72
Koala Park	High	High	Tilbury/Chadwell	2
Coalhouse	High	High	Tilbury/Chadwell	3

**Community Needs and Open Spaces Study - Thurrock Council**

Gobions	High	High	Tilbury/Chadwell	6
Aluric Close	High	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	14
Tilbury Rec	High	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	21
Linford	High	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	39
Frome	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	42
Chadwell Rec	High	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	43
Tilbury Leisure	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	44
St Francis	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	48
West Tilbury	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	54
East Tilbury	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	55
Gooderham	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	60
Cowper	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	65
Colne	Low	Low	Tilbury/Chadwell	68
Corringham Town Park	High	High	Stanford/Corringham	17
Hardie Park	High	High	Stanford/Corringham	22
Stanford Rec	High	High	Stanford/Corringham	24
Corringham Rec	Low	High	Stanford/Corringham	30
Ruskin Road	Low	High	Stanford/Corringham	36
Rosevalley	Low	High	Stanford/Corringham	37
Fobbing	Low	Low	Stanford/Corringham	40
Park Road	Low	Low	Stanford/Corringham	47
Billet Rec	Low	Low	Stanford/Corringham	64
Horndon	Low	High	Rural Area	38
Bulphan	Low	Low	Rural Area	49
Orsett	Low	Low	Rural Area	57

Four sites have been assessed as split sites because part of the site has relatively new equipment installed whilst the remainder has significantly older equipment. These sites have been labeled (1) and (2).

The highest scoring children's playing space is Grays Beach (Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet), although Koala Park (Tilbury/Chadwell) is assessed to be of equivalent quality. The highest scoring site in Stanford/Corringham is

Corringham Town Park although this only ranks 17 in the overall scores. Seventeen sites have both high value and high quality. These sites have equipment in good condition that has been installed within the last five years. The location of these sites also contributes to higher site factor scores.

However, there are 31 sites that are assessed as being of both low quality and low value. The majority of these are the sites with older equipment, which pre-date the introduction of European Standards and which also tends to be in the worst condition. These sites also score less well in terms of site factors. Two sites, Elm Road and Kilverts, fail to achieve any score for value.

There are 15 sites that are considered to be of high value but are of low quality and 6 sites that have high quality but low value.

### **6.5.3 Accessibility**

Accessibility to children's play areas is shown on **Map 34**, which indicates the catchment areas for each play space, and shows that when this hierarchy is employed, the majority of housing areas in the borough have access to a children's playing space. **Maps 35 - 38** provide details of the main areas of housing in the borough.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The quantity of children's playing spaces and the number of items per child in Thurrock is relatively good compared to other local authorities. Provision is also reasonably well distributed relative to the population of children under 14 years old. The distribution of children's play areas across the borough relates well to the main housing areas and most children would appear to live within a reasonable distance of a playing space. However, the quality and value of the children's playing spaces and the equipment stationed within them is of greater concern. Much of the equipment is old and fails to meet current standards. A lack of investment in new equipment has led to a deteriorating stock, some of which is having to be removed on safety grounds.

## **6.7 Standards**

### **6.7.1 Quantity**

It is recommended that the current level of provision of children's play equipment of 1 piece of equipment to every 33 children aged 5-16 years should be maintained. This should be augmented by good quality informal play space provided through amenity greenspace, the role of which in children's play should not be overlooked or minimised.

### **6.7.2 Quality**

It is recommended that the location of children's playing spaces in future should be assessed against the guideline criteria set out in **Appendix 2.1**. This is to ensure that in future children's playing spaces are:

- reasonably close to home;
- within sight of walking or cycling 'desire lines' or main travel routes;
- in spaces where there is 'informal oversight' from nearby houses or other well-used public spaces;
- in locations identified by children and young people as appropriate.
- Capable of being used for a variety of play activity, including sports
- Embedded in the community and
- Provide encounters with the natural environment

We also recommend that all play equipment should comply with European Standards BS EN 1176, Playground equipment, and BS EN 1177, Impact absorbing playground surfacing.

### **6.7.3 Accessibility**

**Table 36** shows the accessibility standards for children's playing spaces. The aim should be for children within each age band to be able to have easy safe access to the appropriate playing space within the distances specified. These

should be located on sites that ensure that children do not have to cross a major road to gain access to the space. We again draw attention, though, to the need to augment equipped play space with local informal space, a particularly important requirement for children under 5.

**Table 36: Hierarchy of provision for Children’s Playing Spaces with Walking Distances.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Items of Equipment</b>	<b>Buffer Zone<sup>30</sup></b>
Toddler Playspace	1 to 4	1 minute walk
Small Equipped Playspace	5 to 8	5 minutes walk
Large Equipped Playspace	9+	15 minutes walk



*Plate 14: Grays Beach*

<sup>30</sup> Taking account of barriers to access such as major roads, railways, watercourses etc.

## 6.8 Deficiencies

### 6.8.1 Quantity

**Table 37** shows the level of deficiency for items of equipment for each settlement when set against our recommended standard.

**Table 37: Deficiencies of Play Equipment**

Settlement	Number of Items of Play Equipment	Children Aged 5 to 16 (2001 Census)	Children per Item	Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard	Deficiency of Items of Equipment
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	287	8338	29	256	
Aveley/Ockendon	104	3977	38	122	-18
Tilbury/Chadwell	178	5241	29	161	
Stanford/Corringham	118	4853	41	149	-31
Rural Area	25	799	32	25	

Two settlement areas show a deficiency of provision on the basis of the recommended standard of 33 children per item of equipment: Aveley/Ockendon and Stanford/Corringham.

### 6.8.2 Accessibility

**Map 39** shows the location of equipped children's play areas with 400 metre catchment areas. The 400 metre catchment is based on the fact that Thurrock's play areas provide equipment for a variety of age ranges and are therefore not age specific. Children will travel about 400m to an equipped playground, but only 200m. to an unequipped area<sup>31</sup>.

The map shows that there is a good level of accessibility in all the settlement areas. The main deficiencies in terms of access are these:

**Table 38: Areas of Deficiency in Equipped Children’s Play Provision**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Area of Deficiency</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	West Thurrock, South Chafford, Grays.
Aveley/Ockendon	Area to east of South Road, South Ockendon including Brandon Groves, North Stifford.
Tilbury/Chadwell	Parts of Chadwell St Mary. Parts of Tilbury
Stanford/Corringham	Parts of Stanford-le-Hope.
Rural Area	Horndon-on-the -Hill

Some play areas, however, have only a very limited range of equipment and the items contained may not be appropriate for the age profile of children living within the catchment. This means that not all children will have access to play equipment that they would use even though they live within 400 metres of an equipped children’s play space. The accessibility criteria must therefore be tempered with a consideration of the range of equipment on offer at any given site.

There has not been any assessment of the location of the equipped children’s play spaces. In the right location, an average or even a poorly-designed space can be well used if not well valued. But a well-designed space, in the wrong place, is likely to fail.

## **6.9 Projections**

Analysis of the Urban Capacity Study reveals the impact of proposed new development in relation to the existing provision of equipped children’s play spaces and to the areas of current deficiency.

### **6.9.1 Quantity**

Overall the impact of new development will be to make the existing quantitative deficiencies worse. There is no specific information available on the projected numbers of children between the ages of 5 and 16 for the

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<sup>31</sup> Research carried out for the report Children at Play, DOE Bulletin 27

individual settlements so we have assumed that the age structure of local populations will remain consistent with the current structure of the areas concerned. The figures are shown in **Table 39** below.

**Table 39: Projected numbers of Children 5 to 15 in 2021**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Children Aged 5 to 16 (2001 Census)</b>	<b>Total Population 2001</b>	<b>% Aged 5 to 16</b>	<b>Total Population 2021</b>	<b>Projected Children Aged 5 to 16</b>	<b>Increase/ Decrease</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	8338	52982	16%	77948	12267	3929
Aveley/Ockendon	3977	26056	15%	26905	4107	130
Tilbury/Chadwell	5241	28124	19%	28120	5240	-1
Stanford/Corringham	4853	30339	16%	28305	4528	-325
Rural Area	799	5627	14%	5319	755	-44
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>23208</b>	<b>143128</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>166598</b>	<b>27014</b>	<b>3806</b>

The child population is projected to remain fairly static for all settlements apart from Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, which will increase by 3,929 (47%) by 2021. The additional requirement this creates is shown in **Table 40**. It will be noted that population change since 2001 has already triggered deficiencies in some areas that were adequately served against the 2001 figures.

**Table 40a: Future Projections for Children’s Play Equipment (2006)**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Number of Items of Play Equipment</b>	<b>Children Aged 5 to 16 (2006)</b>	<b>Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard</b>	<b>Additional Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard 2006</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	282	9402	288	6
Aveley/Ockendon	109	3902	120	11
Tilbury/Chadwell	178	5204	160	-18
Stanford/Corringham	118	4794	147	29
Rural Area	25	796	24	-1
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>24099</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>27</b>

**Table 40b: Future Projections for Children’s Play Equipment (2011)**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Number of Items of Play Equipment</b>	<b>Children Aged 5 to 16 (2011)</b>	<b>Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard</b>	<b>Additional Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard 2011</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	282	10508	322	40
Aveley/Ockendon	109	3827	117	8
Tilbury/Chadwell	178	5155	158	-20
Stanford/Corringham	118	4697	144	26
Rural Area	25	801	25	0
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>24989</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>55</b>

**Table 40c: Future Projections for Children’s Play Equipment (2016)**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Number of Items of Play Equipment</b>	<b>Children Aged 5 to 16 (2016)</b>	<b>Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard</b>	<b>Additional Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard 2016</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	282	11367	349	67
Aveley/Ockendon	109	4113	126	17
Tilbury/Chadwell	178	4996	153	-25
Stanford/Corringham	118	4604	141	23
Rural Area	25	776	24	-1
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>25980</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>81</b>

**Table 40d: Future Projections for Children’s Play Equipment (2021)**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Number of Items of Play Equipment</b>	<b>Children Aged 5 to 16 (2021)</b>	<b>Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard</b>	<b>Additional Items of Equipment Required to meet Standard 2021</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	282	12267	376	94
Aveley/Ockendon	109	4107	126	17
Tilbury/Chadwell	178	5240	161	-17
Stanford/Corringham	118	4528	139	21
Rural Area	25	755	23	-2
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>27013</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>113</b>

These tables show that, using the estimated population projections, the deficiency in items of equipment increases from 27 in 2001 to 113 in 2021 for the whole of Thurrock. With Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet being the only area with a significant population change over the five-year intervals, this area is the only one which will have a large change in deficiency, rising from 6 items deficiency in 2006 to 113 in 2021.

### **6.9.2 Quality**

There is an ageing existing stock of play equipment in Thurrock and this will require replacement in addition to any new provision.

Thurrock Council's Aspiration for Equipped Children's Playing Space is to make sure that any new play equipment conforms to European Standard BS EN 1176 and that surfacing conforms to the EN 1177 standard. The Council wishes to bring play equipment up to a quality score of 22 based on the NPFA assessment criteria.

### **6.9.3 Accessibility**

**Map 39** shows the impact of proposed new development on existing play catchment areas. In Grays and West Thurrock a significant proportion of new development will not lie within 400 metres of an existing equipped children's play area; **Map 40** shows this in greater detail. On site provision in conjunction with any residential development here will be essential.

## **6.10 Actions and recommendations**

### *Recommendation One:*

A play strategy is needed to meet the requirements of BVPI 115, which sets out in detail the ODPM's expectations of local authorities' play strategies.

### *Recommendation Two:*

Thurrock Council should review the proposed standards for Children's Play provision in the light of the emerging Greater London Council standards for provision. The approach to children's play provision for new housing development should follow the following three step standard approach:

#### *Step One:*

Assessment of accessibility and nature of development:

1. Calculate Child Yields from development based on:
  - Mix of Unit sizes
  - Tenure
  - Types of Dwellings
2. Apply the Location/Accessibility distance criteria specified in the proposed Thurrock standard.

*Step Two:*

Apply the quantity standard.

*Step Three:*

Apply the quality guidelines listed here:

### ***Design Guidelines - What makes a good play space?***

**Location** is probably the single most important success factor for outdoor play spaces. In the right location, an average or even a poorly-designed space can be well used if not well valued. But a well-designed space, in the wrong place, is likely to fail. The key feature is the physical relationship between the space and the wider built environment that children spend time in. A good location will be:

- reasonably close to home;
- within sight of walking or cycling 'desire lines' or main
- in spaces where there is 'informal oversight' from nearby houses or other well-used public spaces;
- in locations identified by children and young people as appropriate.

This means that play spaces are best located:

- at or near a busy entrance of a park, not a long way inside;
- in the middle of a housing estate, within view of the housing, not on the edge;
- near to other well used facilities such as shops, cafes and public transport.

The detailed location will vary depending on the age group who are likely to use the space. Older young people may wish their spaces to be less 'overlooked' than younger children. It might be important to locate spaces for older and younger children close together to allow older young people to watch over their younger friends or relatives. Decisions about location will often require compromises, for example, some residents may resist the idea of children's playing space near to their homes. Consultation with children and young people and with residents can help to overcome these difficulties. However, there is a risk that the space will fail if children's views are ignored

**Accessibility** – all areas should be easily and safely accessible on foot, bike or buggy by their potential users and should be located both to encourage informal supervision and to prevent undue disturbance to residents. In accordance with disability requirements, thought must be given to issues of physical accessibility both to and within the site.

**General site context and equipment** –The general site context will be as significant as equipment in creating a good quality play area which is an attractive place to be and which maintains its interest. It is equally important to make provision for grassed areas within the play area site and for changes of levels within the site. These may also incorporate play equipment such as embankment slides and climbing features. A range of surfaces, including grass, safety surfacing where required beneath equipment, and hard surfacing for buggies, bikes and wheeled toys will provide for a variety of activities. Of particular importance is the need to incorporate natural features such as rocks, boulders, logs and fallen trees. The natural feel of the site will be enhanced by planting including trees.

Play equipment should be incorporated into the site with the aim of offering a range of opportunities for physical activity including climbing, jumping, swinging and sliding. It should also offer opportunities for social activity and choice of playing alone or with others.

Sand and water are both excellent play materials. Sand should be incorporated as a play material in play areas wherever possible. Water should be incorporated where this is possible and where the very high standards of maintenance and safety required can be guaranteed.

**Signage** – Every play area should have a clear sign stating the name of the play area, who is responsible for it, and a contact telephone number to call if the equipment is damaged, general maintenance is deficient, or an accident occurs.

**Informal Recreation Areas should always be provided as well as equipped play areas.** These will always include a kickabout area, whether a simple grass space or a surfaced and fenced area. These may also include provision for other kinds of informal recreation such as skateboarding or cycling.

**Fencing** – Fencing is not always necessary and in some circumstances can inhibit children's ability to move around different types of space. However, play areas should be fenced in the following situations:

- Where dog exclusion is essential.
- Where the play area includes sand or water.
- Where the play area is sited close to busy roads, rivers, or other potential hazards.

**Safety Standards** - All equipment must conform to the appropriate European Standards (BSEN 1176 and 1177, details of which are available from ROSPA or NPFA) and must be correctly installed. In the case of natural features such as rocks, boulders, logs etc, the Council's Play Officer will advise and will ensure that risk assessments are carried out.

### **Home Zones**

Consideration should be given to the development of Home Zones. A home zone is a street or group of streets designed primarily to meet the interests of pedestrians and cyclists rather than motorists, opening up the street for

social use. The key to creating a home zone is to develop street design that makes drivers feel it is normal to drive slowly and carefully. Features often include traffic calming, shared surfaces, trees and planters, benches and play areas.

A home zone can turn streets into valued public spaces, which can provide a safer place for children to play near their homes, and are safer places for older people and disabled people to move around in the street.

*Recommendation Three:*

That further work, beyond this study, be undertaken to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

**Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
1 piece of equipment for every 33 children aged 5 – 16, augmented by good quality amenity greenspace	Play space should be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonably close to home</li> <li>• Within sight of walking or cycling lines or main travel routes</li> <li>• In spaces with informal oversight from neighbours</li> <li>• In locations identified by children and young people as appropriate</li> <li>• Capable of being used for a variety of play activities</li> <li>• Embedded in the community</li> <li>• Providing encounters with the natural environment</li> </ul>	Toddler play space with 1-4 items within 1 minute walk  Small equipped play space with 5-8 items within 5 minutes walk  Large equipped play space with 9 or more items within 15 minutes walk

## **7 Outdoor Sports Facilities**

### **7.1 Definition**

For the purposes of this report, outdoor sport and recreational facilities are defined as playing pitches (grass and artificial), greens, courts, athletic tracks and other facilities which meet the National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA) definition of outdoor playing space for sport.

### **7.2 Strategic Context**

Millions of people take part in sport and physical activity, and it is now recognised that sport has a valuable role to play across a range of key policy agendas including:

- improving fitness and health;
- improving the environment;
- making a positive contribution to young people's attitude to learning;
- contributing towards reducing youth crime; and
- providing opportunities for 'active citizenship' through volunteering.<sup>32</sup>

The benefits of physical activity on health are clear, well evidenced and widely accepted. Thirty minutes of moderate activity five times a week can help to reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, some cancers, strokes and obesity. Conversely, a lack of physical inactivity is an increasing problem, as the continuing rise in obesity and other inactivity-related health problems demonstrate.

Government policy therefore aims to achieve a major increase in participation in sport and physical activity, primarily because of the significant health benefits and to reduce the growing social and health costs of inactivity. The initiatives aiming to increase participation in sport will focus on economically disadvantaged groups, in particular young people, women and older people.

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<sup>32</sup> "Realising the Potential: The Value of Sport", LGA 2001.

One significant known barrier to participation is lack of facilities. Maintaining an adequate supply of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities to support this objective should therefore be a high priority.

Playing pitches are also important as recreational and amenity features and as an element of open space in the urban landscape. The loss of playing pitches to development has had serious repercussions, not only through the reduction of leisure facilities and the resulting pressure on those remaining, but also in the visual impact created by loss of open space. The importance of pitches is demonstrated by Sport England's role as a statutory consultee on proposals for development affecting them and in the fact that PPG 17 makes a presumption against development on this type of site. When a planning application is submitted that involves the loss of a playing field, it will be necessary to show not only that the area has a surplus of playing fields, but also a surplus of all other types of open space. Sport England will generally resist the loss of playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities, unless strict criteria are met.

### **7.3 The Need for Outdoor Sports Facilities**

Historically, the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) has set recommended standards for outdoor playing space to assist local planning authorities formulating local open space standards. The methodology used to carry out the NPFA assessment for team pitch sports uses a minimum desired standard of 1.21 ha per 1000 of population, and this is still accepted as a useful benchmark (for instance, this is acknowledged in Towards a Level Playing Field).

However, PPG 17 no longer regards the NPFA standard as an adequate measure of local open space needs, and indicates that local authorities should undertake a robust locally-based assessment of needs considering the demand, supply and accessibility of different forms of open space.

Trends in participation in outdoor sports have also had a significant impact on the need for facilities in recent years.

To provide an in-depth assessment of local playing pitch needs, an assessment following the Sport England methodology set out in 'Towards a Level Playing Field' is required. This would be based on surveys of actual demand on the ground to assess the number of pitches required for each sport to meet demand. The results can then be used to model the existing situation, to assess the adequacy of provision and to predict the future situation.

A full playing pitch assessment lies beyond the scope of this study, but we have referred to data generated by the authority in preparing its playing pitch assessment in 2000, and information supplied by sports clubs and through the resident consultation. We have used the playing pitch model to provide an indication of current and future levels of provision and highlight potential deficiency.

### ***Football***

The Football Association (FA) has noted that football participation is changing. There is a tremendous growth in small-sided football and 35% of 11-a-side players also play 5-a-side football. This growth is attributed to changing leisure/work patterns, better facilities and improved team organisation. It is the view of the FA that development programmes must recognise this trend and develop appropriate links with public and private sector small sided football providers.

Junior Football Trends is a major quantitative survey conducted by Surveyplan on behalf of the FA, interviewing 1,200 children throughout England in three age groups, 7-9, 10-12 and 13-15. The research found that 60 per cent of the population of 7-15 year old girls in England - nearly 1.5 million girls - played football in 2002.

The survey reveals that small-sided soccer and park matches account for a large proportion of the activity, while school-based participation only counts

for 19 per cent. Affiliation in girls' football has leapt from just 80 11-a-side teams in 1993 to 4,820 last season, with football surpassing the traditional girls' favourite team sports of hockey and netball as the top female sport in 2002.

In 2001 research by Nike and the Youth Sport Trust into Girls in PE and Sport highlighted that football is the sport of choice for teenage girls. A survey by Sport England revealed that the numbers of girls playing football in school has increased from 7% in 1994 to 12% in 2002.



*Plate 15: Recreation Ground, North Stifford*

**Table 41: National Football Participation Trends - Summary**

<b>Trend</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Response</b>
Out of school, football has experienced the biggest growth out of all sports in 'frequent' participation from 37% in 1994 to 43% in 2001	More children are playing due to popularity of mini-soccer	More mini-soccer sized pitches needed?
Female soccer is now starting to grow nationally at a rapid pace <sup>33</sup>	More women are playing the game	Improved quality of ancillary facilities and in particular dedicated changing facilities?
A substantial growth in informal 5-a-side football <sup>34</sup>	More mid-week fixtures, more non-grass pitches	Players defecting to 5-a-side, therefore additional synthetic turf and indoor space may be required?
The FA forecast the number of youth players to increase by 10% over next five years <sup>35</sup>	More pitches will be needed	The vast number of children playing mini-soccer will result in the need for more junior pitches in five years time?
Over 600 football coaches have attended the Coaching Disabled Footballers Course. 45 Football in the Community schemes offer regular playing and coaching opportunities for disabled players. Over 10,000 disabled children and adults participated in Ability Counts sessions.	Increased participation of disabled children and adults	Need to accommodate and develop the growing popularity of disabled football and ensure suitable disabled provision is in place in the county

<sup>33</sup> Women and Football – A Strategy Document, Football Association (1996)

<sup>34</sup> Data provided by FA (unpublished).

<sup>35</sup> Data provided by FA (unpublished).

These developments are likely to impact upon pitch and related facility requirements in Thurrock.

### ***Community Clubs***

The FA's Community Clubs initiative has a requirement for at least ten teams of different age groups and both sexes, based at sites with at least five pitches and changing facilities capable of accommodating a diverse range of users. Community Club accreditation provides both status, and expectation of quality, but also reward in the form of funding eligibility. This will impact significantly in a borough where only Belhus Woods and Blackshots offer five pitches and changing accommodation is generally inadequate for the needs of women and girls.

### ***Small-sided football***

The significant growth of the small-sided (mainly five-a-side) game as a commercial venture principally involves small, all-weather, floodlit pitches. This could supplement and possibly displace demand for full-sized natural turf pitches.

### ***Mini-Soccer***

Mini-soccer has experienced a similarly rapid growth since 1997, with 250,000 participants nationally under the age of ten now requiring small pitches and goals with specific dimensions. With the continued rapid growth of the game, levels of provision of Mini-soccer pitches will need to be kept under careful review.

### ***Women's football***

Changing provision for women and girls remains generally poor at all pitch sites and is likely to act as a deterrent to new and continued participation, as well as raising serious questions over equalities.

### ***Rugby***

"Rugby - Making An Impact" is the most comprehensive study into participation trends in rugby union in England. A total of 254 ex-players, 193

people involved in rugby at all levels, and 1,708 members of the public were interviewed between January and April 2003.

The study found that:

- There has been a 12% reduction in the number of senior men playing rugby in the past between 1998 – 2003, although this has been offset in part by the growth of women's rugby (from 2,000 players in 1988 to 8,000 in 1998) and Mini-Rugby (4% more teams in 2002 than 1998). This shift in patterns of participation has significant implications for pitch provision (with more small-sided Mini-Rugby pitches needed) and for changing facilities (with appropriate provision made for juniors and women).
- Less than one fifth of the population is interested in rugby union, down from a quarter in 1996. Only rugby league, boxing and snooker have suffered a greater decline in interest over that period.
- Just 4% of the population (aged 15+) have played rugby, either in the 15-a-side or modified versions.
- The number of active rugby clubs has fallen over the past two seasons, from 1,537 to 1,480.
- Over the past five seasons, the average number of sides fielded by each active club has fallen (from 2.9 in the 1997-98 season) to an average of 2.7 per club.
- Three in ten ex-amateur players would be interested in non-contact rugby to prolong their careers.
- Rugby ranks 15th among school sports and physical activities, behind dance. Only volleyball has seen a greater decline in participation since 1994.
- Since 1994, participation in rugby among primary schoolchildren has increased by 3% to 18%. Participation in rugby in secondary schools has declined by 11% to 28%.

- There are fewer adult volunteers than in 1991 and those who are volunteering are now doing so for longer - an average of four hours a week, compared to less than three hours in 1991.

### **Cricket**

- Adult participation (aged 15+) has shown a steady decline in male participants since 1991.
- Most cricket participants are male. Around two-thirds are in the 15-34 age group, about a third are in the 35-54 age group, and a very small number are aged 55+.
- The decline in participation has been matched by a decline in the number of clubs.
- Kwik Cricket - a game specially devised for youngsters - is proving very popular. 1.1 million pupils, in 90% of the country's primary schools, now play the game - 434,000 of these are girls. There are currently 2.1m children playing the game in schools and clubs nationwide.
- Women's cricket is a growing sector of the game with nearly 200 women's clubs now established nationwide. A record 600,000 girls and women currently play cricket. The national women's team enjoys an increasingly high profile.
- The need for good quality grass pitches is highlighted for both club and district level play. However, in many instances facilities now comprise an artificial grass wicket set in a lightly mown outfield, with no grass cricket table (or square) as such. The maintenance of good quality grass wickets is a major challenge.

### **Hockey**

- Over half a million adults participate in hockey annually and there are around 100,000 junior players.

- Research in 1998 found that nearly half of all children participated in hockey at least once in the previous year. However, outside school, hockey ranks only 26<sup>th</sup> among other sports played.
- Nearly all club games are played on Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs) and the number of full size STPs in England is now in excess of 600.

### ***Bowls***

- The General Household Survey 2002<sup>36</sup> found that 3.8% of adults had participated in any type of bowls during the 12 months before the interview; 1.3% had participated in the four weeks before the interview, and 1% had participated in bowls four or more times in the previous 4 weeks, i.e. once a week or more.
- The age profile of people participating in bowls shows that 4% of the sample aged 60-69 took part in bowling in the previous 4 weeks, as did 3% of those aged 70 and over, and 1% of the age groups 45-59 and 16-19.
- The English Bowls Youth Development Scheme (EBYDS) aims to provide a pathway to enable children and young people to participate in outdoor bowls and to develop their core skills in order to improve standards of play in the future.

### ***Tennis***

The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is actively seeking to develop the game through its clubs network, but much participation is still based around highly seasonal casual use of park courts.

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<sup>36</sup> The General Household Survey covers participation by persons aged 16 and over only.

#### **7.4 Consultation – key findings in relation to sports**

Participation in outdoor sports is lower than for indoor activity, at just 14% active participant and 12% as spectator (these figures overlap), compared with 31% participation and 4% spectating indoors. Participation varies by age, reducing sharply as middle age begins (and tending more towards spectating as well).

Opinions of outdoor facilities are qualified, with a third (35%) of users describing them as good or excellent, and a similar proportion (35%) saying they are poor or appalling. There are particular problems in relation to quality on some football pitches. Older children also ask for more, and better equipped, sports facilities, highlighting the absence of nets from goals and basketball rings as an example. Women participants highlight a lack of adequate changing and showering facilities.

Sports participation divides strongly on gender lines, and the traditional stereotypes are strong. Football is a younger male sport, on the whole, and golf attracts an older, but still predominantly male, player. Indoors, squash and football are essentially male preserves, fitness and swimming are more popular with women.

A telephone survey of sports clubs was also undertaken in conjunction with the assessment of the quality of playing pitches. Sports clubs who use Thurrock sports pitches were asked to identify any problems or issues with the pitches that they use and to provide an overall score for the quality of pitches.

Whilst generally sports pitches were considered to be reasonably good, with a median score of 7 out of 10, a number of issues were identified including:

- The uneven surface of individual pitches and in particular problems with the quality of cricket pitches
- Holes in the pitch affecting the quality of the games played.
- Poor grass cover where the pitch is worn and has not been re-seeded.

- Damage associated with the unauthorised use of motor-bikes being ridden across football pitches and cricket squares.
- Unauthorised use of pitches either by children or by teams other than the authorised user has led to the deterioration of the playing surface in a number of instances. Billet Recreation Ground and Belhus Woods seem to be particularly prone to this problem.
- Quality of the changing accommodation.
- The almost overwhelming majority of respondents, when asked which was the best pitch that they had played on during the season, cited one or all of:
  - Shell Club
  - Pegasus Club
  - Fire Brigade Club

## **7.5 Audit**

### **7.5.1 Quantity**

The report, '**An Assessment of Playing Pitch Pitches in Thurrock**' was published in 2000. This found that additional requirements were needed for the following sports:

**Football:** Additional pitch provision required by 2016 in the Grays (including Chafford Hundred) and West Thurrock sub-areas.

**Rugby:** Additional pitch provision likely to be required by 2016 in the Grays (including Chafford Hundred) and West Thurrock sub-areas.

**Cricket:** Additional pitch provision likely to be required by 2016 in the Grays (including Chafford Hundred) and West Thurrock sub-areas.

**Hockey:** One artificial turf pitch (ATP) required for hockey and other sports in Thurrock as at 2000 and a further pitch required by 2016 in the Grays (including Chafford Hundred) and West Thurrock sub-areas.

**Tennis:** 12 additional courts required in new development areas within the Borough by 2016, recommended as one 4-court outdoor tennis complex and up to 8 MUGAs for tennis and other sports.

These requirements were reflected as part of a recommended local standard of provision calculated at settlement level, and weighted towards areas of planned population growth.

The audit of playing pitches revealed that there are a total of 161 pitches located within the boundaries of the Borough. This figure includes all pitches including those in public, private, education and any other pitches regardless of whether they are in secured community use. They comprise:

- 55 Adult Football Pitches
- 40 Junior Football Pitches
- 31 Mini Soccer Pitches
- 18 Cricket Pitches
- 15 Rugby Pitches
- 2 Hockey Pitches (including 1 Synthetic Turf Pitch)

Of these pitches, 89 (60%) are full-size adult football, rugby and cricket pitches, averaging 1 pitch per 1608 population in the Borough, a ratio well below the estimated national average which is one pitch for every 989 people<sup>37</sup> and worse than many other local authorities for which data is available. Outdoor sports provision in Thurrock is shown on **Map 41**.

**Table 42** compares the numbers of pitches in Thurrock relative to the population of Thurrock with selected other areas of the country.

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<sup>37</sup> Source: The 1991 Playing Pitch Strategy

**Table 42: Adult Pitches per 1,000 adults**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Ratio (Pitches: Adults)</b>
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>1: 1608</b>
Torbay	1: 1,313
Portsmouth	1: 1,100
St Helens	1: 1,050
England	1: 989
East Devon	1: 861
North Wiltshire	1: 804
Colchester	1: 655
South Somerset	1: 608
Bath & North East Somerset	1: 574
Mid Devon	1: 518
West Devon	1: 506
Kennet	1: 365

### **Pitches in Secured Community Use**

The community use of school sports facilities brings advantages for both the school and the local community. The schools benefit from additional and improved facilities, a widening of networks with other organisations such as local sports clubs and an improved relationship with their communities. Also, by opening up schools to a wider range of community groups and clubs new pathways are developed to allow young people to make the transition from school sport to community sport and continued participation in activity. Where there are links to new community schools the benefits to both individuals and the community can be significant.

The ownership and accessibility of pitches will influence their actual availability for community use. The definition of pitches in ‘secured community use’<sup>38</sup> includes:

**Table 43: Categories of pitches**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Supplementary information</b>
<b>A</b>	All pitches that are in ‘Secured Community Use’ <sup>39</sup> and are available for use at most times.	These will largely be facilities in council ownership, and may be located on Public Open Space. They may be managed by a club/trust on a secure lease from the Council. Their availability for community use must be assured.
<b>B1</b>	Pitches that do not fall within the above category, but nevertheless are in ‘Secured Community Use’ and are available for use during times of peak demand.	This category will cover those schools which have pitches and other facilities available to the public through formal community use’ agreements.
<b>B2</b>	Pitches not included in categories A or B1 that are nevertheless available for use by the community (free or for a charge) at times of peak demand.	This category includes any facilities owned by schools, clubs, commercial organisations etc. which as a matter of policy or practice are available for use by large sections of the public through membership of a club or admission fee. In either case the ‘cost of use’ must be reasonable and affordable for the majority of the community.
<b>C</b>	Pitches not presently considered to be available for community use.	This category mainly covers schools and other establishments which do not as a matter of policy or practice hire pitches to outside teams

<sup>38</sup> Drawn from An Assessment of Playing Pitches in Thurrock, August 2000

<sup>39</sup> Pitches in secured community use are pitches that are available for use by community teams and whose future use is secured for the coming seasons by one or more of the following:

- a formal community use agreement
- a leasing/management arrangement between the school and LEA requiring the pitch(es) to be available to community teams
- a policy of community use minuted by the school or LEA, including tariff of charges, etc
- minutes of the board of school governors allowing use of pitches by community teams
- written commitment from the school to the current community team(s) using the pitch(es), and, where it is the intention of the school to maintain access for community teams to its pitch(es) at peak times (i.e. evenings, weekends and/or school holidays) for the next two or more years.

The number of pitches currently available is shown in **Table 44** below.

**Table 44: Summary of current pitch provision by type and public availability**

Pitch Type	Pitch category			
	A	B1	B2	C
Adult Football	28	5	18	4
Junior Football	8	18	4	10
Mini-soccer	7	4	6	14
Cricket	7	5	6	0
Rugby	4	5	6	0
Hockey (grass)	0	0	1	0
STPs	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>

This compares with the findings of the assessment undertaken in 2000:

**Table 45: Summary of pitch provision by type and public availability**

Pitch Type	Pitch Category			
	A	B1	B2	C
Adult Football	34	2	36	5
Youth Football	0	0	3	0
Mini-Soccer	3	0	5	12
Cricket	10	0	12	0
Rugby	4	0	12	0
Hockey Grass	0	0	0	0
STP	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>17</b>

Overall, there appears to have been a rise in the total number of football pitches from 100 to 126. However, the number of adult pitches has been reduced because education pitches have previously been classified as adult pitches, when in reality they are used as Junior pitches.

The number of pitches in secured community use has also increased. This is largely due to the fact that several education pitches previously designated as B2 have been re-classified as B1, as several schools have agreements with local clubs which make their pitches available for community use at peak times, agreements that have been in place for two years or more. Some pitches are no longer marked out (as in the case of Aveley Recreation Ground).

The distribution of pitches across the sub areas identified in Assessment of Playing Pitches in Thurrock reveals a considerable variation in the level of provision between different areas. West Thurrock and East Tilbury are particularly poorly served. Three areas provide 88% of the total pitch provision for Thurrock with 37% of all pitches being located in Grays, 27% in Stanford-le-Hope/Corringham and 24% in South Ockendon.

Where there are proposals to close school sites with a view to their redevelopment for other purposes, PPG 17 makes it clear that any existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on where the local authority has identified a deficit in one type of open space or sports and recreational facility. In this situation, PPG 17 states that:

“..planning conditions or obligations may be used to secure part of the development site for the type of open space or sports and recreational facility that is in deficit.”

The development of a school site may therefore provide an opportunity to remedy deficiencies in provision. In addition para 13 of PPG 17 indicates that:

“... development may provide the opportunity to exchange the use of one site for another to substitute for any loss of open space, or sports or recreational facility.”

Para 14 of PPG 17 also makes it clear that playing fields must not be regarded as 'previously-developed land'.

Sport England promotes the use of a sequential approach in relation to proposals on surplus school sites.

The sequential approach is as follows:

Firstly, if the site is in an area of identified deficiency of playing field provision, the school playing fields should be retained and made available as public open space including pitches. This is in line with PPG 17, paragraph 41.

Secondly, if the existing school playing fields are not in a suitable location to meet the recreational needs of the community, replacement playing fields of equivalent or better quality and quantity should be provided in a suitable alternative location prior to the commencement of the development of the surplus school site.

If, however, the provision of new or upgraded existing alternative sporting facilities in the vicinity would provide better sporting opportunities of sufficient benefit to the community and development of sport to outweigh the loss of the existing grass playing fields, then it would be appropriate to seek financial contributions towards such alternative provision in lieu of replacement playing field provision elsewhere.

**Table 46: Pitch provision for each sub area by type and public availability**

	Football			Cricket	Rugby	Hockey
	Adult	Junior	Mini			
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet						
A1	6	5	3	4	3	0
B1	2	5	0	2	6	0
B2	4	4	0	2	2	1
Aveley/Ockendon						
A1	7	3	2	3	0	0
B1	0	3	0	1	0	0
B2	6	1	1	1	2	0
Tilbury/Chadwell						
A1	5	0	0	0	0	0
B1	0	0	0	0	0	0
B2	5	0	1	0	0	0
Stanford/Corringham						
A1	5	2	0	3	1	0
B1	0	6	0	3	2	0
B2	6	0	3	3	1	0
Rural						
A1	3	0	0	2	0	0
B1	0	0	0	0	0	0
B2	0	0	0	0	0	0

### Area of Pitches

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that accurate measurements of pitches have been recorded, it has been necessary to use the standard sizes and areas for playing pitches provided by the National Governing Bodies for

Sport. It has been assumed that the pitches in Thurrock conform to these standard sizes.

The area of the pitch included in the measurement is the area of the pitch together with safety margins.

These areas were expressed in the Assessment of Playing Pitches report in terms of the NPFA standard of 1.21 ha per 1000 population, to enable a comparison to be made with the current situation and to examine the implications for future provision should the existing level of provision remain unchanged.

**Table 47: Current provision (2004) of pitches per head of population for the sub areas based on all pitches in community use (A1,B1,B2), all pitches in secured community use (A,B1), and the NPFA Standard.**

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>2001 Population</b>	<b>Category A, B1,B2</b>	<b>Category A, B1</b>	<b>All pitches/ 1000 (ha)</b>	<b>A/B1 pitches/ 1000 (ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	52982	49	36	1.00	0.73
Aveley/Ockendon	26056	30	19	1.30	0.79
Tilbury/Chadwell	28124	11	5	0.51	0.25
Stanford/Corringham	30339	35	22	1.36	0.84
Rural	5627	5	5	1.39	1.39
<i>Recommended NPFA Standard of provision:- 1.21 ha/1000</i>					

There are estimated to be 150.3 ha of pitches in community use and 99.5 ha in secured community use<sup>40</sup>. This equates to an overall figure for community use for Thurrock of 1.05 ha/1000 for community use and 0.70 ha/1000 when considering only those pitches that are regularly available to the community, and are therefore in the supply.

<sup>40</sup> As defined in the 2000 Playing Pitch Assessment

Looking to the future, if the current level of provision remains the same, there will be lower levels of provision, particularly in **Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet** where population growth will take place. At present, only the rural area meets the NPFA benchmark.

**Table 48: Future provision of pitches per head of population for the sub areas based on all pitches in community use (A1,B1,B2), all pitches in secured community use (A,B1), and the NPFA Standard.**

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>2021 Population</b>	<b>Category A, B1,B2</b>	<b>Category A, B1</b>	<b>All pitches/ 1000 (ha)</b>	<b>A/B1 pitches/ 1000 (ha)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	77948	49	36	0.68	0.50
Aveley/Ockendon	26905	30	19	1.26	0.77
Tilbury/Chadwell	28120	11	5	0.51	0.25
Stanford/Corringham	28305	35	22	1.46	0.90
Rural	5319	5	5	1.47	1.47
<i>Recommended NPFA Standard of provision:- 1.21 ha/1000</i>					

Future population change will intensify shortfalls in provision in all areas except for the rural area, whose population is relatively static in the study period. This is explored more fully in the deficiencies analysis below. Meanwhile, it is useful (and in keeping with the spirit of PPG17) to examine need on a locally based demand analysis, which is provided through the Playing Pitch Model.

### ***The Playing Pitch Model***

The Playing Pitch methodology described in ‘Towards a Level Playing Field’ sets out an eight-stage process to enable an analysis of the adequacy of current provision. The model examines the component parts of supply and demand for playing pitches.

The numbers of pitches in secured community use and teams for the main pitch sports are shown in **Table 49** below.

**Table 49a: Details of Teams and Pitches for Main Pitch Sports (football)**

Settlement	Football					
	Seniors		Junior		Minis	
	No of teams	No of pitches	No of teams	No of pitches	No of teams	No of pitches
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	37	8	32	10	23	3
Aveley/Ockendon	46	7	16	6	21	2
Tilbury/Chadwell	14	5	11	0	6	0
Stanford/Corringham	26	5	24	8	31	0
Rural	10	3	5	0	8	0
<b>Total</b>	133	28	88	24	89	5

**Table 49b: Details of teams and pitches for main pitch sports (rugby, cricket, hockey)**

Settlement	Rugby Union			Cricket			Hockey		
	Seniors		Junior	Seniors		Junior	Seniors		Junior
	No of teams	No of pitches	No of teams	No of teams	No of pitches	No of teams	No of teams	No of pitches	No of teams
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	12	9	12	3	6	0	6	1	1
Aveley/Ockendon	3	0	3	2	4	0	0	0	0
Tilbury/Chadwell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stanford/Corringham	5	3	5	11	6	11	0	0	0
Rural	0	2	0	9	2	7	0	0	0
<b>Thurrock</b>	20	14	20	25	18	18	6	1	1

The methodology is employed to analyse the adequacy of current provision and to assess possible future situations, in order that latent and future demand (identified through Team Generation Rates), and the problems with quality, use and capacity of existing pitches can be taken into account.

The method requires that each sport is dealt with individually with a specific set of calculations for each, because of the different patterns of play.

The analysis is further subdivided for some sports to deal with specific sub-sectors of activity within them, e.g. junior play or adult play, in order that important aspects are not submerged in aggregated data. Football and rugby are subdivided in this manner, whereas no differentiation is made between junior and senior cricket or junior and senior hockey teams as they play on pitches of similar dimensions.

A separate calculation has been undertaken for football because the active age group is more reasonable set at 6 to 45 years, rather than the 6 to 55 years specified in the model.

The summary of the findings for Thurrock as a whole gives an indication of the shortfall/ surplus of pitches for each sport.

The key issues that emerge are:

- there is a shortfall of 11 adult football pitches on Sunday morning.
- there is a shortfall of 10 junior rugby pitches on Sunday morning.

At sub area level there are a number of issues:

- The problem of a shortfall in adult football pitches is most evident in Aveley/Ockendon with a shortage of 7 pitches, and Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and Stanford/Corringham both lacking 3 pitches.
- The problem of a shortfall of 2 junior football pitches on Sunday mornings and afternoons in Tilbury/Chadwell.
- The problem of a shortfall of 1 junior football pitch on Sunday mornings and afternoons in the Rural Area.

- The problem of a shortfall in adult rugby pitches is most evident in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.
- The problem of a shortfall in junior rugby pitches on Sunday mornings most affects Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.



*Plate 16: Blackshots Sports Pitches, Grays*

**Table 50a: Current Shortfalls in Playing Pitch Provision in Thurrock (football)**

	Shortfall or surplus											
<b>Football</b>	Saturday AM (senior)	Saturday PM (senior)	Saturday AM (junior)	Saturday PM (junior)	Sunday AM (senior)	Sunday PM (senior)	Sunday AM (junior)	Sunday PM (junior)	Mid Week 1 Tuesday (senior)	Mid Week 1 Tuesday (junior)	Mid Week 2 Thursday (senior)	Mid Week 2 Thursday (junior)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>-10.9</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>28.0</b>	<b>24.0</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	7.3	2.5	10.0	7.5	-2.8	6.5	3.3	3.3	8.0	10.0	8.0	10.0
Aveley/Ockendon	6.1	0.2	6.0	4.8	-6.5	5.1	2.6	2.6	7.0	6.0	7.0	6.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	4.7	2.9	0.0	-0.9	0.9	4.4	-2.3	-2.3	5.0	0.0	5.0	0.0
Stanford/Corringham	4.5	1.2	8.0	6.1	-2.6	3.9	2.9	2.9	5.0	8.0	5.0	8.0
Rural	2.8	1.5	0.0	-0.4	0.1	2.6	-1.1	-1.1	3.0	0.0	3.0	0.0

**Table 50b: Current Shortfalls in Playing Pitch Provision in Thurrock (cricket)**

	Shortfall or surplus											
<b>Cricket</b>	Saturday AM (senior)	Saturday PM (senior)	Saturday AM (junior)	Saturday PM (junior)	Sunday AM (senior)	Sunday PM (senior)	Sunday AM (junior)	Sunday PM (junior)	Mid Week 1 <i>Tuesday</i> (senior)	Mid Week 1 <i>Tuesday</i> (junior)	Mid Week 2 <i>Thursday</i> (senior)	Mid Week 2 <i>Thursday</i> (junior)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Aveley/Ockendon	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Stanford/Corringham	6.0	6.0	6.0	2.9	6.0	6.0	6.0	2.9	6.0	4.5	6.0	6.0
Rural	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0

Table 50c: Current Shortfalls in Playing Pitch Provision in Thurrock (rugby)

	Shortfall or surplus							
<b>Rugby Union</b>	Saturday AM (senior)	Saturday PM (senior)	Saturday AM (junior)	Saturday PM (junior)	Sunday AM (senior)	Sunday PM (senior)	Sunday AM (junior)	Sunday PM (junior)
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>-10.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	9.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	9.0	9.0	-6.0	0.0
Aveley/Ockendon	0.0	-1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-1.5	0.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Stanford/Corringham	3.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	-2.5	0.0
Rural	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0

## **7.5.2 The Future Situation**

### ***Team Generation Rates***

Team Generation Rates (TGRs) indicate how many people in a specified age group are required to generate one team. TGRs are derived by dividing the appropriate population age band in the area by the number of teams playing within that area in that age band. Calculating TGRs enables fair comparison to be made between different areas where similar studies have been undertaken.

Dividing the estimated number of male teams playing each sport into the estimated total number of males aged between 6 - 55 years gives an overall TGR of 262 for football in Thurrock. This means that there is one football team for every 262 male residents aged 6 - 55.

**Table 51** below compares TGRs for football with those of other studies.

**Table 51: Football Team Generation Rates**

<b>Local Authority/ Area</b>	<b>TGR (football)</b>
Mid Devon	1:118
Bromsgrove	1:127
South Somerset	1:131
East Devon	1:169
Worcester City	1:170
Wychavon	1:180
Redditch	1:182
Kennet District	1:183
Crawley, Horsham, Hastings, Bexhill and Maidstone	1:183
Colchester City	1:200
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>1:228</b>
Derwentside	1:230
Portsmouth	1:236
RMBC	1:238
Malvern Hills	1:241
West Devon	1:244
Wyre Forest	1:252
Chelmsford	1:248
Tyne and Wear	1:290
North Wiltshire	1:314
<b>Average</b>	<b>1:209</b>

The following examples help clarify what TGRs mean:

- 1:100 → high TGR → relatively low latent (unmet) demand  
 1: 1000 → low TGR → relatively high latent (unmet) demand

For Thurrock, this means:

**Overall**

1:179 → TGR → relatively low latent (unmet) demand

**Football**

1:276 → TGR → moderately low latent (unmet) demand

**Cricket**

1:1165 → TGR → relatively high latent (unmet) demand

**Rugby**

1:1817 → TGR → very high latent (unmet) demand

**Hockey**

1:1817 → TGR → very high latent (unmet) demand

It is important to note that latent demand indicated by TGRs is relative to other studies.

**7.5.3 Projections**

Population projections by ward for Thurrock show that the active population will remain static between 2005 and 2021 for all settlements apart from Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet where the active population will increase from 38,350 to 54,740.

By applying TGRs to the population projections for 2021, it is possible to project the theoretical number of teams that would be generated over the next decade. This can then be applied to the PPM model to forecast the future shortfall of pitches, assuming that no new pitches are built in the interim and that 'area average' TGRs are applied to those wards with current low TGRs (to simulate a possible increase in participation rates).

The separate calculation for football included the use of separate TGRs for each settlement area. These were applied on the grounds that there were

significant differences between the TGRs for each area and that the use of the average TGR gave rise to anomalous results. In addition the future split between adult and junior teams was kept as 60% adult and 40% junior because there was no evidence in the data to justify changing this split. In reality, there will probably be a growth in junior football and a decline in adult football. This will only be ascertained once the Playing Pitch Assessment has been reviewed.

The results from this analysis are shown in **Table 52** below. The tables show the situation in 2021 by settlement area.

Table 52a: Future projection (2021) of surplus or shortfall (football)

Football Future Year	Shortfall or surplus							
	Saturday AM (senior)	Saturday PM (senior)	Saturday AM (junior)	Saturday PM (junior)	Sunday AM (senior)	Sunday PM (senior)	Sunday AM (junior)	Sunday PM (junior)
<b>Total</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>-20.6</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.7</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	6.8	-1.3	10.0	6.7	-10.3	5.5	1.2	1.2
Aveley/Ockendon	6.2	0.7	6.0	3.8	-5.5	5.3	-0.0	-0.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	4.7	2.5	0.0	-0.9	0.1	4.3	-2.3	-2.3
Stanford/Corringham	4.4	0.1	8.0	6.3	-4.7	3.6	3.3	3.3
Rural	2.8	1.4	0.0	-0.6	-0.1	2.6	-1.5	-1.5



**Table 52b: Future projection (2021) of surplus or shortfall (cricket)**

	Shortfall or surplus											
<b>Cricket Future Year</b>	Saturday AM (senior)	Saturday PM (senior)	Saturday AM (junior)	Saturday PM (junior)	Sunday AM (senior)	Sunday PM (senior)	Sunday AM (junior)	Sunday PM (junior)	Mid Week 1 <i>Tuesday</i> (senior)	Mid Week 1 <i>Tuesday</i> (junior)	Mid Week 2 <i>Thursday</i> (senior)	Mid Week 2 <i>Thursday</i> (junior)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	6.0	6.0	6.0	2.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	2.0	6.0	4.0	6.0	6.0
Aveley/Ockendon	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.6	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.6	4.0	3.3	4.0	4.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	0.0	0.0	0.0	-1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	-1.4	0.0	-0.7	0.0	0.0
Stanford/Corringham	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.5	6.0	6.0	6.0	4.5	6.0	5.3	6.0	6.0
Rural	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0

**Table 52c: Future projection (2021) of surplus or shortfall (rugby)**

	Shortfall or surplus											
<b>Rugby Union Future Year</b>	Saturday AM (senior)	Saturday PM (senior)	Saturday AM (junior)	Saturday PM (junior)	Sunday AM (senior)	Sunday PM (senior)	Sunday AM (junior)	Sunday PM (junior)	Mid Week 1 <i>Tuesday</i> (senior)	Mid Week 1 <i>Tuesday</i> (junior)	Mid Week 2 <i>Thursday</i> (senior)	Mid Week 2 <i>Thursday</i> (junior)
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>-16.8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>0</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	9.0	1.1	0	0	9.0	9.0	-7.9	0	9.0	0	9.0	0
Aveley/Ockendon	0	-2.7	0	0	0	0	-2.7	0	0	0	0	0
Tilbury/Chadwell	0	-2.8	0	0	0	0	-2.8	0	0	0	0	0
Stanford/Corringham	3.0	0.1	0	0	3.0	3.0	-2.9	0	3.0	0	3.0	0
Rural	2.0	1.5	0	0	2.0	2.0	-0.5	0	2.0	0	2.0	0

As shown in **Table 52**, as a result of the projected population level and the impact of sports development, overall demand will increase. The key issues in 2021 will be:

- a shortfall of 21 adult football pitches on Sunday morning.
- there is a shortfall of 3 adult rugby pitches on Saturday afternoon.
- there is a shortfall of 17 junior rugby pitches on Sunday morning.

At sub area level there are a number of issues:

- The problem of a shortfall in adult football pitches is most evident in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, which will have a deficiency of 10 pitches on Sunday morning.
- The problem of a shortfall in adult football pitches in Aveley/Ockendon and Stanford/Corringham with deficiencies of 6 and 5 pitches on Sunday morning.
- The problem of a shortfall of 2 junior football pitches on Sunday mornings and afternoons Aveley/Ockendon and Stanford/Corringham.
- The problem of a shortfall in adult rugby pitches is most evident in Aveley/Ockendon and Tilbury/Chadwell.
- The problem of a shortfall of 17 junior rugby pitches on Sunday mornings affects all areas although Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet is the most affected with a deficiency of 8 pitches.

As stated above, the shortage of playing pitches calculated by the Playing Pitch Model is based on 2001 data, which is now out of date, and should be viewed with appropriate caution.

An element of this shortfall will be addressed by the provision of five new pitches at Gable Hall School. These pitches have been developed with grant aid from the New Opportunities Fund and will be made available for community use.

### ***Mini Soccer***

There are 6 mini soccer pitches available for community use within Thurrock at present and 89 teams have been identified.

Mini soccer is played in 15-minute matches and it is assumed that each pitch is able to sustain six matches. As a result of the structure of mini leagues which tend to be based at a central venue, rather than requiring teams to travel, each team always plays at home.

The playing pitch methodology does not cater specifically for mini soccer, but the same principles can be applied. As each pitch is able to accommodate 6 matches between two teams, this indicates a need for 8 mini soccer pitches within Thurrock compared to the 6 that are currently available.

#### **7.5.4 Quality**

All playing pitches in Secured Community use have been visited and a Visual Quality Assessment (VQA) of each pitch undertaken. The scores are shown in **Table 53** below. They cover the quality of the pitch together with the quality of the changing rooms. The VQAs have been supplemented by a telephone survey of club representatives to ascertain the number of cancellations for each pitch and to obtain a 'users' view of the pitches concerned.

##### *Playing Pitches*

Overall the results for football and rugby pitches are reasonably good. It was difficult to obtain a clear picture with regard to the cricket pitches because at the time of survey the sport was out of season.

At the time of inspection the weather had been very mild and the grass cover on most pitches was good. Looking at the key factors individually provides a more detailed review of the main issues relating to playing pitches.

*Drainage/ Waterlogging*

There have been very few cancellations this season, but both those who use the pitches and those who maintain them assert that this season is far from representative in that the weather this winter has been particularly dry. Staff at Gable Hall School in Corringham reported that their football pitch floods very quickly and is generally unusable for much of the time between November and March, but this year has been much better. Some pitches have heavy subsoil which tends to become waterlogged in poor weather such as those in Corringham Recreation Ground. The grounds staff deal with this problem by slitting the ground. Other pitches, for example those pitches at Thames Rugby Club, have excellent drainage and rarely become waterlogged.

*Subsidence*

This is a major problem affecting many of the sites in Thurrock causing an uneven surface which sometimes 'moves'. Problems are caused either by landfill on sites of old rubbish tips, such as at Orsett Heath where evenness of pitches was found to be poor and considerable damage to pitches has been caused by subsidence. Also, some pitches at St Clere's School in Stanford le Hope are very uneven due to landfill subsidence. Another cause of subsidence is ancient quarrying. Some of the pitches at Blackshots lie on the sites of ancient quarries and as a result have extremely uneven surfaces. The Council has attempted to deal with this problem in the past by filling the dips with top soil but nevertheless many pitches were found to be poor in this respect.

*Vandalism and unauthorised use*

Pitches on public parks are at times subject to considerable vandalism. Problems are particularly caused by motorcycles and cars being driven on pitches, or by motorcycles being wheeled in circles. Worst affected are the pitches at Blackshots, the cricket pitch at North Stifford Recreation Ground and pitches at Corringham Recreation Ground. Unauthorised use of pitches either by playing football or using the ground for golf practice has caused pitches to become over used and damaged. The pitches at Belhus Woods have been particularly affected by this.

*Damage caused by weed*

The presence of a creeping perennial weed (pearlwort) on some pitches has caused expanding patches of bare soil resulting in much reduced grass cover. The weed is difficult to eradicate and has caused problems at the football pitches at Thames Rugby Club, and some of the football pitches at both Blackshots and Belhus Woods.

*Over-use of pitches*

Some pitches are over-used to the extent that their quality is seriously affected. This happens either where a whole site is subject to overuse such as Belhus Woods, or where too much use is placed on the pitches nearest the car park or changing rooms and not enough on the other pitches. This was observed to be the case at William Edwards' School, a huge site of football pitches with most activity taking place on the pitch nearest to the school.

*General maintenance*

Most pitches were well maintained in respect of length of grass, quality of line markings and general state of cleanliness. Amount of grass cover varied, with many pitches having grass cover in excess of 95%, but some had 60% or less due to overuse or damage caused by some of the factors outlined above.

*Changing Facilities*

Quality of changing facilities was found to be generally very good in the school facilities but very basic in the Council-owned facilities in parks and recreation grounds. Many of these appeared fortress-like due to measures taken to prevent vandalism which has occurred in the past; an exception is the facility at Thames RFC where members are in the process of constructing new changing facilities of a very high standard. Very few changing rooms had segregated accommodation, which presents a serious barrier to female participation. In one case, South Ockendon, it is necessary to walk past the tea area in order to access the showers. As a consequence these changing rooms are not used to any great extent.

### *Car Parking*

Considerable variation was found in the provision of car parking. Schools generally had good provision, as did the larger sites such as Blackshots and Belhus Woods. Conversely Orsett Recreation Ground has a small car park opposite the hospital which gets very full with users who are not visiting the sports facilities. The car park at Corringham Recreation Ground is in a very rough state with an uneven, muddy surface. Linford Recreation Ground has no provision at all, so when the summer school takes place participants use the nearby pub car park. North Stifford Recreation Ground has a small car park by the village hall which the Cricket Club may use if there is no function in the hall.

### *Public Transport*

Most sites were on bus routes or near to a railway station. However, the large site at Belhus Woods was not served by public transport at all.

### *Consultation*

In addition to the Visual Quality Assessment undertaken of the pitches in secured community use, a telephone survey of clubs was undertaken. This revealed that:

- Generally, teams have found the standard of pitches to be acceptable. Some concern was expressed with regard to the pitches at Belhus and Corringham Recreation ground.
- When asked which pitches are the best quality in Thurrock, nearly all responded that these were at the private clubs of Shell, Pegasus and the Social Club of the London Fire Brigade at Aveley.
- Users felt that the Council did not spend sufficient money on routine maintenance and some clubs resented having to fund repairs out of their own funds when they had no control over the facility.
- Most users felt that changing accommodation was acceptable with the exception of South Ockendon and Corringham Recreation Ground. Female users are poorly catered for however.

- Some football pitches are being 'overplayed' e.g. Belhus Woods and one school site.
- Users complained that the unauthorised riding of motorbikes on the pitches had caused damage to the playing surface. In one case a club had spent over £2,000 on pitch maintenance only to see the pitch seriously damaged two days later.
- On the whole clubs feel that the standard of pitch maintenance has been improving in the past two years. There were very few cancellations of games as a result of the pitch being unplayable.



*Plate 17: Bowling Green, Blackshots*

Table 53: Quality Scores for Playing Pitches and Changing Rooms (other than bowls).

Ref No	SITES	Changing	Football 1	Football 2	Football 3	Football 4	Football 5	Football 6	Football 7	Football 8	Football 9	Football 10	Rugby 1	Rugby 2	Rugby 3	Cricket 1	Cricket 2	Hockey
1	Billet Recreation Ground	54	82%	85												85		
2	Stanford Recreation Ground	51	81	84	74								95			85		
3	Corringham Recreation Ground	56	68	77												87		
4	Horndon Recreation Ground	51	95	82 (mini)												95		
5	Orsett Recreation Ground	54	81													85		
6	Blackshots	78	79	84	87	89	65	87 (youth 1)	76 (youth 2)	89 (mini 1)	90 (mini 2)		79	84	84	63	69	

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7	South Ockendon Recreation Ground	49	84 (jun)	94	94 (mini 2)												92 (mini 1)		
8	Thames RFC	88	76	84 (mini)									87	87					
9	Orsett Heath	71	66	68															
10	Chadwell Recreation Ground	63	81	81															
11	Tilbury Rec. (Daisyfield)	61	69	73															
12	Belhus Woods	61	65	71	74	77	84	50	53	79	79	82 (mini)							
13	Bulphan Rec Ground	n/a	77																
14	Linford Recreation Ground	n/a	71																
15	Long Lane Recreation Ground	n/a	71	76	74 (mini 1)	74 (mini 2)													
16	Aveley School	80	73	77															81
17	North Stifford Rec	85															79		
18	St. Clere's Sch	95	82	82	85	79							76						

19	Grays School	100	66	71									60					
20	William Edward's School	100	74	81	81	79	73 (mini)	76 (mini)	66 (mini)	76 (mini)			82					
21	Lakeside		79	81														
22	Ockendon Sch	100	92	76													77	
23	Gable Hall Sch	95	76															
24	Thurrock RFC	80											82	73	92			

## **Bowling Greens**

There are currently 12 bowling greens, four of which are in private ownership. Of those in Council ownership, there are six sites with one green and one site with two greens. Total membership at these clubs is 567. The location of the bowling greens is shown on **Map 42**.

Club membership ranges from 21 at Aveley to 195 at Grays, a wide variation in take-up. The greens at Aveley (21 members) and Ockendon (68 members) are within one and a half miles of each other. Similarly, Billet Recreation (34 members) and Stanford-le-Hope (56 members) are within three quarters of a mile of each other. The club at Stanford-le-Hope has been approached with a view to joining in the development of a multi-sport hub with cricket and football but has rejected the proposal.

Provision in adjoining Districts includes Brentwood with 3 greens and 450 members, Basildon with 6 greens and 450 members and Chelmsford with 3 greens and 300 members.

A recent review of bowling green provision concluded that the Council can no longer afford to maintain the greens and must rationalise provision. There are proposals to encourage clubs to merge and concentrate resources on providing better quality greens and facilities at fewer locations.

A survey of ten Bowling Greens was undertaken employing a quality assessment sheet using criteria approved by the English Bowling Association (see **Appendix 2.5**). Conclusions from the survey are as follows:

- Changing accommodation was nearly always excellent with members putting in a great deal of effort to maintain this.
- Similarly condition of surrounds of bowling greens was always good and there was a complete absence of litter or graffiti.
- With regard to the greens themselves, they were virtually all totally flat and level, the only exceptions being the greens at Billet and Orsett which had some general undulations within a smooth surface. The situation on grass cover was more varied, ranging from greens with 100% grass cover such as Stanford, Corringham and one of the greens at Blackshots,

through to greens at Orsett and Billet where grass cover was considerably reduced with large bare patches. All the other greens had a small loss of grass cover.

- One cause of reduced grass cover appears to be the shade cast by trees along the edge of a green. This was particularly observed at Billet where the bare patches along one side of the green exactly corresponded with the shadow of conifers along the edge.
- Sward height and mowing frequency were generally good or excellent, even though the assessments took place in January and February. Species cover, i.e. whether the green is composed of the correct species or whether broad-leaved species of grass and other weeds have invaded, presents a mixed picture. The best greens were Stanford and Shell with a very good mix of correct grass species, but all other greens had the odd broad leaf weed or broad leaf grasses.
- The best greens for firmness of surface were those at Shell, Blackshots, Corringham and Stanford and these also scored highly for the amount of soil water. The worst greens in this respect were at Billet and Aveley with too much soil water giving a very soft, spongy surface.
- Rating of playing surface by bowlers was in most cases either good or excellent, the exceptions being Billet and Orsett. This information is not known for the green at Aveley.
- Condition of gullies was usually either good or excellent. However the height of the banks in many cases failed to meet the standards set down by the English Bowling Association, the worst of these being at Aveley. In spite of this, however, with the exception with some rinks at the Billet, all greens have been passed by the County Bowling Association as being suitable for County matches.
- Some greens have experienced problems of vandalism either caused to the green, for example at Corringham where large trenches have been dug in the green from time to time (which have been repaired very effectively and speedily by the dedicated green keeper), to problems with damage caused round the surrounds of greens such as at Fondu.

Table 54: Bowling Greens Quality Assessment Results

Bowling Green	Date	% Score	Firmness	Soil Water	Sward Height	Overall Grass Cover	Sward Density	Grass Cover	Level	Playing Surface	Gully Condition	Condition of surrounds	Litter/ Graffiti	Comments
The Billet	13/1/05	59	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	4	4	3	Grass cover considerably reduced on the side of the bowling green which is in the shadow of conifers. Some fusarium.
Stanford Recreation Ground	13/1/05	92	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	3	
Corringham Recreation Ground	13/1/05	88	3	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	3	4	3	Some fusarium disease has caused bald patches. There have been considerable problems due to vandalism - digging holes in green. Bank does not meet EBA standard.

Blackshots 1	14/1/05	<b>82</b>	3	3	4	4	3	4	5	4	5	4	3	
Blackshots 2	14/1/05	<b>88</b>	3	3	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	4	3	
South Ockendon	14/1/05	<b>80</b>	2	3	5	4	3	3	5	4	5	4	3	
Aveley	14/1/05	<b>67</b>	1	2	5	4	3	3	5	n/kn	4	4	3	Banks do not met EBA standard
Orsett	14/1/05	<b>59</b>	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	Banks do not met EBA standard
Fondu	14/2/05	<b>82</b>	2	2	5	4	3	4	5	5	5	4	3	
Shell	15/2/05	<b>92</b>	3	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	

### **7.5.5 Accessibility**

Whilst there is a reasonable distribution of playing pitches, the current and future shortfall in provision is likely to mean that teams will not be able to play at their preferred home ground and may need to travel to gain access to pitches. At present, the dual use of school pitches caters for some of the demand, particularly for junior football. However, there must be some concern that should these pitches be withdrawn from community use as a result of a change in current policy, access to sports pitches will become very difficult without major changes in current patterns of play.

Access to bowling greens is good apart from Tilbury and Chadwell St Mary where bowling greens have now been abandoned, largely as a result of continued vandalism.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

The assessment of playing pitches shows that improvements in the supply of pitches in secured community use is largely due to the redesignation of school provision as dual use. The increase is therefore largely illusory and it is difficult to disagree with the conclusions reached in the 'Assessment of Playing Pitches' report that the supply of pitches is currently only just meeting expressed demand. The situation is likely to deteriorate with the continued growth in junior and women's football.

There is an urgent need to consider how the future demand for playing pitches, particularly for junior teams, will be met. The capacity for further dual use of education sites is limited. In any event, curricular use of playing pitches combined with community use at weekends is resulting in some pitches being overplayed. Additional training provision in the form of 'Third generation' rubber crumb Synthetic Turf Pitches may help to alleviate the use of grass pitches for training. In the future, this type of pitch may well be approved for regular league games.

The quality of playing pitches was found overall to be reasonable. There are some problems associated with a lack of evenness, and motorcyclists and car parkers are

regularly damaging some pitches. Changing accommodation is basic but acceptable (with one or two exceptions), but is inadequate to support women and girls' participation and is probably discouraging inclusion.

At present some bowling greens would appear to be underused. However, this may well be a response by club members to the poor quality of some of the bowling greens, as there is some evidence of players migrating to better facilities. Increasingly a higher proportion of the population will be in the older age groups, from which the majority of participants in bowling originate, and demand is likely to increase in future years.

Thurrock has some bowling greens of very high quality, the best scoring being at Shell, Stanford, Corringham and Blackshots. Other greens were of good quality except for those at Billet and Orsett which both had significant problems.

Bowling greens are being maintained to a reasonable standard and the County Association passes most rinks as acceptable after their annual inspection. The standard of ancillary facilities at bowling greens is normally good.

There is a perception amongst users that the Council's budget for maintaining its stock of facilities is inadequate. Clubs complain that any improvements they fund in either pavilions or pitches revert to the Council, and that there is little incentive to work in partnership with the Council to improve facilities.

## **7.7 Standards**

### **7.7.1 Quantity**

**Table 55** sets out the calculations for the standards of provision required to meet the needs of the population in 2021<sup>41</sup>.

Different standards have been derived for each settlement area to more closely reflect local needs.

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<sup>41</sup> This is based on the formula: Total pitch area needed in future year ÷ total population for future year x 1000

**Table 55: Standards of Provision for Sports Pitches**

<b>Total Required ( Existing + Shortfall)</b>	<b>Total Ha Required</b>	<b>Population 2021</b>	<b>Ha per 1000</b>	<b>Proposed Standard</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	63.4	77948	0.8	1.0
Aveley/Ockendon	32.6	26905	1.2	1.3
Tilbury/Chadwell	14.8	28120	0.5	1.0
Stanford/Corringham	36.0	28305	1.3	1.3
Rural Area	12.4	5319	2.3	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>159.2</b>	<b>166598</b>	<b>1.0</b>	

### **7.7.2 Quality**

There is no “one size fits all” determination of a quality standard for outdoor sport. Quality considerations are normally determined by the appropriate sports governing body and vary according to the level at which each sport is being played; pitches that do not meet criteria for sport at a senior level will not be permitted to be used at that level, but may be suitable for participation at a lower level. As teams improve and progress in their respective competitions, quality requirements will change, but this is not a predictable progression. Our recommendation is that a variety of pitches be available for each sport to meet the needs and aspirations of a wide variety of local sports teams.

### **7.7.3 Accessibility**

Setting accessibility standards for outdoor sport is difficult because while some more popular sports should be accessible at quite a local level, other less popular sports need only be provided at wider geographic intervals - including in some cases at a regional rather than a local level. A pragmatic solution to this, which avoids the near-impossibility

of listing accessibility standards on a sport by sport basis, is to suggest that facilities for the more popular outdoor sports - particularly football - should be provided through partnership arrangements with existing facilities, including the strategic development of community use agreements with local schools and other facility providers, and that local parks and amenity green spaces should wherever possible offer facilities for informal outdoor sport, supported where appropriate by the provision of goal posts, basketball hoops and other infrastructure. This type of provision maximises the use of informal open space for sport and recreation, and has benefits in drawing informal sport away from the overused formal pitches, but does create challenges as well as efficiencies for those who maintain open spaces.

Guidance from Sport England and the main sports governing bodies suggests that the development of sport hubs and partnership agreements with existing teams and providers is the direction that should be pursued, and we have followed this lead.

## **7.8 Deficiencies**

### **7.8.1 Quantity**

The overall current deficiency has been assessed as being:

- a shortfall of 11 adult football pitches on Sunday morning.
- a shortfall of 10 junior rugby pitches on Sunday morning.

At settlement area level the following deficiencies have been identified:

- a shortfall of 7 adult football pitches in Aveley/Ockendon.
- a shortfall of 3 adult football pitches in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.
- a shortfall of 3 adult football pitches in Stanford/Corringham.
- a shortfall of 2 junior football pitches on Sundays in Tilbury/Chadwell.
- a shortfall of 1 junior football pitch on Sundays in the Rural Area.

- a shortfall in adult rugby pitches in Grays.
- a shortfall in junior rugby pitches on Sunday mornings in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.

## **7.9 Projections**

### **7.9.1 Quantity**

The increase in the projected population and the impact of sports development results in further shortfalls by 2021 if playing pitch provision remains at the same level:

- a shortfall of 21 adult football pitches on Sunday morning.
- a shortfall of 3 adult rugby pitches on Saturday afternoon.
- a shortfall of 16 junior rugby pitches on Sunday morning.

At settlement area level the deficiencies identified are:

- a shortfall of 10 adult football pitches in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet on Sunday morning.
- a shortfall in 6 adult football pitches in Aveley/Ockendon on Sunday morning.
- a shortfall in 5 adult football pitches in Stanford/Corringham on Sunday morning.
- a shortfall of 2 junior football pitches on Sunday mornings and afternoons in both Aveley/Ockendon and Stanford/Corringham.
- a shortfall in adult rugby pitches in Aveley/Ockendon and Tilbury/Chadwell.
- a shortfall of 17 junior rugby pitches on Sunday mornings affects all areas although Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet is the most affected with a deficiency of 8 pitches.

As stated above, the shortage of playing pitches calculated by the Playing Pitch Model is based on 2001 data which will now be out of date. For this reason the results should be treated with caution.

## **7.9.2 Potential Solutions**

An element of this shortfall will be addressed by the provision of five new pitches at Gable Hall School. These pitches have been developed with grant aid from the New Opportunities Fund and will be made available for community use.

Over the last few years a 'third generation' of Synthetic Turf Pitches has been developed. In November 2004 UEFA's Executive Committee approved the use of artificial grass pitches at both club and national level in UEFA competitions with effect from the 2005/06 season, so long as the artificial turf system installed complies with the UEFA quality criteria. The development of third generation STPs may well offer a way forward in addressing the current and future shortfalls in pitch provision. STPs have an unlimited capacity and can therefore accommodate a large number of matches at one location.

Other ways to address the shortfall include:

- Changing pitch use – Convert any surplus adult pitches into junior and mini soccer pitches to met the growing demand for junior football.
- Dual use facilities – Thurrock already has a significant proportion of its community use taking place on dual use sites. There needs to be caution, however, about the numbers of games being played on these pitches, some of which are showing signs of being overplayed.
- Enhancing existing capacity – This can be achieved by installing drainage to increase the capacity of the pitches.
- Management options – The overwhelming demand for pitches occurs at the same time i.e. weekends and particularly Sunday mornings. Changing the starting times of matches could significantly reduce the 'peak' demand level.
- Developing new pitches – New pitches could be secured through developer contributions.

### ***Multi-sport hubs***

Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of Sport now encourage the development of multi-sport hubs particularly where there are proposals for new development. There are no models for development as all sports clubs are different.

Some of the benefits of multi-sport clubs include:

- Larger clubs enjoy better facilities, both sporting and social. More members mean more money and economies of scale;
- Juniors have the opportunity to play more than one sport;
- A larger club will mean more potential volunteers to coach and develop sport;
- Stronger sections help fund smaller ones giving a greater level of security and providing shared facilities which otherwise may not be viable e.g. access to an ATP;
- Sports can share expensive items, such as facilities and equipment for pitches;
- The club can be ongoing throughout the year so sports participation can be less seasonal;
- Club houses can be used for other activities that can support the community and bring more people into the club during times not used by the sports clubs;

A number of models of multi-sport hubs have been identified. These are:

**Sport Specific:**

This could be founded on clubs at different levels. For example, for football a second level club following might be present:

- Southern or Feeder League standard ('Super' or 'community' Club);
- Range of junior, women's and senior squads;
- Centre of Excellence/Development Squads;
- Full Time Community Coach;
- Limited support services e.g. physiotherapy;
- Limited training opportunities;

- FA Charter standard;

### **Multi Sport with a Hub Club: (All sports)**

Several sports clubs each with their own ground/premises could secure benefits from working together. For example, if the Hub Club is a Rugby Club, satellite clubs such as hockey, bowls, netball would have access to support services such as physiotherapy, a Training Centre and a wider range of facilities e.g. classroom, gym, fitness testing; social facilities.

### **Site Specific: (All Sports)**

This would be on a single site and could be located in a neighbourhood and managed through a Sport & Recreation Trust. Taunton Vale Sports Club is an example of this type of facility.

### **Leisure Centre Based: (All Sports)**

A variety of clubs located at a leisure centre sharing facilities and benefiting from a variety of services. Would include clubs of varying sizes, involving junior, women's and senior squads.

### **School Based**

This would be a community use model which would include clubs of various, predominantly junior squads but also include senior and women's squads using school facilities. The Sandhill Centre in Sunderland provides this type of facility. Innovative features of the community facilities include an electronic village hall, a community theatre and an outdoor amphitheatre. The wider community also benefit from a dual use library, youth centre, community meeting rooms, crèche, multi-use playing fields, sports hall and swimming pool.

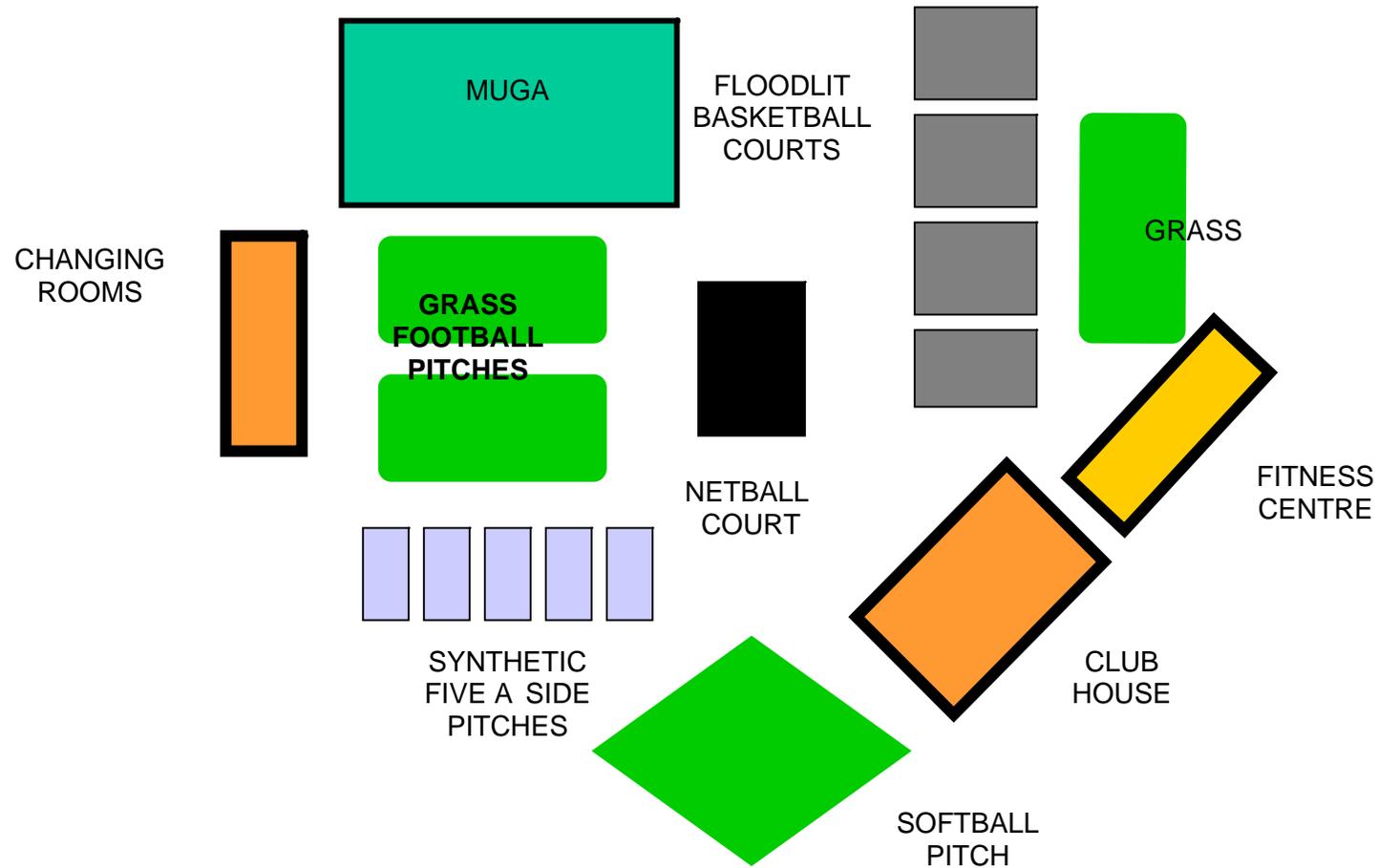
The multi-sport hub concept is shown in **Diagram 1**. It places an emphasis on multi-sport environments (indoor and outdoor), modern social venues, quality surroundings and ease of access, including leisure credits and pay-as-you-play regimes. In addition,

the aim is to identify and build up the best of the existing clubs within the voluntary sector as a focus for people to remain participating, or to rejoin, in sport.

However, the concentration of facilities on to a reduced number of sites will have accessibility implications. In order to meet the needs of children and young people it may be appropriate to consider developing more informal 'kick about' areas at the local level to ensure that those who do not have the means to travel to the 'multi-sport hubs' are still able to participate in and enjoy their chosen sport.

There is no "standard size" for a hub, because the scale is determined by the level and variety of provision to be included; they can range from an area sufficient to accommodate one or two pitches up to the much larger sites. The sample site in the diagram overleaf would require a space allocation of around 10 ha, but smaller sites can be contemplated.

DIAGRAM 1: THE MULTI-SPORT HUB



### **7.9.3 Actions and recommendations**

The following measures are recommended to bring about an overall improvement in the quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor sports provision in Thurrock:

*Recommendation One:*

Measures should be taken to improve the pitch quality of Council owned sports pitches through the provision of drainage and to encourage other providers to undertake similar measures.

*Recommendation Two:*

Action should be taken to improve the quality of ancillary facilities, particularly women's football changing facilities.

*Recommendation Three:*

The Council should seek to work with the Governing Bodies of Sport to review the programming and timetabling of matches.

*Recommendation Four:*

Consideration should be given to the development of single site multi-sport hubs to serve all the settlement areas.

*Recommendation Five:*

Priority should be given to obtaining additional funding for capital and revenue investment in new pitches to meet the needs of local sports users with a focus on the provision of third generation STPs.

*Recommendation Six:*

Measures should be introduced to stop dog fouling on sports pitches and to introduce deterrents to stop motorcyclists from gaining access to pitches.

*Recommendation Seven:*

A management policy of removing posts from a site after each match should be adopted to stop overuse of goalmouths.

*Recommendation Eight:*

Informal 'kickabout' areas and Multi Use Games Areas should be created within new housing developments to ensure that younger children have access to provision for pitch sports.

*Recommendation Nine:*

That Thurrock Council should update the Playing Pitch Assessment to provide a more accurate assessment of the current supply and demand for pitches.

*Recommendation Ten:*

Any new schools delivered in response to population growth should provide pitches suitable for community use, to help reduce deficiencies in supply. However it should be recognised that policies regarding secured community use of educational facilities could change in the future.

*Recommendation Eleven:*

That where playing fields on school sites are scheduled for redevelopment, this space should be retained or replaced with suitable equivalent or better spaces.

*Recommendation Twelve:*

That the Council liaise with local sports clubs and facility providers to determine their capacity to develop or improve local sports facilities.

*Recommendation Thirteen:*

The management of new sports facilities, including playing pitches, provided as part of development of new schools in Thurrock, either through the Building Schools for the Future programme or in response to population growth, should incorporate a formal service level agreement that ensures the community use of the sports facilities at the school.

*Recommendation Fourteen:*

Open space located within existing schools sites should be retained and protected from development. Former school playing fields should be retained.

Development of open space within the curtilage of a school including playing fields on surplus school sites should not be permitted unless:

- (a) The proposed development is for an open space or outdoor recreational use which retains the open character of the area; or
- (b) The open space or playing fields are re-provided in full in an alternative location within the local area; or
- (c) Appropriate financial contributions are made to Thurrock Council for the provision of replacement open space and leisure facilities or the enhancement of existing leisure facilities in the area to meet the needs of the local community.

*Recommendation Fifteen:*

That further work, beyond the scope of this study, be undertaken to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

## Summary of proposed standards

Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Grays and Tilbury areas 1.0 Ha per 1000 population Aveley and Stanford-le-Hope areas 1.3 Ha per 1000 population Rural area 2.3 Ha per 1000 population	As determined by the appropriate sport governing body in relation to the type of sport and the level at which it is being played or aspired to	Guidance from Sport England and the main sports governing bodies suggests that the development of sport hubs and partnership agreements with existing teams and providers is the direction that should be pursued.

## **8 Allotments and Community Gardens**

### **8.1 Definition**

An allotment is an area of land in, or on the edge of, a developed area which can be rented by local people for the growing of vegetables, flowers or fruit. They provide opportunities for those who wish to do so to grow their own produce, and support health, sustainability and social inclusion. They also provide garden space for those with no gardens, such as flat-dwellers.

### **8.2 Strategic context**

The government has stated<sup>42</sup> that it believes that allotments make an important contribution to the quality of people's lives in our towns and cities, and in creating and maintaining healthy neighbourhoods and sustainable communities. Allotments are considered to be important social assets and the government is keen to ensure that they are better appreciated and properly managed and maintained.

Allotments are an important asset to Thurrock, providing a wide range of benefits to local communities and the environment. They are a valuable green sustainable open space that benefits wildlife and provides a recreational activity that offers health, exercise, and social contacts at a low cost. They are also readily accessible to those members of the community who find themselves socially or economically disadvantaged.

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<sup>42</sup> 'Growing in the Community, a good practice guide for the management of allotments growing in the community', Professor David Crouch, Dr Joe Sempik and Dr Richard Wiltshire for the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions, The Greater London Authority, the Local Government Association and the Shell Better Britain Campaign.

### **8.3 The need for allotments**

PPG17 states that in preparing development plans, local authorities should undertake an assessment of the likely demand for allotments and their existing allotment provision, and prepare policies which aim to meet the needs in their area.

Local Authorities are required to provide allotments for their residents if they consider there is demand under section 23 of the 1908 Allotments Acts (as amended). The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) per 1000 population. In the context of Thurrock this would equate to an area of 28.6 hectares. In 1996, the National Allotment survey identified an average provision in England of 15 plots per 1000 households.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners considers that the target for provision should be 20 allotment plots<sup>43</sup> per 1000 households based on a national allotment survey undertaken in 1997. This allows for some growth in demand as forecast in the House of Commons Select Committee report 'The Future of Allotments' (1998). This target figure equates to a recommended spatial standard of 0.25 hectares per 1000 population.

The National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG17: Annex A, para A14) promotes a demand led approach to the provision of allotment space based on local authority records. It suggests that a waiting list be kept to help identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution. However, Thurrock Council no longer keeps an allotment waiting list to help identify the level of unmet demand. This is because over the last two years the majority of sites have become self-managed and records are no longer maintained. Nevertheless, demand for allotments in Thurrock has increased significantly since the new management arrangements were implemented and many sites no longer have vacant plots and have established waiting lists.

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<sup>43</sup> Where a plot is defined as 10 Rods.

A renewed interest in allotments has been stimulated by the desire for good quality, sustainably grown, local, organic food. The current trend is for more women, families, and black and ethnic minority users to take up allotments. A report for the Greater London Authority found that allotments are particularly important in areas where most people do not have access to a private garden. In many parts of London, these are most likely to be those on a low income.<sup>44</sup>

#### **8.4 Consultation – key findings in relation to allotments**

Very few allotment holders were covered in the consultation, because their numbers mean that a random sample is unlikely to uncover many of them. Just one in 33 respondents in the survey was an allotment holder. There is little evidence of unmet demand, as very few people said they were waiting for one to become available, but this is inconclusive as it could be that people either are unfamiliar with allotment availability or have given up waiting. Those that have allotments said that their condition was good – 29% said it was excellent, and 97% have positive views of their allotment's quality.

#### **8.5 Audit**

##### **8.5.1 Quantity**

There are currently 27 allotment sites in Thurrock providing 945 plots. **Map 43** indicates the location of these, and shows that there is a reasonable spread of sites across the main settlements in Thurrock. The provision equates to 16.7 plots per 1000 households compared to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners target for provision of 20 allotment plots per 1000 households. National comparison demonstrates that Thurrock has an above average number of plots per 1000 households, as shown in **Table 56** below.

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<sup>44</sup> (Mayor's State of the Environment Report for London: May 2003 para 1.15).

**Table 56: Average number of plots per 1000 households**

	England	Cambridge	Bristol	Liverpool	Sheffield	Stevenage	Thurrock
Plots per 1000 house-holds	15	12.01	11.9	4.2	6.7	12.7	16.7

**Table 57** provides details of the location of individual sites, and the number of plots that were available on each site before they became self managed.

The majority of sites are relatively small. These are relatively well distributed across all settlements with only Chafford Hundred lacking any provision.

Of the 27 sites listed in **Table 57**, 22 have 50 or less plots. There are only 2 large sites. The site at Whitehall Lane, Grays has 80 plots and the site at Billet Lane, Corringham has 144 plots.

The demand for allotments is indicated by the extent to which sites are taken up, as shown by the level of vacancies. **Table 57** shows that nine of the sites are fully occupied and a further three sites have four or fewer vacancies. Five sites have no tenants because these are sites, which are either scheduled for disposal or are affected by development plans. One of the sites with more vacancies than tenants is also affected by development proposals. However, one site, Belmont, which is affected by development proposals, is fully occupied and another, Anchorfield, has half its plots vacant. The large site at Corringham, Billet Lane, shows a 40% vacancy level. However, since the site has become self-managed the level of take up has increased and it seems likely that the level of vacancy shown is no longer representative of the actual situation. Thurrock Council no longer monitors waiting lists for allotments and it will be difficult in the absence of this to determine levels of demand.

**Table 58** shows an overall provision of 0.25 ha per 1000 population, which compares well with the Thorpe report recommended level of provision of 0.2 ha per 1000 population. In fact, all the settlements with the exception of Chadwell St Mary, South Ockendon and Chafford Hundred meet this standard.



*Plate 18: Allotments at Maycroft Gardens, Little Thurrock*

**Table 57: Allotment sites**

<b>Sites</b>	<b>Total Number of Plots</b>	<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Vacancies</b>	<b>Statutory</b>	<b>Self/ Council Managed</b>	<b>Statutory/ Temporary</b>	<b>Settlement</b>
Adam Road	8	8	0	YES	SELF	S	Stanford/Corringham
Billet Lane	144	78	66	YES	SELF	S	Stanford/Corringham
Wharf Road	54	37	17	NO	SELF	S	Stanford/Corringham
Fire Station	39	13	26	YES	COUNCIL	S	Stanford/Corringham
Giffords Cross Road	24	13	11	YES	COUNCIL	S	Stanford/Corringham
High Road	27	16	11	NO	SELF	S	Rural
Kingsley Walk	25	21	4	NO	SELF	T	Tilbury/Chadwell
Bull Meadow	24	24	0	YES	SELF	T	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Cromwell Road	50	0	50	NO	COUNCIL	S	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Hogg Lane	50	50	0	YES	SELF	S	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
London Road	0	0	0	FOR DISPOSAL			Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Rosedale Road	40	40	0	YES	SELF	T	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Thurloe Walk	10	8	2	NO	SELF	S	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Ward Avenue	30	30	0	YES	SELF	S	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Whitehall Lane	80	50	30	YES	SELF	S	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Mollands Lane	34	33	1	YES	SELF	T	Aveley/Ockendon
West Road	59	0	59	YES	SELF	T	Aveley/Ockendon
Hall Road	0	0	0	FOR DISPOSAL		S	Aveley/Ockendon
High Street	42	42	0	YES	SELF	S	Aveley/Ockendon
Anchorfield	48	22	26	NO	SELF	T	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Belmont	25	25	0	YES	SELF	Part S/Part T	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Orsett Heath	24	24	0	YES	SELF	T	Rural
Orsett Recreation	63	63	0	NO	SELF	S	Rural
Station Road	23	23	0	NO	SELF	T	Tilbury/Chadwell
Feenan Highway	30	13	17	YES	SELF	S	Tilbury/Chadwell
Tilbury Recreation	42	23	19	YES	SELF	S	Tilbury/Chadwell
<b>Total</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>289</b>				

**Table 58 : Provision of Allotments by Settlement**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Settlement Area (ha)</b>	<b>Allotment (ha)</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Ha per 1000 population</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	2893.8	12.33	52985	0.23
Aveley/Ockendon	2824.8	6.07	26055	0.23
Tilbury/Chadwell	4083.3	5.71	28126	0.20
Stanford/Corringham	3859.7	7.84	30337	0.26
Rural Area	4707.4	3.84	5628	0.68
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>18369</b>	<b>35.79</b>	<b>143131</b>	<b>0.25</b>

**Table 59** shows two different potential scenarios for possible use of selected allotment sites for other purposes. It is not possible to quantify the impact of the two scenarios on the total number of plots available as allotments, as this level of detail is not provided in either the UDP or the UCS for all of the sites listed.

The UCS scenario, however, excludes a number of sites formerly allocated for housing. The impact of the UCS on available allotment plots is thus reduced.

**Table 59: Allotment sites with development proposals**

Site	Proposal in the UDP	Proposal in the UCS
Allotment land at Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope and Chadwell St. Mary	Cemetery extensions	Cemetery extensions
Anchor Field Allotments, West Thurrock	Housing	-
Belmont Allotments, Grays	Housing	Housing
Cherwell Grove Allotments, South Ockendon	Housing	Housing
Essex Road Allotments, West Thurrock	Primary school	Primary School
Hogg Lane Allotments, Grays	Housing	-
Merton Place - Chadwell St. Mary	Housing	-
Adams Road - Stanford Le Hope.	Housing	-

### 8.5.2 Quality and value

A quality assessment was undertaken for 23 out of the 27 allotment sites. Details of the criteria used in the assessment can be found at **Appendix 2.6**. The scores derived from this process are shown in **Table 60** below and in **Map 43**.

**Table 60: Quality Scores for Allotment Sites**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>% Score</b>
Anchor Field , West Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	45.0
Belmont Allotments, Belmont Road, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	67.5
Bull Meadow , Little Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	57.5
Cromwell Road, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	37.8
Essex Road, West Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	
Hogg Lane, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	72.5
Rosedale Road, Little Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	62.5
Thurloe Walk, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	48.6
Ward Avenue, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	70.0
Whitehall Lane, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	50.0
Hall Road, Aveley	Aveley/Ockendon	
High Street, Aveley	Aveley/Ockendon	67.5
Mollands Lane, South Ockendon	Aveley/Ockendon	60.0
West Road, South Ockendon	Aveley/Ockendon	56.8
Feenan Highway, Tilbury	Tilbury/Chadwell	67.5
Kingsley Walk, Chadwell St Mary	Tilbury/Chadwell	60.0
Merton Place, Chadwell St Mary	Tilbury/Chadwell	
Station Road, East Tilbury	Tilbury/Chadwell	62.5
Tilbury Recreation, Tilbury	Tilbury/Chadwell	65.0

Adams Road, Stanford-le-Hope	Stanford/Corringham	47.1
Billet Lane, Stanford-le-Hope	Stanford/Corringham	80.0
Fobbing Road, Corringham	Stanford/Corringham	
Giffords Cross Road, Corringham	Stanford/Corringham	62.2
Wharf Road, Stanford-le-Hope	Stanford/Corringham	48.6
High Road, Horndon-on-the-Hill	Rural Area	51.4
Hornsby Lane, Orsett Heath	Rural Area	60.0
Orsett Recreation, Rectory Road, Orsett	Rural Area	87.1

The scores range from 37.8% at Cromwell Road, Grays to 87.1% at Orsett Road Recreation. The main reasons for poor scores were poor access and parking, lack of a communal shed, a limited range of plot sizes and a lack of re-cycling facilities. Only 8 of the sites surveyed have a communal shed where plot holders can purchase seeds and other essential items.

The map also shows that the worst sites tend to be towards the western side of the borough. Sites in West Thurrock are both poor, as is one of the two Aveley sites.

### **8.5.3 Accessibility**

**Map 44** indicates the catchment areas for allotments in Thurrock based on the following criteria:

- Over 100 plots = 1200m radius
- 50 to 100 plots = 900m radius
- 10 to 49 plots = 600m radius
- 1 to 9 plots = 300m radius

These criteria are considered to be the reasonable distances that people would expect to travel to an allotment site, taking into account the size of the allotment site and the number of plots available.

#### **8.5.4 Management**

Thurrock Council has 6 allotment sites throughout the borough. There are a further 19 sites that are self-managed. Since this data was last collated, it is understood that there are now only three sites that are Council managed.

#### **8.6 Conclusion**

Allotment provision in Thurrock currently exceeds the England average of 15 plots per 1000 households. Evidence submitted to the Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs on Allotments indicated that this would be an acceptable standard of provision. However, there are a number of sites that will be taken from the supply of allotment land as a consequence of proposals contained in the UDP. It has not been possible, at this stage, to determine the extent to which this will affect current levels of provision but it seems likely to reduce this to below the acceptable standard of provision.

The assessment of the quality of the provision reveals that there is scope to improve facilities on most sites, particularly through the provision of communal sheds.

#### **8.7 Standards**

**The allotment standard proposed is the average provision in England of 15 plots per 1000 households.**

##### **8.7.1 Quantity**

This would not allow for any growth in demand and should be considered to be a minimum level of provision.

PPG17<sup>45</sup>: promotes a demand led approach to the provision of allotment space based on local authority records. It suggests that a waiting list be kept to help identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution. Thurrock Council has recently stopped collecting this information following the move to self-management. It is therefore recommended that in order to ensure that this standard is maintained the collection of waiting list information should be reinstated.

### **8.7.2 Quality**

The median quality score is 60%. Hornsby Lane, Orsett Heath, Kingsley Walk, Chadwell St Mary and Mollands Lane, South Ockendon achieved this. Other allotment sites should be brought up to this level of quality as a minimum benchmark.

Good aspects of an allotment site are considered to be:

- Security (e.g. fencing)
- Water availability.
- Good quality soil.
- Vacant plots maintained to a reasonable standard. e.g. grass cutting and rotation of soil before plot is taken on by new owner.
- Clearance/removal of rubbish.
- Good access.
- Parking facilities.
- Pathways.
- Containers for facilities.

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<sup>45</sup> Annex A, para A14

### **8.7.3 Accessibility**

The catchment areas for allotments in Thurrock are based on the following criteria:

Over 100 plots = 1200m radius

50 to 100 plots = 900m radius

10 to 49 plots = 600m radius

1 to 9 plots = 300m radius

These criteria are considered to be the reasonable distances that people would expect to travel to an allotment site, taking into account the size of the allotment site and the number of plots available.

### **8.8 Deficiencies**

#### **8.8.1 Quantity**

**Table 61** shows details of the deficiencies for each settlement in relation to the standard of 15 plots per 1000 households.

**Table 61: Deficiencies in Allotment Provision**

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Households</b>	<b>Total Number of Plots<sup>46</sup></b>	<b>Plots per 1000 Households</b>	<b>Surplus/ Deficiencies</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	22239	357	16.1	1.1
Aveley/Ockendon	11249	135	12.0	-3.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	10989	120	10.9	-4.1
Stanford/Corringham	11828	269	22.7	7.7
Rural Area	2180	114	52.3	37.3
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>58485</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<i>Standard: 15 plots per 1000 households</i>				

The two settlements where current provision is below the standard are Aveley/Ockendon and Tilbury/Chadwell.

However, there are a number of allotment sites that are currently the subject of development proposals and these are shown in **Table 62** below.

**Table 62: Number of Plots affected by development**

<b>Site</b>	<b>No. of Plots</b>	<b>Settlement</b>
Anchor Field Allotments, West Thurrock	48	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Belmont Allotments, Grays	25	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Hogg Lane Allotments, Grays	50	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet
Wharf Road	54	Stanford/Corringham

**Table 63** below shows that if these sites are lost to current provision, only Stanford/Corringham and the Rural Area will meet the recommended standard of provision. In addition, the UDP states that there will be a further reduction in allotment provision where allotment land is needed for cemetery extensions but does not specify where these will be. In addition, Adams Road, Stanford-le-Hope in Stanford/Corringham with 8 plots has been identified in the Urban Capacity Study as a potential development site but this has not been included in the revised figures as no commitment has been made to develop this site.

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<sup>46</sup> The number of plots shown excludes sites that are being disposed of for development.

**Table 63: Deficiencies in Allotment Provision if scheduled sites are developed**

Settlement	Households	Total Number of Plots	Revised Number of Plots	Plots per1000 Households	Revised Deficiencies
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	22239	357	234	10.5	-4.5
Aveley/Ockendon	11249	135	135	12.0	-3.0
Tilbury/Chadwell	10989	120	120	10.9	-4.1
Stanford/Corringham	11828	269	215	18.2	3.2
Rural Area	2180	114	114	52.3	37.3
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>58485</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>-1.0</b>

### 8.8.2 Accessibility

Overall there is a good distribution of allotments with the majority of residents in Thurrock having an allotment site within a reasonable distance of their homes. The main areas located outside the catchment of existing allotments are Chafford Hundred and Purfleet.

## 8.9 Projections

### 8.9.1 Quantity

The household projections are based on dwelling figures derived from a population and dwellings baseline using ward-based 2001 Census data. The phased provision for 18,500 dwellings set out in the East of England Plan (RSS 14) has been incorporated in the projection and the division of these dwellings into the five areas is based on information regarding the current development pipeline and the Urban Capacity Study. The growth rates for

dwellings have been applied to households through to 2021 on the basis that the 2001 figures for dwellings and households are very similar.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 64a: Projections of surpluses/deficiencies in relation to the standard (2006)**

<b>Settlement 2006</b>	<b>2006 House- holds</b>	<b>Number of plots</b>	<b>Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (plots)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	24749	234	9.1	-5.9	-152
Aveley/Ockendon	11332	135	11.9	-3.1	-35
Tilbury/Chadwell	11204	120	10.7	-4.3	-48
Stanford/Corringham	11998	215	17.9	2.9	35
Rural Area	2231	114	51.1	36.1	81
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>62514</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-120</b>

<sup>47</sup> The Revised 2001-based Population and Household Growth in the East of England, 2001-2021 March 2005 suggests a higher level of growth to 81,000 households (40% increase). Dave King, Janet Hayden and Roger Jackson Population and Housing Research Group Anglia Polytechnic University

**Table 64b: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2011)**

<b>Settlement 2011</b>	<b>2011 House- holds</b>	<b>Number of plots</b>	<b>Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (plots)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	29588	234	7.9	-7.1	-210
Aveley/Ockendon	11429	135	11.8	-3.2	-36
Tilbury/Chadwell	11411	120	10.5	-4.5	-51
Stanford/Corringham	12087	215	17.8	2.8	34
Rural Area	2309	114	49.4	34.4	79
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>66823</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>-184</b>

**Table 64c: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2016)**

<b>Settlement 2016</b>	<b>2016 House- holds</b>	<b>Number of plots</b>	<b>Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (plots)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	33074	234	7.1	-7.9	-262
Aveley/Ockendon	12690	135	10.6	-4.4	-55
Tilbury/Chadwell	11428	120	10.5	-4.5	-51
Stanford/Corringham	12240	215	17.6	2.6	91
Rural Area	2309	114	49.4	34.4	79
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>71740</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>-3.6</b>	<b>-258</b>

**Table 64d: Projections of surpluses and/or deficiencies in relation to the standard (2021)**

<b>Settlement 2021</b>	<b>2021 House- holds</b>	<b>Number of plots</b>	<b>Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Deficiency Plots per 1000</b>	<b>Surplus/ deficiency (plots)</b>
Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	36654	234	6.4	-8.6	-316
Aveley/Ockendon	13013	135	10.4	-4.6	-60
Tilbury/Chadwell	12309	120	9.7	-5.3	-65
Stanford/Corringham	12362	215	17.4	2.4	30
Rural Area	2309	114	49.4	34.4	79
<b>Thurrock</b>	<b>76647</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>-4.3</b>	<b>-332</b>

These tables show that, using the estimated household projections, the level of provision for the whole of Thurrock declines from 14 plots per 1000 population in 2001 to 10.7 in 2021. The projection for Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet, where virtually all the population increase will take place, indicates a decline to 6.4 plots per 1000 households, less than half the standard of 15 plots per 1000 households. In addition, the settlements of Aveley/Ockendon and Tilbury/Chadwell will have a level of provision below the agreed standard. Stanford/Corringham and the rural area remain in surplus throughout the time period.

### **8.9.2 Potential Solutions**

Our review of the Urban Capacity Study includes an analysis of the sites that were considered but subsequently rejected to examine whether there were any potential sites that could be used to redress the quantitative deficiencies. This review revealed that a total of five allotment sites were considered for future development, at least one in each settlement area with the exception of the Rural Area. No new potential sites were identified.

### ***Landscape Capacity Study***

The Landscape Capacity Study identified one potential site for additional allotment land and this is an increase in the extent of the allotment land to the west of Linford. The study also makes recommendations regarding features desirable to safeguard and this includes all allotment sites covered by the study areas.

This represents a potential solution that will require more considered investigation and appraisal; it is also possible that good urban design may enable densities to be achieved that remove the need to use these options to secure the necessary quantity of open spaces.

### **8.9.3 Accessibility**

The allotment sites in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet that are subject to development proposals are all located to the east side of Grays and are in relatively close proximity. As a consequence, new areas of deficiency in accessibility will be created. Principally this will affect West Thurrock and South Chafford, further exacerbating the problem that already exists in this part of the settlement area.

When proposed new developments are taken into account the situation deteriorates further because these are the areas that will experience the major part of the new development identified in the Urban Capacity Study. This is illustrated in **map 45**.

### **8.10 Actions and recommendations**

#### *Recommendation One:*

Consideration should be given to the development of a strategy for the future provision and management of allotments.

*Recommendation Two:*

The Council follows the advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance<sup>48</sup> that a waiting list for allotments be kept to help identify the level of unmet demand and its spatial distribution and that Waiting List positions should be reported annually.

*Recommendation Three:*

Thurrock Council should consider producing an Action Plan for upgrading existing sites to provide improved facilities including water, fencing and communal sheds on all allotment sites.

*Recommendation Four:*

Thurrock Council formally confirms its commitment to retaining, at a minimum, the existing number and area of both public and privately owned allotments. It should be noted that there may be opportunities for small scale allotment sites as part of housing development and that large are not the only solution.

*Recommendation Five:*

That the Council should ensure that the Local Development Framework gives due recognition to allotments and their protection.

*Recommendation Six:*

A participatory approach to the management and development of allotments should be adopted through the establishment of an Allotment Steering Group.

*Recommendation Seven:*

Sites identified in the Landscape Capacity Study should be further assessed and a survey of land to find new sites should be considered.

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<sup>48</sup> PPG17: Annex A, para A14

*Recommendation Eight:*

Consideration should be given to the role of allotments in the enhancement of biodiversity and in the implementation of the council's biodiversity action plan.

*Recommendation Nine:*

That further work beyond the scope of this study, be undertaken to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

**Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
15 plots per 1000 households	Quality score of 60%	Everyone should live within at least one catchment area, dependent on site size:  Over 100 plots – 1200m 50-100 plots – 900m 10 – 49 plots – 600m 1 – 9 plots – 300m

## **9 Churchyards and Cemeteries**

### **9.1 Definition**

Cemeteries and churchyards are spaces set aside for the burial of the dead, either through interment of the body or of cremated remains, or for memorials to those who have died. They are important for quiet contemplation and reflection linked to death. They have a secondary, but nonetheless important, role in the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Churchyards lie within the curtilage of a church, and are most often consecrated ground; cemeteries lie outside church confines, and will commonly have a chapel or other religious building on the site (though many such buildings are being lost).

### **9.2 Strategic context**

PPG 17 notes the potential importance of churchyards and cemeteries as “important places for quiet contemplation”, especially in the busy urban context, and also notes their value in promoting biodiversity. However, there is debate ongoing about the importance of cemeteries and churchyards in modern Britain, centering not only on the need for space for burial but also on the purpose and focus of these spaces. Government issued a consultation paper “Burial Law and Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”<sup>49</sup> following a detailed report by a Select Committee, aiming at a widespread review of law and current practice.

There are important differences between churchyards and cemeteries, as well as the obvious similarities of purpose. Churchyards are generally historic in nature, and many have existed for centuries. They are generally fairly small – often no more than around an acre (0.4ha) in size – and are usually owned by the denominational authorities of the church to which they are attached, which is most commonly the Church of England.

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<sup>49</sup> Burial Law and Policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Home Office Consultation paper, 2004.

Cemeteries, on the other hand, began to come into being in the early nineteenth century and most are owned by local authorities, including parish as well as district councils. A typical cemetery may be around 4ha in extent, and there are around 7000ha of cemetery space in England in total.<sup>50</sup> However, there is no statutory duty on an authority to provide burial space, and as such provision tends to be rather ad hoc.

In recent years, a private sector involvement in burials has begun to emerge, linked to the environmental movement, in the form of provision for “green burials”. These involve the deceased being buried in a biodegradable casket, sometimes in municipal cemeteries but increasingly in privately run facilities, often located in tranquil rural surroundings. Examples of meadow or woodland burial sites close to Thurrock are at Maldon and Dovercourt; some local authorities now provide these (for example, Carlisle).

Practice in relation to burial has changed in the twentieth century, with an increasing preference to cremate rather than inter the deceased. The Cemetery Research Group estimates that 72% of deaths are now followed by cremation, leaving a minority (but a significant one) opting for full interment.<sup>51</sup> The eminent bereavement sociologist Tony Walter, however, notes that this proportion has now levelled off, and suggests that the demand for interment is now likely to remain relatively consistent for the foreseeable future.<sup>52</sup>

As essentially quiet and undisturbed places, cemeteries have also become a place where biodiversity can thrive, and provide habitats that are becoming scarce such as heathland and hedges. Flora and fauna have taken sanctuary in cemeteries and they make an important contribution to the protection of uncommon species in the British Isles. This is recognised, among others, by the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) which, in conjunction

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<sup>50</sup> Paradise Preserved, English Heritage, 2002 p 19

<sup>51</sup> Dr Julie Rugg, Report of the Cemetery Research Group, University of York, 2002

<sup>52</sup> Dr Tony Walter, evidence to Select Committee, 2001

with the Arthur Rank Centre, set up in 1989 a “Living Churchyards” initiative which claims to have worked with over 5,000 projects nationwide.<sup>53</sup>

Having said that, it is important to recognise that churchyards and cemeteries are not primarily intended as open space or semi-natural environments. English Heritage recognises this and notes that “first and foremost, cemeteries are places to respect and commemorate the dead”.<sup>54</sup> However, they go on to add that cemeteries are also “thoughtful places, reflecting the impact of time on humankind....places for quiet communion.” This echoes the evidence of Tony Walter to the Select Committee investigating cemeteries in 2001, when he drew attention to their prime purpose as a place to bury the dead, and their prime significance as a *memento mori* reminding the living of their transitory nature. Walter suggested that burial grounds need to be “local, sustainable, accessible and safe”, and stated that “British burial grounds were the worst in Europe on all these counts”.<sup>55</sup>

There is, indeed, a widespread and growing concern over the quality and management of many churchyards and cemeteries, prompted initially by the unsafe and unstable condition of many memorials and monuments. In the early 1990s the Association of Burial Authorities drew attention to injuries and even deaths caused by unstable gravestones; this situation had not improved by 2002, when the Environmental Health Journal reported that accidents to cemetery workers and visitors were causing some councils significant problems in securing adequate insurance cover.<sup>56</sup>

The Cemetery Research Group at York University notes that most cemeteries (91%) are still in use, although there is now considerable pressure on space. One in nine cemeteries had fewer than twenty new grave spaces remaining.<sup>57</sup> Options for increasing the provision of grave spaces have been widely

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<sup>53</sup> The UK Church and Conservation Project, [www.ecen.org.uk/ch&cons.shtml](http://www.ecen.org.uk/ch&cons.shtml), accessed 11/4/2005

<sup>54</sup> Paradise Preserved, p4

<sup>55</sup> Dr Tony Walter, Memorandum CEM 45 Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Memoranda, December 2000

<sup>56</sup> Environmental Health Journal, February 2002

<sup>57</sup> Dr Julie Rugg, Report of the Cemetery Research Group, University of York, 2002

discussed - a Home Office consultation was completed in April 2004<sup>58</sup> - but no conclusion has yet been reached on a way forward.

However, the relevant Select Committee has published a report<sup>59</sup> which signposts the direction of future policy and which indicates the preferred options on which consultation feedback has been sought. The Select Committee findings indicated:

- A continuing respect for the desire of a significant minority to bury the dead, and no further promotion of cremation
- Local Authorities should give the widest possible access to burial through local, accessible burial space, and this need should be addressed in Development Plans
- The public should have access to good, impartial advice about their options
- Local Authorities should pay more attention to the cultural significance of cemeteries
- Cemetery managers should evaluate the biodiversity potential of burial places and, in conjunction with relevant partners such as wildlife trusts, manage them accordingly.

### **9.3 Consultation – key findings in relation to cemeteries and churchyards**

Four in ten respondents said they visit a local cemetery or churchyard; the most commonly visited are those at Chadwell. However, some local churchyards attract little or no attention from visitors, including the very central churchyard in Grays (SS Peter and Paul). Women were a little more likely to be visiting (perhaps reflecting the demography of mortality) but visiting is by no means limited to older residents.

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<sup>58</sup> Burial Law and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Home Office consultation paper 2003

<sup>59</sup> Eighth Report of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, April 2001

Cemetery visits are less common for people in Grays and the rural area than elsewhere in Thurrock; just 38% of Grays residents visit, and 39% of rural residents, in comparison with 44% of other urban area residents.

Most residents (64%) said the condition of their cemetery was at least good; 22% said it was excellent. Quality is more highly rated in Aveley/Ockendon where 77% said good or excellent, than in Grays where just 52% scored their cemetery good or excellent.

## **9.4 Audit**

### **9.4.1 Quantity**

There are churchyards at Grays, South Ockendon, Aveley, Bulphan and Horndon-on-the-Hill, and in addition Thurrock Council manages eight cemeteries across the borough. The locations of these facilities are shown in **Map 46**. Of the Council's eight cemeteries, two date from the nineteenth century (Grays New and Grays Old), two from the early twentieth century (North Stifford and South Ockendon), and the remaining four from the 1920s (Chadwell St Mary, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope and West Thurrock). Of these, only four remain open for new lawn graves (Chadwell St Mary, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope and West Thurrock).

### **9.4.2 Quality and value**

An assessment has been made of the quality and value of local cemeteries and churchyards, and a summary of the results is shown in **Table 65** below. The full scores are listed in **Appendix 4.7**.

**Table 65: Quality and value scores for churchyards and cemeteries**

Site	Location	Quality	Value
Chadwell Cemetery	Tilbury/Chadwell	High	High
Grays New Cemetery	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	High	High
Sandy Lane West Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	High	High
St Nicholas, S Ockendon	Aveley/Ockendon	High	High
St Michael's Church, Aveley	Aveley/Ockendon	Low	High
SS Peter and Paul, Grays	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Low	High
Corringham Cemetery	Stanford/Corringham	High	Low
St Mary's Church, N Stifford	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	High	Low
Wharf Road, Stanford-le-Hope	Stanford/Corringham	High	Low
St Mary's Chadwell	Tilbury/Chadwell	Low	Low
St Mary's, Little Thurrock	Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet	Low	Low
St Mary the Virgin, Bulphan	Rural	No assessment available	
SS Peter and Paul, Horndon on the Hill	Rural	No assessment available	

Four of the eleven assessed sites are of both high quality and high value, relative to the median scores for each site. However, no site scores at all well in relation to environmental and ecological criteria, where the criteria are set very high and do not allow recognition of the ecological and environmental value of these sites, in spite of the status of Corringham cemetery which is an Area of Local Nature Conservation Significance. This suggests that the assessment criteria for cemeteries and churchyards require revision to reflect the specific issues that are associated with these sites.

Two sites, St Michael's and SS Peter and Paul, are assessed as being of high value but low quality. Conversely, Corringham, North Stifford and Stanford-le-Hope are assessed as being of high quality but relatively low value.

Two sites, at Chadwell and Little Thurrock, are of both low quality and low value.



*Plate 19: Cemetery at North Stifford*

### **9.4.3 Accessibility**

As **Map 46** shows, each major settlement in the borough has at least one churchyard or cemetery, with the notable exceptions of Tilbury and East Tilbury, which have no provision, but which are catered for by the cemetery at Chadwell St Mary. Some villages in the north of the borough also have no local churchyard or cemetery.

All Council managed facilities are open to the public during daylight hours, and Council regulations are designed to protect the quiet enjoyment of these sites. Fees are set at levels which seem moderate in relation to those of other

authorities; interment in Thurrock costs £365, compared with £300 in Runnymede and £326 in Swale, but is much less than the comparable charge in Barking (£540) or Richmond (£500).

## **9.5 Standards and projections**

### **9.3.1 Quantity**

No assessment has been undertaken of the adequacy of cemetery space in Thurrock to meet current local demand, although the public consultation does not suggest a significant weakness in the supply of plots. However, it is possible to calculate the likely requirement for burial space in the area based on current death rates and the proportion of people who choose to bury their loved ones. According to the Cemetery Research Group, approximately 28% of deaths are followed by full body interment, and 40% of these require new graves. Applying Thurrock’s current death rate of 9.5 per 1000 population to the population figures now and into the future suggests the progression in demand for grave spaces shown in **Table 66**, assuming population growth as projected by the authority and no change in either death rates or preference for cremation.

**Table 66: Deaths and burials, 2001 - 2021**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Deaths per annum</b>	<b>Burials per annum</b>	<b>New graves per annum</b>
2001	143,128	1,360	381	152
2006	148,816	1,414	396	158
2011	154,518	1,468	411	164
2016	160,226	1,522	426	170
2021	166,598	1,583	443	177

An ongoing need for new graves is thus projected. The proposed development of the allotment sites at Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope and

Chadwell St Mary would address this, albeit at the expense of allotment provision (see Section 4.7). Government may however be minded to permit re-use of graves and this would reduce pressure on provision.

### **9.5.2 Quality**

The Council has identified a benchmark for quality in the churchyard at St Nicholas, South Ockendon which achieved a quality score of 51.5%. Other cemeteries and churchyards should be brought to that level as a minimum.

The Council's aspiration for cemeteries is to have at least two water sources at every site. In addition, the following aspects have been identified as indicative of quality:

- Availability of water
- Security (e.g. fencing or walling)
- Good access to and within the site
- Containers for disposal of rubbish
- Entrance signage and information at the main entrance
- Adequate parking
- Good maintenance of the aesthetics of the site
- Toilet facilities for those sites still taking new burials

There is no definitive national standard for churchyards and cemeteries at present. English Heritage publishes suggested quality standards in *Paradise Preserved*, but discussion with the Council leads us to conclude that these are more appropriate to cemeteries capable of listing in the English Heritage Register, and a more workaday standard is appropriate locally.

One such standard, adopted by an increasing number of local authorities, is the Charter for the Bereaved published by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management. This covers a wide range of issues linked to bereavement, including matters focused on the bereaved themselves

(procedures, choices, dignity, monuments and inscriptions) and others focused on the responsibilities of the authority (staff, maintenance, ceremonies, equality and cultural differences, and health and safety, for instance). The charter is thus a very comprehensive document which would form a very good basis not only for setting standards in relation to quality but also wider aspects of the authority's interaction and relationship with the bereaved.

Specifically in relation to quality, the charter expects subscribers to provide

- Grass cutting at least seven times a year, every four weeks from April to October (other than in cemeteries where grass is being allowed to grow freely for habitat purposes) with care taken to avoid damage to stones or tributes
- Weekly removal of litter and of dead wreaths from recent funerals (though not from subsequent visits, which are the responsibility of visitors)
- Accessible water supplies
- Clear paths and walking surfaces that are safe for the elderly and disabled people
- Minimise damage to existing graves, memorials and tributes when preparing adjacent new graves
- A statement of service standards

The ICCM indicates that charter members will be working on a national standard but it seems likely to include these minimum standards of maintenance and care. We recommend this as a basis for cemetery quality in

Thurrock, and note how well it corresponds to the council's own aspirations for this type of space.

### **9.5.3 Accessibility**

There is no appropriate accessibility standard for cemeteries, although the importance of these places to the elderly and infirm suggests strongly a need to take account of public transport when planning sites, and to provide sites that are reasonably easily accessed in terms of distance. The growth of population in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet implies a need to concentrate new cemetery development in localities that are more accessible to Grays and West Thurrock in particular; the allotment sites currently suggested for development, at Corringham, Stanford and Chadwell, would only partly meet this need (the populations in these areas decline or are static over the forecast period) and other sites should be considered. **Map 47** illustrates this.

The lack of rural provision may be overcome by changes in policy permitting reuse, and a decision should be delayed pending the outcome of current consideration. However, the growing demand for green burials is not currently met anywhere near Thurrock; green burial sites are, by their nature, frequently rural in character, and the possibility of meeting this need in the rural locality, and thereby addressing the accessibility issue for the Thurrock villages, should not be overlooked.

## **9.6 Actions and recommendations**

### *Recommendation One:*

An ongoing need for burial sites is projected, even though the vast majority of people now opt for cremation. The Council will need to make adequate provision to address this need. Allotment sites are currently scheduled for this purpose in some settlements. However, there will be an increased demand

from the Grays area which suggests that other sites more local to Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet should be considered.

*Recommendation Two:*

Some local cemeteries and churchyards are of high quality and highly valued, but there are others where work is needed to bring their quality up to the expectation set by their value. The Council should use the quality benchmark offered by St Nicolas' churchyard, South Ockendon, as a minimum level of quality

*Recommendation Three:*

Assessment criteria for cemeteries and churchyards should be tailored to the specific issues associated with these facilities and a model exists, in the Charter for the Bereaved, which can usefully be adopted for Thurrock and which will deliver against the council's aspirations for cemeteries. The Council should consider formal adoption of the Charter.

*Recommendation Four:*

A small but increasing demand for "green burials" is not met locally at all and may offer a possible solution for the lack of rural provision. The Council should explore this possibility further with landowners seeking to diversify land use.

*Recommendation Five:*

That further work beyond the scope of this study, be undertaken to apply these standards in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework.

**Summary of proposed standards**

<b>Quantity standard</b>	<b>Quality standard</b>	<b>Accessibility standard</b>
Sufficient to meet a demand for 150 - 175 graves per annum	Quality score of 51.5%  Charter for the Bereaved standards of quality and service	None.

## **10 Summary of findings**

### **10.1 Overall**

Residents are very positive about the value of their open space, even though they may have more qualified views about quality, quantity (especially in some areas of the borough) and accessibility (especially to the country parks). They are anxious to conserve remaining space, and to improve it; they are critical of the development at Chafford Hundred which lacks adequate provision and are fearful of plans for further housing development in which existing open space may be sacrificed to the developer, and where there will be pressure to use land for housing rather than amenity. People want more space; although half the residents said they were happy with the extent of local parks and spaces, a substantial minority of 30% disagree – by implication saying that they are looking for more, and for better than they have now.

Thurrock's open spaces contribute significantly to aspirations for exercise, health, community cohesion, environmental awareness, education, and live ability. They could, with the improvements people call for, contribute even more. Open space value is however threatened by misuse (by motorcyclists and irresponsible dog owners in particular) and vandalism, which gives rise to serious safety concerns that may be hardened by anti-vandalism measures being taken by owners.

Safety in open space after dark is a genuine concern shared across the community. Young people may be the main cause of this problem, but are also often the group who suffer most from it, in terms of threat and direct damage to facilities, and because any group of young people tends to be seen as a threat and treated accordingly.

Even those who don't use space still value it, and want to see it conserved at the very least; even those whose space is poorly looked after still think the space is important.

## **10.2 Parks**

Parks are a very popular recreational activity in Thurrock. Only 1 in 5 people say they never use them; in contrast, over half the population use a local park at least once every fortnight, and one in eight visit at least daily. The most popular parks (apart from the country parks, which are also very popular) are those at Grays (both the town park and Grays Beach) and Corringham, but people's use of parks is widely distributed and a great many were mentioned by name.

Access to local parks is largely on foot – three in five visitors travels to a park this way, confirming that the park is essentially seen as a local amenity rather than an attraction requiring a special trip (with the exception of the country parks). Consequently expenditure incurred in travelling to parks is generally very low, and for two in three visitors a park visit costs nothing at all – reinforcing the important role of the park in promoting inclusion, and highlighting the disadvantage of those communities where this local, free to access provision is not present.

Those who don't walk to the park use their cars; use of public transport as a means to visit parks is negligible.

Parks are also important as a basis for social activity; although a quarter of people visit their local park alone, by far the majority use the park as the focus for an activity with family, partner or friends. The park thus has a significant role in promoting cohesion within communities. It is also an important provision for health; three in five residents who use parks do so to walk, around 30% use parks to walk their pets, and on top of this are the people who go there for more strenuous exercise such as outdoor sports. Although

parks are also used for relaxation, picnics and other diversions, their role in promoting a healthy lifestyle is a significant one and the absence of parks could therefore have a detrimental effect on the taking of exercise.

Park catchments are, by and large, local. The two country parks at Langdon Hills and, to a lesser extent, Belhus Woods, draw visitors from wider surroundings, and both Grays Beach and Coalhouse Fort appeal beyond their immediate environs, but otherwise the catchment areas of the parks are very tightly drawn around the immediate park locality.

The highest quality scores for local parks are secured by Grays Beach, Grays Park, Dilkes Park, and Coalhouse Fort. All four also achieve very high value scores too, so the investment in these facilities is appropriate and justified by their place in the value hierarchy.

At the other end of the scale, Woodview Play Area and Usk Road both attract low quality scores and are not highly valued – perhaps in part because of their low quality. Elm Road Open Space, although poorly scored for quality, is nevertheless highly valued, and West Thurrock Memorial Ground, which also attracts a low quality score, receives a much higher score for value – perhaps because of the significance of this space in an area of otherwise very limited provision.

People value their parks very highly. Two thirds of park users are positive about the difference the park makes to the local area, highlighting its contribution to overall quality of life and live ability. They also praise their park for the availability of play and recreational space, and in general have a positive (albeit qualified) view of the quality of grass, planting, and overall appearance. Park users are less confident about park cleanliness, and there are particular problems with dog fouling and with the provision of (and emptying of) litter and dog bins. People are also more critical of facilities such as seating, catering and toilets, which they identify as a focus for improvement, and have mixed views on the range of provision in respect of play equipment.

Safety when using parks is not a prominent concern during the daytime – although even young park users would welcome increased staffing, to reduce their fears about homeless people and strangers using their parks - but is very much an issue after dark. A majority of local people fear for their safety after dark in the park.

Those who don't use parks generally do so from choice rather than force of circumstance – the main reasons for non-use are time and inclination. Nevertheless there are some people who find it difficult to access parks, either because of distance or mobility limitation, and this may be a problem in some areas where provision is more limited.

Almost everyone agrees that parks are important; their value to the local community is high. Even those who don't use parks support the idea that they are a big positive contributor to quality of life; three-quarters of respondents (a figure higher than the figure for regular park users) agreed with this statement, and a large proportion of these did so strongly; virtually no one disagreed.

There is some enthusiasm for the creation of a landmark park, to put Thurrock on the map, and several practical recommendations for improvement in facilities and amenities, most notably in increasing diversity within parks and in improving safety and security.

The results of consultation indicated that the current levels of provision of parks in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and the Rural Area do not meet the expectations of the local community. We have set a standard of 0.7 Ha per 1000 population on the basis that this level of provision is adequate to meet current community expectations.

Urban parks and gardens in Thurrock are unevenly distributed across the borough with two settlements lacking any provision. There is a distinct split in the quality and value of urban parks and gardens with almost half being

assessed as of high quality and high value and almost half as being low both in terms of quality and value.

A hierarchy of provision has been identified that is based on size and the distance traveled to the urban parks and gardens. This also reflects the function and purpose of these parks.

Our review of the Urban Capacity Study shows that for Urban Parks and Gardens, using estimated population projections, the deficiency in hectares per 1000 of population increases in the period 2001 to 2021 for the whole of Thurrock. However, the level of deficiency almost doubles from 19 Ha in 2001 to 36 Ha in 2021 in Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet due to the large expected growth in population.

### **10.3 Country parks**

The country parks attract very positive responses from those who use them. Usage is, not surprisingly, lower than for local parks, but even so appears strong; a third of local people use the country park at least once a month, and their affections appear evenly divided between the two sites in the borough.

Access to a country park is however severely limited if the individual has no private transport. Virtually all country park users living further than a short walk from the park visit by car; very few people use public transport. Costs of access are still low – most people quote costs at £2 or less – but the country parks do not have the same effect on inclusion as the local facilities and this must be seen as a weakness. Country parks are appealing to a Thurrock-wide audience, but even so the numbers of visitors from Grays appears low and suggests untapped potential in this resource.

Activities in the country park are again focused on exercise and relaxation, but education is also a prominent element in people's enjoyment. The parks score well on litter, and better than the local facilities on dog mess, but there is a criticism of lack of shelter from adverse weather which suggests that

people want to use these facilities even under less attractive circumstances. People also call for improved catering facilities and toilets, and more seating; their priority for improvement is in the range of activities for children.

Those who don't use country parks again cite choice reasons (time and inclination) but one in five say it's too difficult to get to, confirming the issue of accessibility in relation to these facilities. Few have been put off by a bad experience, though.

#### **10.4 Natural greenspace**

The local countryside is seen generally as easy to access, although one in five residents would disagree with this perception, a small but significant minority. The problem may lie in public rights of way; although positive views outweigh negative ones, there are substantial proportions of residents who think footpaths are inadequately signposted and who comment adversely on both quality and footpath maintenance.

Although the area is well provided with public rights of way, user feedback indicates that many of these are obstructed, and consequently of limited value. The footpaths are also difficult to negotiate for people with disabilities.

Whilst there appears to be a satisfactory amount of provision of natural and semi natural greenspace in Thurrock overall, this disguises the fact that the distribution of sites is not evenly spread across the area. Most of the sites identified are located towards the eastern and western boundaries, leaving the central area, where most people are resident, outside the recognised catchment areas for this type of open space.

Whilst many people in Thurrock do not have access to smaller sites of natural and semi natural greenspace, there are a number of larger sites which are of sufficient size and attractiveness to be accessible to most people living in the borough.

We have recommended that Thurrock Council adopt the principles of the English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards Model. Thurrock already meets some of these requirements. However, the standard should be adopted in order to address the identified shortfalls in provision, notably in Grays, Tilbury and Chadwell St Mary.

All the Settlement Areas in Thurrock will remain in surplus in the period 2001 to 2021, for natural and semi-natural greenspace. In Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet the surplus decreases from 116 Ha in 2001 to 80 Ha in 2021 with all other areas remaining fairly static. However, the lack of access to natural and semi-natural greenspace at the 300 metre level of the hierarchy will remain problematic for parts of Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.

## **10.5 Riverside**

The riverside is an underutilised resource. Just one in five people visit the river frontage more than once a month, and a substantial proportion of local people never go there, in spite of its considerable length and relative convenience to the concentration of local population. The river frontage is a mixed environment including outstanding landscape and environmentally-degraded areas; its main use is for walking, and users value the space for the tranquillity it offers as well as the river views; they are less positive about accessibility and safety in this area, however, and safety after dark is a real concern.

Riverfront users are by no means confined to the riverside communities. The river is a resource for the whole of the borough and draws visitors from across the area. Nevertheless, the most frequent visitors tend to live nearer the river.

A riverside walk would be a clear environmental and recreational asset to Thurrock and would help to increase access to, and potentially use of, the recreational amenity of the river itself, which is also an underutilised resource

at present. However, the continuity of a riverside path is affected by development that has been allowed to encroach on the space that could be used for this. Areas of outstanding landscape quality exist along the riverbank in the east of the borough, but the amenity value of these marshland environments is being adversely affected by the indiscriminate use of marsh footpaths for off-road motorcycling.

## **10.6 Amenity land**

Amenity space is very important and valued by local people; 86% say these spaces are important to them, against just 11% who think otherwise. Residents assessment of quality is mixed, though; a quarter of residents say their local spaces are not well maintained, and just one in five praise quality in these spaces.

Although a borough-wide assessment might conclude an adequate provision of informal amenity space, this would conceal significant local variation, and areas with limited supply include some which may present development potential. Protecting informal amenity space in planning frameworks limits options for redevelopment and may hinder regeneration by creating pockets of land which cannot be developed, but leaving these sites unprotected may threaten future provision when development pressures intensify.

Amenity spaces in Thurrock tend to be quite small in scale. Our original cut-off point of 0.3 hectares for survey was reduced to 0.2 hectares to ensure an adequate level of site coverage.

Areas deficient in informal open space include West Thurrock, Purfleet, Tilbury and Chafford Hundred. There has been a loss of housing amenity land to development, including in Chafford Hundred where a nursery has been built on an area of open space – a situation which highlights the importance of ensuring this kind of facility provision at the time of development and without the need to sacrifice an already limited resource.

Amenity space is also put under pressure by car parking. Accommodating the private car, especially on larger estate developments, is a major problem. Some spaces have been surfaced to provide hard standing for cars, but parking on green space is a widespread problem limiting their wider amenity value and causing considerable damage to the surface.

The quality of amenity space varies widely. Perhaps the worst is a square in Tilbury used as a car parking area and; a large riverbank site in Grays is essentially derelict land used for fly tipping. A site in Chafford Hundred includes a steep cliff, where we noted a breached access that presented a real and present danger to the public.

On the other hand, there are some sites that are well managed and offer considerable amenity value. Brandon Groves, a landscaped area in South Ockendon, is a superb and well-managed site with many mature trees, although access to the area is limited. This is a high quality site that also presents high value to local people. A site at Parker Road is a delightful area used extensively as a green corridor, with an attractive play area for children.

Areas of low quality but high value include a site at Argent Street, Grays, near some high-rise flats. This is a locality that is clearly well-used, particularly as a kick about area, but is badly marred by poor quality grass and extensive dog fouling, and by the absence of lighting for an important pathway. The example illustrates that even space that is of very poor quality can be highly valued (especially in the absence of alternatives); another is a space at Thamley in Purfleet, apparently poorly managed but valued by (some) local people as a wildlife haven for foxes and badgers.

Planting in these areas is often very good and winter colour was much in evidence. Shrubbery is generally well maintained, but appearance can be marred by blown-in litter.

Improvements needed to amenity space include additional litter and dog bins, seating, and where appropriate lighting.

The provision of amenity greenspaces is an important factor in the creation of individuality and a strong sense of place. Amenity open space provision is an essential part of any housing development, as it presents opportunities to introduce significant landscape elements necessary to produce visual relief and the softening of the built environment. It is important that amenity space is incorporated around development areas.

The provision of amenity greenspace in Thurrock is variable. The exemplar development is that of Brandon Groves, cited here as a case study. Some older housing areas retain significant areas of amenity space, which contributes to a strong sense of place. Elsewhere, the space has been eroded with some sites being used for development or being surfaced for car parking

The current Council standard requires 10% of the gross site area of any new development of 30 dwellings, or 0.8 hectares or more, to be set aside as open space. We took Belhus as a location providing a reasonable amount of amenity greenspace, and which people seem to think adequate from the community consultation, The area has a provision of 0.73 Ha per 1000 people, but this excludes smaller spaces not surveyed in this study because they were below the size threshold. We therefore recommend a standard of provision for amenity greenspace as 0.8 to 1 hectare per 1000 people.

Looking at changes in the level of provision of amenity greenspace over the period 2001 to 2021, four of the Settlement Areas will remain deficient against the standard and one is in surplus (Tilbury/Chadwell). The deficiency in the whole of Thurrock will increase from 37 Ha in 2001 to 55 Ha in 2021 at 0.8 Ha per 1000 population, with most of this deficiency being accounted for by Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet.

## **10.7 Children's playgrounds**

Play areas are used primarily by young families, but not exclusively so; they are also important to grandparents and to parents who live away from their children. Levels of use are much lower than for parks, however; only one in six people use a play area more than once a fortnight. Views of play areas are positive but tend to be more muted; there are substantial minorities who feel that cleanliness, condition and range of equipment, and even safety are below par in their local facility. Play equipment (both range and quality) are priorities for improvement among those using play facilities.

Although most residents think that there is enough play space for children, a quarter think the provision is insufficient. Quantity and quality are thus perceived as issues by residents.

The quantity of children's playing spaces and the number of items per child in Thurrock is relatively good compared to other local authorities. Provision is also reasonably well distributed in relative to the population of children under 14 years old. The distribution of children's play areas across the borough relates well to the main housing areas and most children would appear to live within a reasonable distance of a playing space. However, the quality and value of the children's playing spaces and the equipment stationed within them is of greater concern. Much of the equipment is old and fails to meet current standards. The lack of investment in new equipment has led to a deteriorating stock, some of which is having to be removed on safety grounds.

Play appears to be an afterthought in some developments. Some play spaces are poorly located and designed, and their use causes disturbance and distress to their neighbours as a result of inadequate buffer zones and inappropriate siting of equipment. On the other hand, there are also some excellent examples of play areas in the borough.

Current levels of provision of children's play equipment of 1 piece of equipment to every 33 children aged 5-16 years are considered adequate and should continue to be the standard for provision. Good quality children's play should consider the role of informal play space provided through amenity greenspace. We have provided some guidelines on what factors to take into account in developing children's playing space.

Using the estimated population projections for the period 2001 to 2021 it is projected that the deficiency in items of equipment will increase from 27 in 2001 to 113 in 2021 for the whole of Thurrock if there is no further provision. In Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet there will be a large change in deficiency rising to 113 items in 2021.

## **10.8 Sports facilities**

### ***Indoor sports***

The most popular indoor sport by a considerable distance is swimming. Badminton and fitness classes also have significant followings. Users' impressions of the indoor facilities in Thurrock are favourable; one in five think they are excellent and two thirds rate them positively overall. Only one in eight thought their facility was below average.

### ***Outdoor sports***

Outdoor sports are popular both for participation and for spectating; the most popular outdoor sports are football, golf and bowls. Users had a much more qualified view of provision, with just one in three users rating the facilities positively and 36% giving a negative view; 12% went so far as to describe their facility as appalling.

The playing pitch assessment has identified some specific issues regarding pitches and these are set out on a sport-by-sport basis.

## **Football**

Football is a popular local activity, but demand is putting pressure on supply and population change and growth, and the expansion of football to new demographic sectors of the community, may lead to provision in some areas coming under severe pressure. Areas such as Aveley and Grays have reasonably good levels of provision, but West Thurrock is especially poorly served.

The quality of pitches emerges reasonably well from the objective assessment, but feedback from clubs and participants, as in the residents' survey, raises questions about this result; users' expectations are often quite high and this difference of perception is by no means uncommon. The Sport England framework used in this assessment is a nationally accepted quality assessment that will allow a meaningful comparison to be made with other areas' provision.

Quality nevertheless is not uniform and varies widely. The local authority provision of pitches is a vitally important component of provision and is generally well-maintained; pitches in the care of a local leisure trust, on the other hand, are grossly overplayed and deteriorating into a very poor condition. There is a high level of use of education facilities for football and several schools have dual use agreements in place; almost all these pitches are, however, heavily overplayed and pitch quality is in consequence very poor. The level of overplay thus conceals an unmet demand that is damaging existing facilities and making them less useful.

Changing rooms tend to be very basic and in the past have been badly degraded by vandalism and criminal damage. In response, Council facilities have been protected effectively by the use of window cages and steel doors, but at the cost of perceptions of quality, attractiveness, and community safety messages.

## **Bowls**

Bowls is a popular local sport and there are several active clubs in the community. Supply probably exceeds demand, especially in some parts of Thurrock, but population change and an increasing older population may well erode some of this excess capacity over the medium term. The western side of the borough is seriously underprovided.

Bowling greens are being maintained to a reasonable standard and the County Association passes most rinks as acceptable after their annual inspection. The standard of ancillary facilities at bowling greens is normally good. However, there appears to be a scarcity of skilled grounds maintenance knowledge; while voluntary investment of time and effort, and Council investment in suitable equipment, are considerable, the skills needed to maintain greens to the highest standards are less well evidenced.

Thurrock has some bowling greens of very high quality, the best scoring being at Shell, Stanford, Corringham and Blackshots. Other greens were of good quality except for those at Billet and Orsett which both had significant problems.

At present some bowling greens would appear to be underused. However, this may well be a response by club members to the poor quality of some of the bowling greens, as there is some evidence of players migrating to better facilities. Increasingly a higher proportion of the population will be in the older age groups. Given that the large majority of participants in bowling are from these age groups, demand is likely to increase in future years.

## **Cricket**

Demand for cricket pitches exceeds supply, especially due to the expansion of colts cricket. There are definite quality issues; pitch maintenance is expensive and serious problems are being caused to local clubs by vandalism and by the indiscriminate use of motorcycles driven across the square. In

North Stifford, significant effort and investment by a local club in improving local facilities has been badly undermined – and confidence dented – by the almost immediate attention of vandals to the new square, which is now being fenced to limit further damage.

### ***Rugby***

Rugby (union) is an expanding sport and demand is reasonably well catered for. A local club has taken over former school playing fields and is making significant provision in new facilities, but there are quality concerns over grounds care that suggest a limited capacity to maintain pitch quality to the necessary standard. The pitches in question are subject to a serious weed infestation which is not being adequately addressed.

### ***Tennis***

There appears to be little or no provision for tennis that is not in disrepair. Although there may be a latent demand for tennis facilities, limited investment has led to a degradation of facilities that in turn leads to low levels of use, undermining justification for further investment.

### ***Private clubs***

There are two large private sports clubs offering very high quality facilities for their members. Although these are private clubs, membership is open and is relatively inexpensive, so these clubs are assisting social inclusion by their approach to community engagement.

### ***Pitches generally***

The assessment of playing pitches shows that improvements in the supply of pitches in secured community use is largely due to the redesignation of school provision as dual use. The increase is therefore largely illusory and it is difficult to disagree with the conclusions reached in the 'Assessment of

Playing Pitches' report that the supply of pitches is currently only just meeting expressed demand. The situation is likely to deteriorate with the continued growth in junior and women's football.

The quality of playing pitches was found overall to be reasonable. There are some problems associated with a lack of evenness and motor cyclists and car parkers are regularly damaging some pitches. Changing accommodation is basic but acceptable with one or two exceptions, but is inadequate to support women and girls' participation – a factor which may cause conflict with the council's equalities policies.

There is a perception amongst users that the Council's budget for maintaining its stock of facilities is inadequate. Clubs complain that any of their funds that are invested in either pavilions or pitches reverts to the Council and that there is little incentive to work in partnership with the Council to improve facilities.

Standards of provision have been developed for individual Settlement Areas ranging from 1 ha per 1000 population for Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet and Tilbury/Chadwell to 1.3 for Aveley/Ockendon and Stanford/Corringham.

Our analysis showed that there is a current shortage of playing pitches in Thurrock. The increase in the projected population, and the impact of sports development, will result in further shortfalls if playing pitch provision remains at the current level. This will affect football in particular with a projected shortfall of 21 adult football pitches and 58 junior football pitches by 2021. In addition there will be a significant shortfall in the provision of adult and junior rugby pitches based on the 2001 data.

## **10.9 Allotments**

Few people in the survey have them, and similarly few people in the survey were waiting for one to become available. There is no current management of a waiting list to assess demand. Those that exist are scored quite positively by their tenants.

Allotment provision in Thurrock currently exceeds the England average of 15 plots per 1000 households. However, there are a number of sites that will be taken from the supply of allotment land as a consequence of proposals contained in the UDP. The assessment of the quality of the provision reveals that there is scope to improve facilities on most sites, particularly through the provision of communal sheds.

We have adopted the nationally recognised standard of provision for allotments of 15 plots per 1000 population on the basis that this is close to current levels of provision and that people are largely satisfied with this. In addition we have developed a hierarchy of accessibility, which provides a standard for future provision.

The level of provision in plots per 1000 population will decline from 16.7 in 2001 to 10.7 in 2021 for the whole of Thurrock. In Grays & West Thurrock/Purfleet the level of provision will decline to 6.4 plots per '000 households, less than half the standard of 15 plots per '000 households. In addition, the settlements of Aveley/Ockendon and Tilbury/Chadwell will have a level of provision below the agreed standard.

### **10.10 Cemeteries and churchyards**

Cemeteries and churchyards are well-used overall, but vary widely. Chadwell's facilities are popular for visiting, but several local churches, including the main churchyard in Grays, attract surprisingly limited interest. Those who visit churchyards and cemeteries generally have a positive view of their condition and quality.

Value scores for these facilities are generally strong; although no local churchyard scores at all on ecological grounds, the criteria for ecological assessment appear to be very severe and there are undoubted ecological and biodiversity benefits being provided in these spaces. The main churchyards in Grays (SS Peter and Paul) and Chadwell score highly for value (but the

former in particular is lacking on quality) in contrast to Wharf Road and Corringham cemeteries which score poorly.

An ongoing need for burial sites is projected, even though the vast majority of people now opt for cremation. Allotment sites are currently scheduled for this purpose in some settlements, but this will not service the needs of population increase. Some local cemeteries and churchyards are of high quality and highly valued, but there are others where work is needed to bring their quality up to the expectation set by their value. There is an absence of provision in the Tilbury and East Tilbury areas, and in the rural north of the borough. Assessment criteria for cemeteries and churchyards should be tailored to the specific issues associated with these facilities and a model exists, in the form of the Charter for the Bereaved, which can usefully be adapted for Thurrock. There is also an unmet potential demand for green burials.



*Plate 20: Elm Road Open Space, Grays*

## 10.12 Summary of proposed standards

Typology	Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Parks, gardens and country parks	0.7Ha per 1000 population	Quality score of 45.4%  Higher scoring parks should aspire to the Green Flag standard	Satellite park within 0.4Km Local park typically within 0.7Km Community park over 1.0Km  Ideally each person should be within the catchment of each element of this hierarchy.  Country parks – no accessibility standard is set
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	2.0Ha per 1000 population, according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit	Quality score of 42.8%	No person should live more than 300m from a natural accessible greenspace; There should be at least one accessible 20Ha site within 2Km of their home There should be at least one accessible 100Ha site within 5Km There should be at least one accessible 500Ha site within 10Km
Green corridors	PPG17 Companion Guide suggests that standards cannot be expressed but reference should be made to Greengrid Strategy		
Amenity Greenspace	0.8 Ha per 1,000 population	Quality score of 64.5%	Space within 100m of home and without the need to cross a road.

Typology	Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Children's Playing Space	1 piece of equipment for every 33 children aged 5 – 16, augmented by good quality amenity greenspace	<p>Play space should be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasonably close to home</li> <li>• Within sight of walking or cycling lines or main travel routes</li> <li>• In spaces with informal oversight from neighbours</li> <li>• In locations identified by children and young people as appropriate</li> <li>• Capable of being used for a variety of play activities</li> <li>• Embedded in the community</li> <li>• Providing encounters with the natural environment</li> </ul>	<p>Toddler play space with 1-4 items within 1 minute walk</p> <p>Small equipped play space with 5-8 items within 5 minutes walk</p> <p>Large equipped play space with 9 or more items within 15 minutes walk</p>
Outdoor sports	<p>Grays and Tilbury areas 1.0 Ha per 1000 population</p> <p>Aveley and Stanford-le-Hope areas 1.3 Ha per 1000 population</p> <p>Rural area 2.3 Ha per 1000 population</p>	As determined by the appropriate sport governing body in relation to the type of sport and the level at which it is being played or aspired to	Guidance from Sport England and the main sports governing bodies suggests that the development of sport hubs and partnership agreements with existing teams and providers is the direction that should be pursued.

Typology	Quantity standard	Quality standard	Accessibility standard
Allotments	15 plots per 1000 households	Quality score of 60%	Everyone should live within at least one catchment area, dependent on site size:  Over 100 plots – 1200m 50-100 plots – 900m 10 – 49 plots – 600m 1 – 9 plots – 300m
Churchyards and cemeteries	Sufficient to meet a demand for 150 - 175 graves per annum	Quality score of 51.5%  Charter for the Bereaved standards of quality and service	None.

The Council is developing further guidance that will indicate how it expects to apply these standards in the context of new developments.

***Phil Back***

***Ashley Godfrey***

***Pete Sinclair***

***Rachel Featherstone***

***Karen Bagshaw***

***Ajay Patel***

***RBA Research Ltd***

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