GREEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION STUDY

ELMBRIDGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

A REPORT

BY

PMP

MARCH 2006
CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Introduction and background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>Undertaking the study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>Strategic context</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td>Involving Communities</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 5</td>
<td>Parks and gardens</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 6</td>
<td>Natural and semi natural open space</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7</td>
<td>Amenity greenspace</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 8</td>
<td>Provision for children and young people</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 9</td>
<td>Sports facilities</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 10</td>
<td>Allotments and community gardens</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 11</td>
<td>Cemeteries and churchyards</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 12</td>
<td>Green corridors</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 13</td>
<td>Resourcing open space</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 14</td>
<td>Planning implementation</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 15</td>
<td>Summary of recommendations</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDICES

Appendix A  Benefits of open space
Appendix B  Open space typology definitions
Appendix C  Surveys
Appendix D  Site assessment matrix and definitions
Appendix E  Setting standards
Appendix F  National context
Appendix G  Quantity standards
Appendix H  Quality standards
Appendix I  Accessibility standards
Appendix J  Technical appendix
Appendix K  Database list by typology
Appendix L  Maps
SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
Introduction and background

Summary

1.1. In July 2005, Elmbridge Borough Council (the Council) appointed PMP to undertake a Green Space, Sport and Recreation Study across Elmbridge (the Borough). The study, an assessment of local needs and audit of green space and indoor sport and recreational facilities, will provide the Council with a clear vision, priorities for the future (based on local need) and a direction for the allocation of resources.

1.2. The study is underpinned by the six overall objectives, which are:

- to provide a comprehensive audit of existing provision of all types of green space, sporting and recreational facility in terms of quantity, quality, accessibility and wider value to the community

- identify local needs and recommend standards of provision in accordance with PPG17

- identify any deficiencies or surpluses in provision together with strategic opinions/policies for addressing any shortfalls in provision (either current or future)

- consider all sources of demand and thresholds for new provision, for example as a result of new residential and commercial development

- provide a comprehensive and robust evidence base for planning policies of the Elmbridge Local Development Framework as well as any supporting Supplementary Planning Documents

- inform corporate and divisional strategies regarding the provision of green space, sport and recreation, including the creation of an annual Action List for provision of both improved and additional facilities.

1.3. The study is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the latest Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002, and its Companion Guide published in September 2002. Further details of these documents are set out later in this section.
Why open space, sport and recreation?

1.4. PPG17 states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, which include:

- supporting an urban renaissance
- supporting a rural renewal
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
- health and well being
- promoting more sustainable development.

1.5. Open space and recreation provision in Elmbridge, therefore, has an important role to play in supporting the implementation of these objectives.

Functions of open space

1.6. Open spaces can provide a number of functions within the urban fabric of cities, towns and villages. For example, the provision for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between the built environment and a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity. Each type of open space has various benefits, which depend on the type of open space. For example, allotments for the growing of one’s own produce, play areas for children’s play and pitches for formal sports events. Open space can additionally perform a secondary function. For example outdoor sports facilities have an amenity value in addition to providing for sport and recreation.

1.7. There is a need to provide a balance between different types of open space to meet local needs. For example, not all areas’ needs will show a demand for playing pitches or allotments. Some areas will have specific local demand for green corridors such as nature walks or bridleways.

1.8. Changing social and economic circumstances, changed work and leisure practices, more sophisticated consumer tastes and higher public expectations have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers including sport and leisure. Open spaces can also promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector.
SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Benefits of open space

1.9. Open spaces, including parks, playgrounds, amenity green space, nature reserves and the countryside, are diverse locations that provide opportunities for a range of formal and informal leisure, passive and active sport, recreation and play.

1.10. Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wider range of people than some sport and leisure facilities and are better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation provision is also key to an ideal, sustainable and thriving community.

1.11. It is widely recognised that the provision of high quality ‘public realm’ facilities such as parks and open spaces can assist in the promotion of an area as an attractive place to live, and can result in a number of wider benefits. These are highlighted in Appendix A.

National policy context

“Assessing Needs & Opportunities” National Planning Policy Background

1.12. PPG17 states “the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments of needs and audits of open space and sports and recreational facilities.”

1.13. The major change in the policy guidance from the previous version is the requirement for local authority decisions regarding open space, to be informed by local needs assessments and an audit of existing provision. Such audits should incorporate qualitative, quantitative and accessibility considerations as well as the overall non-monetary value of the land including the level of use. National standards are no longer considered to meet local needs, although they may be used as benchmarks.

1.14. Other changes in this planning policy document are:

- a greater emphasis is placed on qualitative considerations – this is particularly important as it will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and/or maintenance of open space
- it advocates the setting of local standards appropriate to the local area rather than assessment by national standards although these can be used as benchmarks. The Government believes that national standards are inappropriate, as they do not take into account the demographics of an area, the specific needs of residents and the extent of built development
- it provides further guidance on the constituent elements of open space typologies
- it clearly acknowledges the multiple functions that open spaces can perform.
1.15. The policy guidance sets out priorities for local authorities in terms of:

- assessing needs and opportunities – undertaking audits of open space, sport and recreational facilities
- setting local standards
- maintaining an adequate supply of open space
- planning for new open space.

1.16. The companion guide sets out the process for undertaking local assessments of needs and audits of provision. It also:

- indicates how councils can establish the needs of local communities and apply provision standards
- promotes a consistent approach across varying types of open space.

1.17. PMP and Elmbridge Borough Council have followed the recommendations of PPG17 throughout the study. By following these recommendations, this study has the potential to make a real difference to the quantity, quality and accessibility of green spaces in Elmbridge.

Demographics and local features

1.18. Elmbridge Borough Council is located in Surrey. It borders Greater London and the River Thames to the north and includes the towns of Esher, Walton-on-Thames, Weybridge and Molesey. 60% of the borough is Green Belt. It has a total population of 121,936 (2001 Census).
SECTION 2

UNDERTAKING THE STUDY
Undertaking the study

Introduction

2.1 This study was undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and its Companion Guide. This Companion Guide suggests ways of undertaking such a study. It emphasises the importance of undertaking a local needs assessment, as opposed to following national trends and standards. The four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:

(i) local needs will vary even within local authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics

(ii) the provision of good quality and effective open space relies not only on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance

(iii) delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend more on improving and enhancing existing open space than new provision

(iv) the value of open space depends primarily on meeting identified local needs and the wider benefits the spaces generate for people, wildlife and the environment.

2.2 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each local authority will need to be adopted as each area has different structures and characteristics. The resulting conclusions and recommendations of this study are therefore representative of the local needs for Elmbridge Borough Council.

Types of open space

2.3 The overall definition of open space within the government planning guidance is:

“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.”

2.4 PPG17 identifies nine typologies of open space. These categories include eight types of green open space and one category of urban open space.

2.5 This study includes the assessment of the eight green open space typologies:

- parks and gardens (P&G)
- natural and semi natural open space (NSN)
- amenity greenspace (AGS)
- provision for children and young people (CYP)
- outdoor sports facilities (OSF)
- allotments and community gardens (ALL)
- green corridors (GC)
- churchyards and cemeteries (C&C).
2.6 The study takes into account open spaces provided and managed by other organisations (ie both public and private), thus providing a more accurate picture of current provision within Elmbridge Borough. Full details of these typologies, their definitions and primary purpose are outlined in Appendix B.

2.7 In conjunction with PPG17, there are a number of types of land use that have not been included in our assessment as open space and recreation, namely:

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

PPG17 – five step process

2.8 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five step process for undertaking a local assessment of open space. This process was followed here to meet the requirements of the Council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of open space within the Borough. Although presented as a linear process below, in reality, many stages were undertaken in parallel.

2.9 The five step process is as follows:

Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards
Step 5 – Drafting Policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.

Our process

2.10 The following steps indicate how the study has been undertaken in accordance with PPG17.

Step 1 - Identifying local needs

2.11 In order to identify the local need, a series of consultations were carried out. These included:

Research

- desk-based research was undertaken considering national, regional and local policies and strategies that will impact upon local needs for open space and sport and recreation provision in Elmbridge. Summaries of key documents can be found in Section 3. Documents reviewed include:
  - Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan – Adopted 2000
- Community Strategy 2003/06
- Cultural Strategy 2003/08
- Strategy for Sport and Healthy Lifestyles 2004/09.

Consultations
- consultations have been carried out with many organisations and individuals through various methods such as one-to-one meetings, telephone calls, questionnaires, drop-in sessions and by email, including:
  - one-to-one consultations with Council Officers (across a range of Council departments including Planning, Leisure and Cultural Services). The aim of these sessions was to establish how green space, sport and recreation provision affects each department and key issues for each
  - 5,000 household questionnaires disseminated across the borough. The questionnaire was intended to explore user and non-user attitudes to the range of green spaces, sport and recreation facilities available near to their homes and people’s views on quantity, quality and accessibility
  - a survey was distributed to all identified sports clubs in the borough to ascertain their views on outdoor and indoor sport and recreation facilities in the area
  - all 56 primary and secondary schools in the borough were contacted and offered the chance for pupils to complete an internet survey regarding green space, sport and recreation. The intention of the internet survey was to engage young people in the study and ascertain their views
  - six ‘drop-in’ neighbourhood sessions across the borough, held during August 2005. The purpose of these sessions was to determine the views, attitudes and expectations of local groups and residents on green spaces throughout the analysis areas and across the borough
  - press releases, dedicated email address and a text messaging service were set up to allow the general public to provide comments on green space
  - consultation was also undertaken with external agencies, such as local allotment groups, English Heritage, the Environmental Agency, Countryside Agency and British Waterways.

2.12 A copy of all relevant questionnaires can be found in Appendix C.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

2.13 A detailed desk exercise was undertaken using existing GIS data, current Council strategies, the Local Plan, Ordnance Survey maps, street maps and other sources, to establish locations and types of all green spaces within the borough.

2.14 Over 350 sites were visited to check the location, size and primary purpose of sites and to assess quality, accessibility and value using a standard matrix and definitions. These can be found in Appendix D.

2.15 As part of the site assessment, a cross-checking exercise was undertaken to ensure the audit was as comprehensive as possible. This included ensuring consistency of
categorisation of open space sites according to the typologies used for this study. A meeting was also held with Council Officers to review and sign off the completed audit.

2.16 Each open space site was then digitised using GIS software, and its associated ratings and characteristics were recorded on an Access 2000 database.

2.17 This report is supplemented by the Access database, which will enable further updates of data and varying forms of analysis to be undertaken. This allows a dynamic reporting and assessment mechanism and enables individual sites or specific geographical locations to be examined in detail where necessary.

Steps 3 and 4 - Setting and applying provision standards

2.18 Within the analysis of the data and site ratings in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility and value of the sites we are able to:

- determine a set of provision standards for each type of open space
- apply such standards for each type of open space
- identify gaps in provision across the different types of open space and therefore the areas of priority.

2.19 The analysis has therefore been undertaken by type of open space looking at a borough wide area and also broken down in to the six analysis areas, which were discussed with and agreed by the Council.

2.20 Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and audits of existing facilities will form the basis for addressing quantitative and qualitative needs through the planning process.

2.21 Further detail regarding the process for setting and application of each type of provision standard is outlined in Appendix E.

Step 5 – Drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities

2.22 The application of the standards provides strategic priorities and recommendations, which are set out for each typology within the report.

2.23 The report also provides guidance for the application of Section 106 agreements and best practice formula based on the approach taken by other authorities and best practice.
SECTION 3

STRATEGIC CONTEXT
Strategic context

3.1 This strategic review sets in context the study and analysis of a local needs assessment.

3.2 For the purposes of this study, Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 and the Companion Guide, Assessing Needs and Opportunities are the key overarching documents (see Section 1).

3.3 However, there are a large number of other national documents and agencies that provide the strategic context to open spaces, sport and recreation facilities across the country and as such influence the provision of facilities in Elmbridge and the findings of this report.

3.4 Appendix F sets out the national strategic context, including Living Spaces: Cleaner, Safer Greener. This was produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2002 and led to the creation of CABE Space, a national government agency which has the overall aim “to bring excellence to the design, management and maintenance of parks and public space in towns and cities.”

3.5 Appendix F also sets out the external agencies, which have an influence and interest in the provision of open spaces and notes some of the key issues and objectives which are relevant to this study.

3.6 The following sets out the strategic context for the borough of Elmbridge.

Regional Policy Documents

Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)

3.7 The Regional Planning Guidance for the South East was published in March 2001 and covers the period up to 2016. The primary purpose of this guidance is to provide a regional framework for the preparation of local authority development plans. The other purpose of this guidance is to provide the spatial framework for other strategies and programmes, these include the preparation of local transport plans by local authorities and under the new planning system forms part of the statutory Local Plan for Elmbridge.

3.8 There are a significant number of policies that relate to the open space, sport and recreation provision in the South East, these include:

- policies within the Environmental Strategy section:
  - E1 - protection of sites designated at international or national level either for their intrinsic nature conservation value or their landscape quality
  - E2 - the region’s biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced
  - E5 - woodland habitats in the Region should be protected
  - E6 - opportunities should be provided for leisure and recreation in, and access to, the countryside in ways, which retain and enhance its character.

- policies within the section on Tourism and Related Sport and Recreation; TSR2, Rural Tourism and Recreation and TSR3, Regionally Significant
3.9 There is therefore a high level of protection and promotion of the enhancement of existing environmental assets and recreational resources.

**The South East Plan**

3.10 The new South East Plan is being drafted by the South East Regional Assembly as part of its role as Regional Planning Body. This plan will set out a vision for the region from 2006 to 2026, focusing on housing, transport, economy and the environment and will replace the existing RPG9.

3.11 The South East Plan is a document that will set out the changes needed to improve the quality of life in the South East England region over the next twenty years. The South East Plan is the name given to the Regional Spatial Strategy.

3.12 Key topics covered in the Plan are housing, transport, employment and the environment. Part One of the Plan covering regional policies was approved in July 2005. The region’s county and unitary councils are consulting locally on sub-regional details for Part Two of the Plan. The full Plan will be submitted to Government in March 2006 and it is expected that the final Plan will receive Government approval in 2008.

3.13 Part One of the South East Plan identifies the London Fringe Sub-Region, which includes Elmbridge, as one of nine sub-regions where further policy advice on the implementation of the regional strategy is required.

3.14 The South East Plan provides guidance by way of Statements of Strategy. The guidance given for the London Fringe Sub-Region is *to support sustainable economic growth and meet as far as possible the pressing housing needs of the sub-region, taking into account considerable Metropolitan Green Belt and the area’s critical relationship to London*.

3.15 Of specific importance for this study are the policies for Tourism, Sport and Recreation. Policy TSR3 – Regionally Significant Sports Facilities, identifies that opportunities should be sought to protect, upgrade and develop new regionally significant sports facilities, particularly in the Thames Gateway.
**Surrey Structure Plan**

3.16 The Surrey Structure Plan was approved by the County Council on 19 October 2004. The Plan replaces the existing 1994 Surrey Structure Plan and forms part of the Development Plan for Surrey and provides the strategic framework and planning strategy for land use planning in the county.

3.17 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has introduced changes to the planning framework and under this new system the Structure Plan will be ‘saved’ for a period of three years from the date of its adoption and will continue to form part of the Development Plan for the county for this period, or until it is superseded by the South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy).

3.18 The document will provide the policy basis of the first round of district Local Development Frameworks that are required to be in place by 2007 and covers the housing provision for the period up to 2016. The Plan on the whole carries forward and builds upon the issues of the previous Structure Plan although there has been the introduction of a Spatial Strategy, the identification of “strategic hubs”, as well as a number of key themes and points that can be identified.

3.19 The Plan initially sets out the Spatial Strategy, which guides the location of development within Surrey. It sets out the overall objectives for urban and rural areas and identifies five sub-areas and key spatial and land use priorities have been established for each of these sub-areas. The North Surrey area, between the M25 and the London boundary, includes Elmbridge.

3.20 Within the North Surrey sub-area, development should accord with the following principle, ‘to improve the quality of life and the environment and promote an urban renaissance, resisting the outward spread of urban areas and restricting new development to the use of previously developed land and buildings within the existing urban area.’

3.21 The Plan makes provision for 35,400 (net) dwellings within Surrey between April 2001 and March 2016, and housing allocations for each of the districts have been identified. A total of 3,370 new homes are required to be built in Elmbridge by 2016. Most of the dwellings will be developed on previously developed land and there is no commitment to development on greenbelt land.

3.22 The Affordable Housing Policy states that Local Development Frameworks should have regard to the objective that at least 40% of new housing provision in the county should be affordable including housing for key workers. This would mean that at least 1,348 units of Elmbridge’s housing allocation should be affordable housing.

3.23 In addition to the built environment the Plan sets out the strategy for the open areas of land of the Surrey Landscape. The key theme in this respect is the protection of the countryside including areas of land designated as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI).

3.24 The Leisure and Recreation Facilities Policy (DN13) relates to development for recreation and leisure use in urban areas. Opportunities for informal recreation, such as improved pedestrian and cycle networks in town and between town and country, should be provided in conjunction with development.
Local context

Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan – Adopted August 2000

3.25 The Replacement Elmbridge Borough Local Plan (REBLP) was formally adopted in August 2000 and supersedes the Elmbridge Borough Local Plan adopted in 1993 and that part of the Brooklands Local Plan (First Alteration) relating to the land in the Borough of Elmbridge, which was adopted by Surrey County Council in 1995.

3.26 The overall strategy of the REBLP is to:

- maintain and enhance the character of settlements and communities which together form Elmbridge, and ensure growth and development are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable
- protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development and maintain its open character
- accommodate development by making the best use of land in the urban area in accordance with environmental and other policies in the REBLP
- conserve the open areas and enhance the environment generally
- reduce the need for travel by car, through encouraging greater use of other modes of transport, integrating transport facilities with land use proposals and promoting work and leisure patterns which lessen the need to travel
- assist in the maintenance and renewal of the economy of the borough
- reinforce and enhance the essential role of the town and village centres as foci for the local community
- contribute to meeting the needs of the borough's population, and enhance the quality of life for all groups in the community.

3.27 The chapter ‘The Environment of Elmbridge’ provides a policy framework within which development is promoted without detriment to the existing character of the borough, while at the same time securing a progressive improvement of the natural and built environment, so that the quality of life in Elmbridge is maintained and enhanced. The aims of the Council in formulating a Strategy for improving the environment are to:

- seek to protect and enhance the character of the environment
- seek a high standard of design for all development, which makes the provision for the needs of people with disabilities and also enhances public safety and discourages crime
- protect existing public and private amenity land and buildings from unsympathetic development
- reduce the environmental damage resulting from the use of resources
- conserve the landscape character of the borough and seek to improve the tree cover and standard of landscape schemes
SECTION 3 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

• protect the borough from environmental pollution and initiate and encourage environmental improvements
• protect strategic views and key landmarks
• protect wildlife and nature habitats
• protect open land within the urban area which makes an important contribution to the local area.

3.28 One of the most important features of the urban landscape structure in Elmbridge is the pattern of open land within the urban area. In the more rural parts of the borough the protection afforded by the Green Belt maintains separation between communities and allows residents to enjoy the visual and aural benefits of keeping this land open. If the quality of life is to be maintained, it is important to also keep land open in the more urban or residential parts of the borough. The Council therefore has designated certain areas as ‘Strategic Open Urban Land’ to which great importance is attached to keeping their open nature.

3.29 A significant, characteristic and important environmental asset of the Borough is its various rivers and reservoirs. They make a fundamental contribution to the landscape quality of the Borough and also provide unique recreational opportunities. The chapter ‘The River Thames’ in the REBLP sets the policy context for this environment.

3.30 There are currently two sites located within the borough that have been designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the European Commission Birds Directive. These sites are shown on the Local Plan Proposals Maps. The Thames Basin Reservoirs in Elmbridge are part of the Thames Estuary and Marshes RAMSAR Site, located in the central north of the borough. The Thames Basin Heath SPA, which includes Chatley Heath Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI), is also recognised for its international importance as a heathland habitat for endangered bird species. Special Protection Areas are strictly protected sites in accordance with Article 5 of the EC Direction on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

3.31 The policy context for this chapter comprises Government guidance in the form of Supplementary Regional Planning Guidance for the River Thames. The historical, cultural and landscape importance of the stretch at Molesey is also recognised by its inclusion in the Thames Landscape Strategy – Hampton to Kew adopted by various local authorities and national agencies.

3.32 The main aims of the Council policy are to:

• protect and, whenever appropriate, enhance the visual character of the Thames and other Waterways
• recognise and respect the national importance of the River Thames
• protect and enhance historic buildings, sites, structures, landscapes, skylines and views of importance, which contribute to the riverside location
• promote wider public access to the riverside
• encourage greater recreational use
• conserve and, where possible, enhance the ecology of the Thames and tributaries
3.33 The chapter ‘Leisure and Recreation’ in the REBLP sets out the Council’s planning strategy for leisure, tourism, recreation and the arts. The Council’s strategy is concerned with ensuring that there is adequate and appropriate land and buildings for recreational purposes to meet the leisure needs of both the borough’s population and of those who visit the borough, without compromising the need to protect and enhance the valuable amenities and essential character of both the urban areas and the countryside.

3.34 The Council will pursue the following aims in respect of its strategy towards leisure and recreation to:

- ensure an appropriate standard of open space provision to accommodate the leisure needs of local people
- promote public access for all groups in the community to the countryside and other open space with recreational value
- improve existing recreational land and facilities to achieve a more effective and efficient use of the borough’s resources
- seek to enable or provide new facilities to enhance overall leisure provision in the borough without prejudicing either the amenities of the surrounding area or the character and appearance of the countryside
- encourage the promotion of arts and cultural activities throughout the borough
- encourage the enhancement of facilities for visitors to the borough, commensurate with the need to avoid any adverse environmental impact.

**The Elmbridge Local Development Framework**

3.35 The reforms introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 include changes to the format and content of development plans and the way in which they are prepared by local planning authorities. Under the legislation transitional arrangements will apply for several years as the old style plans are updated and assimilated into the new planning system.

3.36 The Borough Council is responsible for preparing the portfolio of Local Development Documents (LDD) that together with the Local Development Scheme (LDS) will form the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Elmbridge.

3.37 The function of the LDF is to provide a robust and reasoned policy basis to:

- implement at the local level the objectives and development requirements of the Regional Spatial Strategy (the South East Plan)
- co-ordinate the Council’s objectives with the spatial activities of a range of different agencies and organisations
- enable successful negotiation over development proposals and for developer contributions
- guide development control decisions
- promote investment and regeneration of underused land and buildings

• restrict development in areas liable to flood.
• establish an audit trail to justify policies and proposals and to support future bids for public funding linked to a coherent strategy

• facilitate effective monitoring of outcomes.

3.38 Local Development Documents will set out the spatial strategy for Elmbridge and will comprise Development Plan Documents (DPD), Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Elmbridge’s overarching spatial strategy will be set out in the Core Strategy DPD, which will provide strategic policies for open space, leisure and recreation provision. This will set out the strategic framework for the preparation of a Planning Contributions Development Plan Document.

**Cultural Strategy 2003/08**

3.39 The purpose of the Cultural Strategy, ‘A Way Of Life’, is to promote the cultural well-being of Elmbridge, and to set down publicly the planned programme of activity in the cultural field for the next five years.

3.40 The following key themes have been identified by Elmbridge stakeholders to move the Strategy forward:

• lifelong learning and participation

• access

• cultural partnerships

• infrastructure and maximizing resources.

3.41 Within Elmbridge there are 1000 organisations involved in running drama groups, sporting clubs, arts activities and events. Horticultural societies are major contributors to the culture of Elmbridge.

3.42 Elmbridge has six ancient monuments, 769 statutory listed buildings, 335 local listed buildings and 24 conservation areas.

3.43 Elmbridge covers 9,972 hectares, much of which is countryside, nearly 60% being Green Belt. For example, the 540 hectares of Commons support an enormous variety of plant and animal species and are so valuable that much of the Commons complex is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Commons are a rich source of enjoyment for visitors, providing a superb area for a leisurely stroll, horse riding, bird watching, dog walking and picnicking. In addition to the SSSI sites in the borough, Elmbridge also has Special Protection Areas (SPA), such as the Thames Basin Reservoirs, where special nature conservation and protection measures are required.

3.44 There are 238 sport organisations within Elmbridge and over 50,000 participants taking part in sport each year. Elmbridge Sports Council promotes sport throughout the Borough encouraging youth participation.

3.45 A key commitment of the document is to identify opportunities to use the waterways (ie River Thames, Mole and Wey), countryside and other special places, as cultural resources by:
• developing and maintaining a strategy for the provision and maintenance of local parks and play areas
• continuing to provide and enhance quality parks, countryside and open spaces
• developing the landscape value and use of the water areas of the Borough to enhance their attractiveness and cultural use
• commissioning an options paper on the potential use of the waterways as a cultural facility.

3.46 The Strategy also commits to protecting and enhancing the borough’s historic built and natural environment by:

• implementing a rolling programme of conservation area environmental Conservation Planning Policy enhancement schemes
• safeguarding through town planning measures the Borough’s archaeological heritage and its historic parks and gardens
• conserving areas of landscape character and its historic value site of importance for nature conservation
• retaining and improving strategic views
• promoting better designs of building and spaces which respect the diverse urban character of different parts of Elmbridge
• facilitating interpretation and understanding of the historic environment.

Community Strategy 2003/06

3.47 The aim of the Community Strategy is to encourage Elmbridge residents to think about how communities will develop in the future, so the vision looks towards 2015.

3.48 The future vision for Elmbridge is of a thriving and inclusive borough, where there are fewer inequalities and people can make the most of the opportunities open to them. Key visions are for an Elmbridge:

• with safe and healthy communities, vibrant town centres and a strong local economy
• with plenty of community facilities, good quality, affordable housing and accessible transport links
• which retains its attractive, green and unique character and where the environment is valued
• where those with extra needs of whatever kind can readily obtain support from their communities.

3.49 Key aims and actions include:

Supporting young people
• increase the participation in leisure, sports and arts activities in the borough
• provide a replacement for Walton Swimming Pool to offer a range of sports and other leisure activities

• consider provision of youth shelters, multi-use games areas and other similar approaches to provide attractive and safe areas for young people to meet.

**Improve travel and transport**
• introduce pedestrian priority schemes to make walking easier and safer

• investigate the suitability of transport links to the main leisure and cultural facilities in the borough

• continue to review bus, train and cycle routes to ensure ease of access to schools, hospitals, shops, businesses and leisure facilities

• increase the size of the cycle network and encourage businesses to provide facilities for cyclists.

**Promoting community safety**
• implement design standards to reduce the risk of crime in new developments

**Managing and enhancing our natural and built environments**
• prepare and implement a proactive tree preservation strategy

• promote community involvement in local ‘clean up’ days and community pride initiatives

• encourage learning in the countryside through school education programmes and the use of the borough’s Local Nature Reserves

• manage the recreational use of the borough’s parks, open spaces and common land to promote healthy living

• encourage the active involvement of local people in environmental projects, such as voluntary countryside projects

• ensure there is a tapestry of habitats across the borough to support both wildlife and recreation.

**Strategy for Sport and Healthy Lifestyles 2004/09**

3.50 The Strategy for Sport and Healthy Lifestyles is a comprehensive strategic document which provides the framework within which to develop sport in Elmbridge.

3.51 By 2007 the Strategy for Sport and Healthy Lifestyles seeks to:

• develop a varied and comprehensive programme for sport to offer diversions from criminal or anti-social behaviour and reduce the local fear of crime

• increase physical activity in Elmbridge in line with Sport England’s guidance to ensure 70% of the population take regular exercise (20 minutes, five times a week) by 2020

• raise awareness among inactive people of the health benefits of exercise
3.52 There is a wide range of high quality sports provision across the borough managed by a range of providers from the public, voluntary and private sectors. Elmbridge Borough Council owns and manages facilities including seven public halls, three outdoor multi-sport courts, one synthetic athletics track, seven bowling greens, seven cricket pitches, 11 football pitches, three junior football pitches, one hockey pitch, 24 tennis courts, three netball courts, six outdoor basketball courts and three skateboard areas.

3.53 The Council also provides indoor leisure facilities with swimming facilities at Walton Pool and Hurst Pool. The development of a new leisure facility on the current site of Elmbridge Leisure Centre, providing state of the art facilities is a fantastic opportunity for sport in the borough. It will provide a focus for sport in Elmbridge providing modern facilities and improved transport to the new centre. Work on the new facility is progressing well, with the 14 August 2006 opening.

3.54 During the last five years over £800,000 has been invested in new or improved public and voluntary facilities through funding from Sport England Lottery Fund. These include: Thames Ditton Lawn Tennis Club; Molesey Boat Club; Ditton Skiff & Punting Club; Esher Cricket Club; Long Ditton Cricket Club and Surbiton Hockey Club.

3.55 Recent audits carried out by PMP and Surrey Local Football Partnership’s Football Facilities Strategy have assisted in identifying any areas of shortfall in facilities in the Borough. The Football Facilities Strategy identified a shortfall in all weather sports pitch provision in the Borough, and this is currently under consideration for the new leisure facility at Elmbridge Leisure Centre through the Surrey Local Football Partnership.

3.56 The Council has developed an action plan to help overcome the challenges highlighted under each of the key themes. The action plan will guide the Sports Development Team, the Health Development Team and strategic partners. After each year the Sports Development Team will undertake a review of the Strategy to reassess the aims and ensure that resources are being used in the most efficient and effective way to meet the targets.

Corporate Plan and Best Value Performance Plan 2005/06

3.57 The Corporate Plan is the strategic planning document and also the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) for Elmbridge Borough Council. The document sets out what the priorities and targets are for the 2005/06 financial year.

3.58 The Council’s vision is to be recognised as one of the best borough councils by 2008 through:
• effective community leadership, partnership working and involving our customers to develop priorities
• ensuring that Elmbridge is a safe, healthy and enjoyable place to live and work
• enhancing the attractiveness and established character of the borough
• effectively managing business to deliver high quality accessible services at an affordable cost
• assisting in sustaining the varied and vibrant local economy
• enhancing and protecting the natural environment.

3.59 Elmbridge has developed a high level Improvement Plan for the Performance Plan. Key developments with implications for green space and recreation provision in the Borough include:

• a new Country Park at Brooklands by 2005
• improved children’s play facilities at nine sites by 2006
• a new leisure centre and Country Park in Walton by 2006.

3.60 In terms of protecting and enhancing the natural environment, in 2004/05, the Council through a Section 106 agreement with the applicants, commenced construction of the new 24 hectare Community Park at Brooklands. This is to be completed by the end of 2006. The opening of the Community Park is a ‘flagship’ target for the Plan and is a key development for Elmbridge. Similarly, the facility at Whittets Ait includes privately owned open space, which allows public access. This open space was secured through Section 106 agreements.

3.61 The Council has also commenced building work on the new leisure centre in Elmbridge. Its opening will include the return of 100% of the clubs. In addition, options will be prepared for the future disposal of Walton Swimming Pool.

3.62 Strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan for Leisure and Culture are to:

• effectively manage the green spaces for which the Division is responsible to provide safe, pleasant and accessible public spaces that add to the quality of life for local residents
• work in partnership with other Divisions/key stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive audit of the borough’s open spaces as required by PPG17, which is linked to the new Local Development Framework
• lead in the development and implementation of a varied and comprehensive programme of sport, play, health and arts services to offer diversionary activities from crime related incidents and to contribute to the reassurance of the local community
• provide a leisure facilities service (including sport, leisure and cultural facilities) that is affordable, accessible, environmentally friendly; which is socially inclusive and aims to meet the needs of the local community within the borough
• work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to provide a range of activities and services for vulnerable people encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle and participation in arts/cultural activities

• work in partnership with the local health providers (Primary Care Trusts, Community Support) and other relevant stakeholders

• develop a volunteer strategy to encourage participation and involvement of the local community in the provision of services across the Division including the museum, countryside, green spaces, sport and health.

Best Value Review of Green Spaces

3.63 The Review covers those services which are currently managed by the Parks and Recreation Team in Leisure and Cultural Services. This includes parks and recreation grounds, open space (including playgrounds), commons, allotments and countryside as well as the cemeteries service. These total 825 hectares of land (including pavilions, buildings and properties).

3.64 The Review recognised and highlighted strengths, and challenged aspects of the management and maintenance of the Council’s green spaces. The Review revealed that there is a considerable number of issues, which are important to residents and need to be addressed in the future Green Spaces Strategy.

3.65 In considering the future of green spaces the Review Team recommended that the following options are not considered:

• the cessation of the service

• transfer to a Non-Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) such as a Leisure Trust.

3.66 The Review Team recommended that the following options are considered:

• to retain the service “in house”

• to regularly review service delivery and options available to provide a higher qualitative service.

3.67 Other key recommendations from the report include:

• to produce a Green Spaces Strategy to dovetail with the Countryside Strategy, Esher Commons Management Plan and Green Flag Criteria & Comparison

• to review and report on the best options for the contracts relating to ground maintenance and children’s playgrounds

• to review current provision of 30 playgrounds for 0-12 years old and young people’s facilities for 11-18+ years

• to consider existing provision and future requirements to 2025 for the cemetery service

• consider positive action in relation to site presence to reduce the fear and causes of crime
3.68 Access issues in relation to the existing and proposed green space facilities are also a key priority, including cycle provision, adequate disabled car parking and a range of measures to provide disabled access.

3.69 As part of the Council’s Best Value Review of Waste Collection, consideration was given to including green spaces as part of the street cleaning contract for litter collection. Due to the type of service required for green space, including emptying of bins at vehicle remote areas, natural areas of woodlands, shrubs, and flowerbeds, it was agreed that this was not appropriate.

3.70 It is recommended that planned preventative maintenance programmes are introduced across all sites to ensure an optimum lifespan for all facilities and buildings. In addition, under planning gains from S106 agreements the finance received, together with interest gained following payment, is to be utilised throughout the borough to provide diverse and quality recreational facilities.

**Best Value Review of Services for Young People**

3.71 In 1999 the Council approved a five-year Best Value Review programme in line with legislative guidelines produced by the Government. The Review considered activities and services for young people aged between 5-18 years of age, provided by all sections of the Council.

3.72 The Council has no statutory duty to provide services for young people. However, there is a corporate commitment to doing so for 5-18 year olds.

3.73 Responsibility for services for young people fall within the remit of a number of different Council divisions including Leisure and Cultural Services, Housing Services, the Chief Executives and Town Planning Division. Overall there is an inconsistent approach across the Council and there is scope for greater emphasis on young people’s needs when service planning.

3.74 Through the Review, a continuous improvement/action plan has been drawn together from the findings, setting out 15 points for action. The action plan relates to introducing a corporate, coherent approach to the provision of services for young people. Consideration is being given to the introduction of stakeholder identified performance indicators, development of a consultation framework for engaging young people in the decision-making process and developing long-term strategic objectives.

3.75 Recommendations relevant to the provision of open space, sport and recreation in the action plan include:

- a review and update of the Leisure Database (Youth Section)
- a comprehensive guide to be developed to support sports clubs/organisations in receiving or training volunteers, applying to funding services and regular coach development courses
subsection 3 – strategic context

- playscheme content to be reviewed with sessions to be implemented to cater for the 11-18 age group

- an audit of facilities/activities/services for young people to identify (with the local community) gaps in provision for the 11-18 year age group and to include consideration of facilities for disabled young people in conjunction with the appropriate disability organisation

- Leisure and Cultural Services to develop partnership links with Community Safety to identify safety issues for young people in the parks and green spaces

- future refurbishment of play areas (seats/tables, hang out shelters) to address social integration issues.

Best Value Review of Older People’s Services

3.76 This Review has encompassed the services provided by the Borough Council to older people across Elmbridge, including centres for retired people, support for carers and information/gateway services.

3.77 Under the Best Value Review of Older People’s Services, key objectives are to:

- develop a partnership approach with Health and Social Services in the Best Value Review of Services for Older People to ensure flexible high quality services in line with the shared vision

- provide services tailored to the needs of the community served through centres for retired people

- work to improve the health of the borough population through the development of a Local Modernisation Plan in partnership with the Primary Care Trusts and Social Services teams using Elmbridge.

3.78 The main recommendations from the Review include:

- to develop a Consultation and Participation Strategy, refocusing the Age Concern Elmbridge Advisory Body, setting up a new Trust and developing two Local Service User Groups

- introduction of a part-time Activity Organiser post, to best address the key concerns of optimising facilities and developing activities and services

- the need to develop an information programme particularly geared at GPs, informing them of the Elmbridge Relief Carers Scheme services.

Summary of strategic documents

3.79 In summary, this review of strategic documents highlights the importance of maintaining and improving open space sites within the borough. Overall, Elmbridge is very well provided for, with the key themes emerging from the regional and local documents being the need to protect, enhance and conserve the existing sites, including the Green Belt land. Specific improvements to sites include the upgrading of children’s play areas and sports facilities, as well as continued and improved management of open spaces to ensure public satisfaction and safety.
3.80 Key actions extracted from the strategic documents that are relevant to this study include:

- new country park at Brooklands
- nine improved children’s play facilities by 2006
- new leisure centre and country park in Walton by 2006.

3.81 This study will contribute to achieving the wider aims of a number of local and national agencies.
SECTION 4

Involving Communities
Involving Communities

Introduction

4.1 As outlined in Section 2, a series of consultations were carried out as part of the local needs assessment to establish the views on open space provision amongst both users and non-users in Elmbridge Borough.

4.2 The information gained from these consultations has been used to help understand:

- the key issues/problems facing different Council departments and agencies
- the needs and requirements of local residents
- the attitudes and expectations of open space within the area
- what is right and wrong about the existing provision.

4.3 The key findings from all consultations are discussed in this section. Further details, such as a copies of the household questionnaire, internal officers and external agency questionnaires are available in Appendix C.

Household survey

4.4 5,000 questionnaires were disseminated across the borough. Each household was selected at random and the person in the household with the next birthday (and over the age of 10) was asked to complete the questionnaire. 846 questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 17%. This response rate gives a statistically significant 95% confidence level.

4.5 The returned household questionnaires have been analysed following entry onto an Access database. The following information summarises the views of the borough’s residents with regards to quantity, quality, accessibility and usage of green space and sport and recreation leisure provision:

Respondent profile

- 39% of respondents were male and 61% female
- respondents reflected the following age profile:
  - under 16: 2%
  - 16-24: 3%
  - 25-39: 22%
  - 40-59: 37%
  - 60-75: 25%
  - 75+: 11%.
- 90% of respondents describe themselves as white British
- 33% of respondents reported children under 16 living in their household.
Quantity

- provision of parks and gardens is considered about right or more than enough by 65% of respondents (base: 796)

- provision of natural green space is about right (60%: base 803). Respondents suggested that Elmbridge is very fortunate to have a vast amount of natural green space, which is attributed to the number of Commons across the borough

- 45% (base: 785) respondents reported there to be about right or more than enough green corridors, whilst 43% (base: 785) suggested there was nearly enough or not enough

- the amount of amenity green space is thought to be more than enough or about right (44% base; 789). However, concern was raised over the importance of maintaining the amount of amenity green space in conjunction with the continual increase of new development

- 55% of respondents (base: 794) suggested that the quantity of provision for children and young people is nearly enough or not enough. Emphasis was placed on the need for more facilities for young people as opposed to children, as it was widely thought that young children are well catered for

- provision of outdoor sports facilities was considered to be nearly enough or not enough by 48% respondents (base: 790). The major area of concern surrounds the number of tennis courts available, which could be a result of the successful ‘Tennis for Free’ scheme

- 44% of respondents (base: 783) suggested that the quantity of allotments is about right or more than enough. Significantly, 37% of respondents (base: 783) had no opinion. External consultation with allotment groups suggested that the demand for allotments is steady to high, with almost all plots rented out and people on the waiting list

- 53% of respondents (base: 789) considered the provision of churches and cemeteries to be about right or more than enough.

Quality

- overall, litter and dog fouling were the most significant problems, identified by 77% and 76% of respondents respectively (base: 649)

- 82% of total respondents (base: 688) were very satisfied or satisfied with the maintenance and management of green space sites, 80% (base:670) with the pathways and 74% (base: 602) with the planted and grassed areas at green space sites

- quality factors identified as being very unsatisfactory or unsatisfactory include toilets (32%: base 654), provision of bins for litter (32%: base 677) and seats/benches (31%: base 700)

- dog fouling (32%; base 232) and vandalism (39%; base 232) were highlighted as significant problems in parks and gardens. It was suggested that there should be more ‘dog-free’ park areas
natural green spaces were identified as having only a minor problem with litter (46%: base 246). Respondents are in general satisfied with the provision but are concerned about the threat of housing developments destroying local woodlands

dog fouling and litter were minor problems affecting quality in green corridors. These issues were more significant within amenity green spaces

litter (63%: base 102) and vandalism and graffiti (52%: base 102) were minor problems at sites for children and young people

the most significant problems encountered at outdoor sports facilities are vandalism and graffiti (48%: base 34) and anti-social behaviour (40%: base 34)
eight out of 10 respondents who use allotments most frequently identified that vandalism and graffiti was a minor problem at allotments

no significant problems were identified at churches and cemeteries by the eight respondents who use this green space type most frequently.

Accessibility

56% of total respondents (base: 798) prefer to walk to their chosen green space, with 31% travelling by private car. 7% respondents cycle and only 1% travel by bus

91% respondents (base: 725) were most satisfied with accessibility by walking to their chosen green space

82% of respondents (base: 102) who use green spaces for children and young people were very satisfied or satisfied with accessibility with pushchairs or wheelchairs

only 38% of respondents (base: 34) who use outdoor sports facilities most often were satisfied with access by public transport and 32% (base: 34) by cycleways

table 4.1 overleaf shows the travel time and base figure of respondents for each typology by four different modes of transport. These figures are from the household survey and consider the 75th percentile figure as recommended within the PPG17 Companion Guide.
Table 4.1 - 75th percentile expected travel time by mode of travel and typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of transport</th>
<th>Parks and Gardens</th>
<th>Natural and semi-natural</th>
<th>Green corridors</th>
<th>Amenity Greenspace</th>
<th>Provision for children, young people</th>
<th>Outdoor sports facilities</th>
<th>Allotments</th>
<th>Cemeteries and churchyards</th>
<th>Indoor sport and recreation facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk (mins)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle (mins)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus (mins)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car (mins)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usage

- natural and semi-natural spaces (29%) and parks and gardens (27%) are the most frequently used types of green space (base: 846)
- the two main reasons for people choosing not to utilise green space were lack of interest (50%) and lack of time (24%) (base: 846)
- three most popular reasons for using green space were to walk (76%), to take exercise (74%) and for fresh air (72%) (base: 846)
- 27% of respondents use green corridors on a daily basis (base: 776)
- 38% of respondents use parks and gardens weekly (base: 779)
- 20% of respondents visit natural and semi-natural spaces monthly (base: 766)
- 27% of respondents use outdoor sports facilities (base: 762) and churches and cemeteries (base: 757) occasionally.

Sport and recreation leisure provision

- 39% of respondents use the sports and leisure facilities in Elmbridge (base 763)
- 37% of respondents indicated the overall provision of indoor sports facilities in the borough was average (base 573)
• those facilities identified as having nearly enough or not enough provision were swimming pools (63%: base 664), leisure pools (59%: base 607), health and fitness (53%: base 612) courts for racket sports (53%: base 612) and sports halls (57%: base 614)

• dance studios were only thought to be low in provision by 33% of respondents however, 56% had no opinion (base 604)

• three highest ranked ideal features for users of sports and leisure facilities were cleanliness of changing rooms (61%), range of activities (55%) and maintenance of facility/equipment (54%) (base 846)

• 44% of respondents use a private car to travel to indoor sports facilities and would expect to travel for 15 minutes.

School’s Internet survey

4.6 A total of 56 schools were contacted across the borough and invited to participate in an online survey.

4.7 The following schools replied:

• Cranmere Primary School
• Chandlers Field Primary School
• Orchard Infant School.

4.8 This survey yielded a good response rate of 115 young people. The key findings are detailed below:

• 70% of respondents were between the ages of nine and 10 years

• 58% of respondents had visited woodland, meadows, grassland or commons in the past year, the other most visited sites were parks and gardens (52%) and footpaths (51%)

• most popular reasons given for not using green space include ‘not interested’ (60%) and ‘costs too much to get there’ (55%)

• the type of green space visited most often in Elmbridge is parks and gardens (38%)

• Grovelands, Esher Green and Claremont Gardens were the most popular sites used most often by young people

• most young people visit their chosen green space occasionally (47%) and either travel by foot (30%) or by car (36%)

• it takes 33% young people less than five minutes to travel to the green space of their choice

• the most popular reasons for using green space were to get some exercise (31%), to get some fresh air (31%) and to go for a walk (39%)

• 59% of respondents visit green space with their family
• most young people rated the amount of green space in Elmbridge as very good (46%)

• most young people rated the overall quality of green space as very good or good (72%)

• 68% of young people think that green spaces are well maintained

• 79% of young people feel safe when they visit green spaces in Elmbridge.

Neighbourhood ‘drop-in’ sessions

4.9 Six neighbourhood drop-in sessions were held in what was considered the most widely used locations in Elmbridge:

• Walton On Thames, Sainsburys

• East Moseley, Tesco

• Hersham, Waitrose

• Claygate, Somerfield

• Brooklands, Tesco Extra

• Cobham, Sainsburys.

4.10 The sessions were open to all members of the public. The purpose of the sessions was to gain information from local residents on the main aspects of the green spaces study – quality, quantity, accessibility, usage and the wider value of green space in Elmbridge.

4.11 The sessions also gave the residents an opportunity to discuss any key issues relating to green space in their area (including site specific and general issues), as well as the opportunity to comment on good and bad examples of green spaces.

4.12 The findings of these consultation sessions are as follows:

Quality

• overall, the borough has very well maintained parks/green spaces

• reinstatement of more flower beds in the borough is needed

• woodlands in the area are generally well maintained

• some natural and semi-natural areas are too overgrown and need de-brambling

• Hurst Park (adjacent to the new Tesco and apartments) - concern over increased resident numbers and cars to the area potentially degrading the quality of the park

• loss of trees is a concern due to continuous housing development

• cemeteries are badly maintained, some are subsiding
SECTION 4 – INVOLVING COMMUNITIES

- safety along green corridors is an issue
- misuse of Ashley Park by youths is a concern
- dog walking facilities are generally good – a ‘dog poop’ scheme is in operation and there are plenty of places to walk.

**Quantity**

- a sufficient quantity of green space in the borough and a general feeling of being very fortunate
- sufficient quantity of play areas for children and young people
- sports facilities provision for all sports needs to be balanced. Football is well provided for while other sports are not.

**Accessibility**

- young mothers struggle with buggies at park gateways/entrances
- wheelchair access is an issue in some places
- good access to Hersham Green
- trees in/along pavements are not sensible for blind/partially-sighted people and pruning and maintenance is needed.

**Internal consultations**

4.13 The following council officers and members have been consulted with regards to the current provision and potential need of green spaces and sport and recreation.

- Ian Burrows, Leisure Development Manager
- Geoff Seale, Sports Development Officer
- Richard Simms, Senior Leisure Officer
- Martin Parker, Principal Planning Officer
- Councillor J Bartlett
- Councillor J Turner.

4.14 The following points summarise the main issues, which emerged from consultations with internal officers.

**Strategy and vision**

4.15 The primary aim of the Green Space, Sport and Recreation Study is to give the Council an understanding of current provision in Elmbridge and therefore identify areas where there are deficiencies in provision and identify solutions through redesignation or additional sites to meet any deficiencies. This study will provide robust evidence to support its future policy recommendations.
SECTION 4 – INVOLVING COMMUNITIES

Quantity

4.16 There was a general feeling that the quantity of green space, sport and recreation provision available across the borough is adequate. However, a surplus of pavilions at recreation grounds have been identified and actions have been taken to ensure that they are adapted to provide more valuable spaces. A lack of a publicly accessible synthetic turf pitches was also highlighted, however, there are current proposals to address this issue.

Quality

4.17 The overall quality of green space, sport and recreation sites across the borough is considered to be good. However, a couple of areas were highlighted for improvement. For example, tennis courts are recognised as needing refurbishment across the borough. Internal consultees also suggested that the service provided, for example by the Council, could impact the perceived quality, meaning that where there are organised activities at sites, there is higher perception of quality.

Accessibility

4.18 Public transport is limited in the borough. Cycle and footpath networks are disjointed and there is a lack of promotion for the use of the existing networks.

4.19 There are plans for the provision of a mini-bus service to recreation grounds for informal coaching sessions.

4.20 Public halls play an important role across the borough and it was highlighted that all halls must have car parks or be accessible by public transport.

4.21 There is generally thought to be a good level of accessible green space within walking distance from the main residential areas in the borough.

Sports club surveys

4.22 As part of the consultation process, surveys were sent to the sports clubs in Elmbridge as identified from the Council’s Sports Directory.

4.23 The following points summarise the main issues which emerged from the surveys:

- the overall provision of facilities for sport in the borough was considered to be good by respondents in terms of quantity (31%), quality (31%) and accessibility (39%)

- reasons given for facilities not meeting the needs of the clubs include:
  - number of pitches available is limited
  - lighting is poor
  - no facility for indoor bowls
  - accessible indoor cricket nets would be useful, for example at schools.

- sports clubs were asked to identify additional new facilities they would like to see in the borough, these were:
  - cricket nets
- floodlit football pitches
- 50 metre rowing tank
- indoor bowls
- sports hall with regional competition standard netball courts
- yoga studio.

- sports clubs were given the opportunity to suggest what could be done to improve the provision of facilities in Elmbridge:
  - maintain the existing facilities
  - improve public transport links to key sports facilities
  - provide publicly accessible water sports venue
  - increase number of floodlit tennis courts.

Summary

4.24 Specific sports facilities were identified as being required through consultation with sports clubs and members of the public.

4.25 Overall, residents of Elmbridge believe they are ‘very well off’ in terms of amount and quality of green space available to them and believe it should be protected.

4.26 The most popular green spaces in Elmbridge are the Commons (classified as natural greenspace sites).

4.27 The majority of respondents to the household survey were satisfied with the maintenance and management of sites overall, however there were some problems identified regarding litter and dog fouling.

4.28 The majority of respondents travel to green spaces in the borough on foot.

4.29 The most popular green space typology identified by young people in the schools internet survey was parks and gardens.

4.30 Public transport has been recognised as a problem throughout the borough, specifically in terms of accessibility and lack of routes within the more rural areas, but plans are in place for a minibus service to be provided for coaching courses at recreation grounds.

4.31 Consultation findings specific to green space typologies can be found in the relevant sections in this report.
SECTION 5

PARKS AND GARDENS
Parks and gardens

Definition

5.1 This type of open space includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events, within settlement boundaries. Parks and gardens tend to offer a range of different facilities.

5.2 This typology also has many wider benefits as supported by the site assessments. Parks provide a sense of place for the local community, ecological and education benefits, help to address any social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide some form of structural and landscaping benefits to the surrounding local area.

Picture 5.1 – Painshill Park (Site ID 354)

Strategic context and consultation

5.3 A national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage was undertaken during 2003, looking at the provision of parks within England. The aims of the survey were to establish:

• how many adults in England use parks
• what activities people take part in when visiting parks
• the reasons people visit particular parks
• the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
• why non-users do not use parks.

5.4 The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad (compared to the PPG17 definition, which was used for the purposes of the Council’s Green Space, Sport and Recreation Study) and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks, recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land.

5.5 The findings of the study were:

• just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months
there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups, with almost three quarters of adults from the higher social group visiting a park compared with only half of those from the lower social group

people from black and ethnic minority communities also have relatively low participation as well as those adults with a disability

over 8 in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring and summer with almost two thirds visiting a park at least once a week, and women tended to visit parks more often than men

it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits to parks during the spring and summer months and 600 million visits during the autumn and winter months – a total of 1.8 billion visits a year

the most popular type of park visited was an urban or city park.

Consultation

5.6 Respondents to the household survey indicated that parks and gardens were considered to be the second most important type of open space in the borough: 93% respondents suggested parks and gardens were very important or important. This score is only slightly lower than that of natural and semi-natural and semi-natural greenspaces (94%).

5.7 65% respondents indicated that the quantity of parks and gardens in Elmbridge is more than enough or about right.

5.8 Vandalism (39%), graffiti (39%) and dog fouling (32%) were considered to be the most significant problems at parks and gardens.

5.9 People attending the drop-in sessions considered that parks were well maintained generally and that litter was not a problem.

5.10 52% respondents of the schools Internet survey revealed they had visited parks and gardens in the last year. It was also the open space type visited most often by young people (38%).

Current position

5.11 The audit of green spaces identified 14 parks and gardens within Elmbridge Borough. These are:

- Brende Gardens (Site ID 26)
- Civic Centre Garden (Site ID 745)
- Claremont Landscape Gardens (Site ID 500)
- Hurst Park Open Space (Site ID 5)
- Hatchford Park (Site ID 153)
- Hersham War Memorial (Site ID 532)
5.12 Painshill Park is a National Trust site that attracts a large number of visitors from outside the borough, as well as being a key site for local residents. There was some concern raised by residents regarding the cost of visiting this site, and some felt there should be more parks and gardens available where access is free of charge.

**Setting provision standards**

5.13 In setting local standards for parks and gardens there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices G, H and I.

**Quantity**

5.14 The audit of parks and gardens shows there is 142.38 hectares of parks and gardens in total across Elmbridge. The current provision of parks and gardens per 1,000 population therefore equates to 1.17 ha per 1,000 population.

5.15 The responses from the household questionnaire suggest that the majority of respondents (65%) feel that provision is about right/more than enough for this type of open space. This is compared to 34% who stated that there is nearly enough/not enough provision.

5.16 The high level of satisfaction with the existing provision suggests that the quantitative standard should be set at the existing level. Other forms of consultation undertaken as part of the study also indicated that the current level of provision is acceptable but that particular areas could benefit from enhancement and improvement.

5.17 There are no definitive national quantity standards for parks and gardens but comparative PPG17 studies suggest a standard between 0.3 ha and 1 ha per 1000 population. In view of the provision of other open space types that provide a park and garden function for residents (ie the Commons), it is considered that the standard should not be higher than the existing provision.

5.18 It is therefore recommended that a standard in line with the existing provision at 1.17 ha per 1,000 population is set for parks and gardens in Elmbridge. Any locational deficiencies should be highlighted through the application of the accessibility standards and the future for parks and gardens should be on improving the quality of the existing provision.
Quality

5.19 The Green Flag Criteria provides a nationally recognised benchmark for the quality of parks and gardens. The key criteria include a welcoming facility and a healthy, safe and secure environment.

5.20 The overall quality of parks and gardens across Elmbridge is considered good to very good, with an average quality score of 91%. For quality, the highest rated parks and gardens were the Civic Centre Garden (Site ID 745) and Walton Memorial Garden (Site ID 663) with 100%. The lowest rated site was Stompond Lane Garden (Site ID 669) which scored 71%.

5.21 The only park that had a poor rating for any quality factors was Stompond Lane Garden (Site ID 669), which was poor for safety and security. This accounts for its lower overall score. On the whole parks and gardens provided a range of wider benefits, such as ecological and amenity benefits.

5.22 Riverhouse Gardens (Site ID 16), Walton Memorial Garden (Site ID 663) and Civic Centre Garden (Site ID 745) are all highly valued sites within the local community. Hatchland Park (Site ID 153) and Painshill Park (Site ID 354) are also noted as well used and good quality open space sites.

5.23 Respondents to the household survey who use parks frequently felt quality issues centred on vandalism, graffiti, and dog fouling with over 32% feeling that each of these presented a significant problem.

5.24 Household survey respondents were most satisfied with maintenance and management (74%), provision of bins for litter (59%) and pathways (63%). Respondents were least satisfied with provision of toilets (33%) and seats and benches (28%).

5.25 As identified by Elmbridge residents through the household survey, the highest rated aspirations for parks and gardens were: clean/litter free, flowers, trees and shrubs, well kept grass, dog-poop scheme and provision of toilets.

5.26 A suggested quality vision standard for parks and gardens should therefore include elements of these aspirations to meet the needs of the public, and also other local and national standards. The vision incorporates the aspirations of the Green Flag Award criteria and public aspirations. The standard is intended to ensure that park provision is sustainable, balanced and ultimately achievable.

5.27 The recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing parks to achieve in terms of enhancement.

**LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD**

“A welcoming, well-maintained site that is clean, and litter, vandalism and graffiti are kept to a minimum. It should provide a wide range of leisure and recreational opportunities, varied and well-kept vegetation and natural features, where suitable appropriate lighting and ancillary accommodation.”
**Accessibility**

5.28 With regards to accessibility there are also no definitive national or local standards.

5.29 Site access was generally rated as good with all but one site scoring above 63%, (Hinchley Wood Gardens scored 53%). Two of the 14 parks rated the highest with 90% for Riverhouse Gardens (Site ID 16) and 87% for Hurst Park (Site ID 5).

5.30 Through the consultation and household survey, of those residents who selected parks and gardens as the type of open space they used most:

- 93% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the accessibility of the site by walking
- 91% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the visibility of the site entrance
- 81% were satisfied with opening times.

5.31 The main areas of concern focused on the accessibility of sites by cycleways and by public transport, and concerns over signage to the site.

5.32 The majority of respondents (77%) to the household survey stated that they would expect to walk to parks and gardens rather than drive, and would be willing to travel up to 20 minutes to reach them. The general perception (75% level) is that a walk time of up to 10 minutes is reasonable within the borough. This is in line with patterns of behaviour for current users, 67% of whom walk to park and garden sites, taking between five and 15 minutes, as well as standards set for other local authorities.

5.33 A straight line distance of 480m has been used rather than the pedestrian distance of 800m. This is based on PMP’s average walking distances and uses a factoring reduction of 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in a straight line to access their open space facilities. This 40% factoring is based on the National Playing Fields Association’s Six Acre Standard (See Table 3, page 25 of NPFA Six Acre Standard), which has been worked out from a trial of four–14 year olds and the distance they travelled. Although all ages will access this type of facility, this ensures that all expectations can be met.

**Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas**

5.34 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs, we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance. Applying the standards together is a much more meaningful method of analysis than applying the standards separately.

5.35 The following map shows an overview of the application of accessibility standards to Elmbridge Borough. We have plotted straight line catchment areas, based on the recommended accessibility standard, around each open space site. The maps are interpreted as follows:

- if a residential area is located within one of these catchment areas (shaded areas on the map), then it can be assumed that it has reasonable access to this type of open space
• if a residential area is located outside of these catchment areas (unshaded areas on the map), then it can be assumed that it does not have reasonable access to this type of open space.

5.36 Map 5.1 shows that there are significant residential areas of deficiency in parks and gardens throughout the borough.

5.37 The audit shows there is currently 142.38 ha of parks and gardens in total across the borough. However, at first glance the locational deficiencies between analysis areas appear to be significant.

5.38 The current provision of parks and gardens per 1,000 population equates to 1.17 ha. When breaking this provision down by analysis areas, area 4 (Hersham) and area 2 (Esher/Claygate/Dittons) have the highest levels of provision (66.75 ha and 59.31 ha in total area respectively). Existing provision in analysis areas 1 (Walton) and 6 (Cobham/Oxshott/Stoke D’Abernon) ranges between 1.28 - 2.09 ha, and area 3 (Weybridge and Oatlands) is least well provided for with no formal park and gardens.

5.39 The high level of provision in area 4 is due to the existence of Painshill Park (Site ID 354), a large historic landscape park 66.14 ha in size. Similarly, the level of provision in Molesey can be understood in the context of Hurst Park Open Space (Site ID 5: 12.46 ha). Whereas the majority of parks and gardens in the rest of the borough are generally less than 1 ha in size, both Painshill Park and Hurst Park are likely to be widely used by residents from surrounding catchment areas. These parks therefore serve a key role in addressing deficiencies in surrounding analysis areas.
Map 5.1: Provision of parks and gardens in Elmbridge
Map 5.2: Provision of parks and gardens (overlaid with natural and semi-natural greenspace)
5.40 Due to the significant deficiencies between analysis areas, an analysis has been undertaken to assess whether other types of open space can fulfil the park and garden function and whether new provision is required in certain areas. Map 5.2 shows the distribution of parks and gardens overlain with natural and semi-natural greenspace sites as a basis for this analysis.

5.41 There are numerous natural and semi-natural greenspace sites throughout the borough, particularly large Commons, many of which provide a ‘park/recreation function’ for resident populations where there are no local existing parks and gardens. For instance, analysis area 3 is entirely deficient in parks and gardens and analysis area 6 has limited provision. However, the accessibility catchment map shows that the urban area has almost complete coverage by natural and semi-natural and semi-natural greenspace due to the existence of large Commons in area 6, such as Princes Coverts North (Site ID 311), and Ockham Common (Site 322). Where there are deficient areas in both parks and gardens, and natural and semi-natural greenspace, there is overlap with amenity greenspace provision.

5.42 In analysis area 1 and 2, there is significant coverage of amenity greenspace (further details are provided in Section 7). Large areas of amenity greenspace could be formalised to provide some park and garden function; eg provision of additional seating, formal planting, art sculptures or some play equipment. This would offer a more formalised environment that could provide a variety of recreational uses.

5.43 Map 5.3 shows an area of identified deficiency of parks and gardens, and natural and semi-natural greenspace in the Claygate residential area (analysis area 2). However, this area is well provided for in terms of amenity greenspaces due to existence of Claygate Recreation Ground (Site ID 457) and Claygate Common (Site ID 449). As detailed above, parts of these amenity greenspaces could be improved as appropriate to provide residents with access to a more formalised park and garden.

Map 5.3 Deficiencies in parks and gardens in Claygate

5.44 In addition to the natural and semi-natural greenspaces there are significant areas of established rural Green Belt that offset locational deficiencies in parks and gardens. These lie outside and between the urban settlements of the borough. These areas provide the residents of Elmbridge with visual, recreational and landscape benefits.

5.45 The recommended minimum level of provision for parks and gardens is 1.17 ha, which equates to the existing level of provision and therefore highlights that current park and garden provision in the borough should be protected. The application of the accessibility catchments also supports the need to protect this existing provision.
Value assessment – identifying specific sites

5.46 The majority of parks and gardens across Elmbridge are considered of high value, i.e. they are well used by borough residents and visitors.

5.47 Typically sites that have a high level of use would have a ‘good’ or ‘very good’ quality and accessibility rating; sites with a low level of use would have an ‘average’ or ‘poor’ quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked. Elmbridge has three parks and gardens that achieve ‘very good’ scores for usage, accessibility and quality:

- Riverhouse Gardens (Site ID 16)
- Walton Memorial Garden (Site ID 663)
- Civic Centre Garden (Site ID 745).

5.48 These sites should be protected and used as examples of best practice.

5.49 There are three sites in Elmbridge with a low score for quality and accessibility, yet were still considered to be well used. Stompond Lane Garden (Site ID 669), Hinchley Wood Gardens (Site ID 473) and Long Ditton Memorial Garden (Site ID 798) all require quality and accessibility issues to be addressed as a priority where possible. This will increase user satisfaction and experience. The sites should be protected, as their value is high in terms of usage levels by the local community.

Summary

5.50 The parks and gardens in Elmbridge vary considerably in size and in function. Painshill Park (Site ID 354), for instance, is a very large historic site located in analysis area 4 and of strategic significance. Civic Centre Garden (Site ID 745) on the other hand provides a more local park and garden facility for those in Esher.

5.51 Consultation suggests that the residents of Elmbridge are satisfied with the quantity of park and gardens and also consider the quality to be adequate to good.

5.52 The majority of parks and gardens across Elmbridge are significant green spaces, of high usage by Elmbridge residents and visitors and therefore have a high value.

5.53 Overall, there are no quantitative deficiencies (if reviewed on a borough wide level) mainly owing to the large parks such as Hurst Park, Claremont Landscape Gardens and Painshill Park. However, as evidenced in Map 5.1, there are locational deficiencies between analysis areas. This is counterbalanced by the wide distribution of natural and semi-natural greenspaces (in particular the Commons) and amenity greenspaces across the borough. Many of these sites can fulfil a park and garden function to meet these deficiencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PG1</th>
<th>Protect the current level of provision of parks and gardens across Elmbridge Borough.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PG2</td>
<td>Protect and improve local access to Hinchley Wood Gardens (Site ID 473), as a priority to increase usage levels. On site improvements to information and signage and site entrances are should be prioritised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG3</td>
<td>Protect and improve quality and accessibility for Stompond Lane Garden (Site ID 669) and Long Ditton Memorial Garden (Site ID 798) in order to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG 4</td>
<td>To address areas of park and garden deficiency, investigate and improve (where appropriate) the park and garden function of amenity greenspaces within the borough.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 6

NATURAL AND SEMI NATURAL OPEN SPACE
Natural Greenspace

Definition

6.1 This type of open space includes woodlands, urban forestry, scrubland, grasslands (e.g., downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity within the settlement boundaries.

Picture 6.1 – Littleworth Common (Site ID 751)

Consultation

6.2 Some of the key issues identified from the consultation indicated:

- 82% of respondents to the household questionnaire felt that natural and semi-natural greenspaces are very important
- natural greenspaces was the most frequently used typology according to respondents to the household survey (29%)
- 60% of respondents believe the amount of natural greenspace in Elmbridge to be about right
- 35% of respondents to the household questionnaire use natural greenspaces on a weekly basis (this is second only to parks and gardens)
- specific issues identified from the consultation were litter and dog fouling, yet overall the sites were considered to be well managed and maintained.
SECTION 6 – NATURAL GREENSPACE

Current position

6.3 There is a large amount of natural greenspace with 67 sites within Elmbridge Borough. The Commons make up a large percentage of this typology, and are a key attraction for people choosing to live in Elmbridge.

6.4 It should be noted that Painshill Park (Site ID 354) and Claremont Landscape Gardens (Site ID 500) are classified as parks and gardens as they provide a country park facility. However they are more natural facilities and do provide some natural greenspace function.

Setting provision standards

6.5 In setting local standards for natural greenspace there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices G, H and I.

Quantity

6.6 The total provision of natural greenspace amounts to 1,202.69 ha in Elmbridge Borough. Therefore the current provision of natural greenspace is 9.86 ha per 1,000 population.

6.7 This is a high level of provision compared to most local authorities, due to the large areas of Commons within the borough. The larger Commons are predominantly located in analysis areas 2 (Esher/Claygate/Dittons) and 6 (Cobham/Oxshott/Stoke D'Abernon). For analysis area 2, this includes Esher Common (Site ID 409 – 96.99 ha) and Ditton Common (Site IDs 768, 770 and 773 – 2.47 ha, 7.7 ha and 2.07 ha respectively). For analysis area 6, this includes Fairmile Common (Site ID 399 – 125.87 ha) and Prince Coverts (Site ID 311 – 295.66 ha).

6.8 There are two main standards which relate to the provision of natural and semi-natural open space. These are the Woodland Trust’s standard for woodland areas and English Nature’s Accessible Natural Greenspace standard (ANGsT).

6.9 The Woodland Trust standard is:

- no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2 ha in size
- there should be also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20 ha within 4km (8km round-trip) of people’s homes.

6.10 The English Nature Accessible Natural Greenspace standard is:

- that no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2 ha in size
- provision of at least 1 ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population
- that there should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2km from home
- that there should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5km
- that there should be one 500 ha site within 20 km.
6.11 Overall, public opinion suggests that the current provision of 9.86 ha per 1,000 population is about right or more than enough, with 65% of household survey respondents suggesting this. Only 19% of respondents felt that there was not enough provision. Qualitative consultation also stressed the importance of protecting the large area of Green Belt that comprises the Commons and woodlands.

6.12 In terms of other local authorities where PMP have set standards these have ranged from around 2 ha per 1,000 population to 11 ha per 1,000 population.

6.13 The standard proposed for Elmbridge is therefore higher than previous local standards set. Such a high level of provision is related to the number of Commons in Elmbridge and the large expanse of Green Belt that covers a total area of 57% of the borough.

6.14 It is therefore appropriate to set a local standard that reflects the existing level of provision. Therefore a minimum level of provision of 9.86 ha per 1000 population is recommended.

**Quality**

6.15 There are no definitive national or local quality standards although the Countryside Agency state that such land should be managed to conserve or enhance its rich landscape, bio-diversity, heritage and local customs.

6.16 The Council Cultural Strategy (2003/2008) sets out to ‘retain [the Borough’s] attractive, green and unique character and where the environment is valued’ and this will be achieved through identified sites meeting the agreed quality standard.

6.17 The overall quality of natural greenspace sites is considered to be average to good. The highest quality site was Hurst Meadows Main Area (Site ID 204) with 96%. The lowest quality scoring was Franklyn’s Ex-Tip (Site ID 22) with 20%.

6.18 Feedback from the household survey indicated that a large proportion of people noted problems with litter and dog fouling at natural greenspace sites (over 75% felt that this was a problem).

6.19 The highest rated aspirations/quality features identified from the household survey were: clean and litter free, natural features, varied vegetation ie flowers, trees and shrubs, pond, lake and water features and clear footpaths.

6.20 Due to the abundance of this type of green space, it is of paramount importance that all such green space is governed by a local quality standards. The standard is based on public aspirations and provides the vision for this type of open space.

6.21 The recommended local quality standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing natural greenspace to achieve in terms of enhancement.

6.22 For natural greenspace, the key points which link the quality vision and site assessments are the provision of a clean and litter free site, clear pathways, natural features that encourage wildlife conservation and biodiversity and in turn

**LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD**

“A spacious and clean site with clear pathways, minimal litter, and natural features and varied vegetation which encourages wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Where appropriate, sites should provide a key cultural and educational resource for the community. Sites should be maintained to protect any nature conservation interest”
provide an important cultural resource for the local community.

**Accessibility**

6.23 English Nature recommends accessibility standards for various size sites of accessible natural greenspace and the Woodland Trust recommends standards for the provision of woodland areas within different catchments for different size sites. This is outlined above. There are no existing local standards.

6.24 In terms of site access, of the sites that were assessed, there is a large range of scores from 20% to 92%. The lowest scoring sites were Brickfield Copse (Site ID 324) and Elvedon Road NSN (Site ID 356). Both sites are located in analysis area 6 with a site access score of 20%. The highest rated sites for access are Esher Common (Site ID 409) and Fairmile Common (Site ID 399) with 90% and 92% respectively.

6.25 From the household survey, of those respondents who used natural greenspaces most frequently, the highest levels of satisfaction were with the visibility of the site entrance and accessibility by walking. Levels of dissatisfaction were relatively low but of these accessibility by public transport and accessibility for pushchairs and disabled access were the highest.

6.26 In terms of the most appropriate method of transport to this type of green space, the majority of respondents across the borough indicated they would prefer to walk to a natural greenspace. The 75% threshold level indicated a walk time of 10 minutes.

6.27 Of those who use this type of open space most frequently, 58% walk, of which 39% of users walk up to five minutes and 55% of users travel between five and 15 minutes.

6.28 There is therefore a preference for walking to natural and semi-natural greenspaces. The standards set for other local authorities are typically around 10 or 15 minutes walk.

6.29 The most common current travel time to natural greenspace sites as indicated by survey respondents is five minutes and although this is different from the recommended local accessibility standard, the most common travel time is not sufficiently different from the 75% level to question this (a larger difference would perhaps suggest that the 75% threshold level was steering the findings away from a true reflection of people’s expectations). As such, the standard is set at the 75% level in accordance with the PPG17 Companion Guide.

6.30 A large proportion of Elmbridge residents are within this catchment due to the large abundance of this typology. As such, the focus will be on improving access to and within these sites and further focusing on the quality of sites.

6.31 A straight line distance of 480 m has been used to create the catchments. This is based on PMP’s average walking speeds (3mph), reduced by 40% as people do not walk in a straight line to access open spaces. This 40% factoring is based on information in the National Playing Fields Association Six Acre Standard, which has been worked out from a trial of 4-14 year olds and the distance they travelled. Although natural greenspace areas offer facilities for all ages, by applying this reduction, all expectations will be covered.
Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

6.32 In order to identify important geographical areas and those areas with local needs we apply the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards while the accessibility standards help to determine where those deficiencies are important.

6.33 Map 6.1 overleaf shows the overview of natural greenspaces in Elmbridge. The map highlights that there are many large, well-distributed natural greenspaces throughout the borough.
Map 6.1 Overview of natural greenspace provision

- Walton
- Hersham
- Molesey
- Long Ditton
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- St George's Hill
- Fairmile
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- Fairmile
- Walton
- Hersham
- Molesey
- Long Ditton
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- St George's Hill
- Fairmile
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- Fairmile
- Walton
- Hersham
- Molesey
- Long Ditton
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- St George's Hill
- Fairmile
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- Fairmile
- Walton
- Hersham
- Molesey
- Long Ditton
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- St George's Hill
- Fairmile
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- Fairmile
6.34 The local standard is set at the existing provision of 9.86 ha per 1,000 population. By applying the accessibility standard, drawn at 10 minutes/0.48 km, there are still some residential areas in the borough that do not have access to natural greenspace.

6.35 In three of the six analysis areas, current provision of natural greenspace is over 6 ha per 1,000 population. However, in the remaining three analysis areas, current provision is significantly lower and ranges from 1.95 ha to 3.54 ha per 1,000. This division in deficiency can be accounted for by the distribution of large Commons areas in particular analysis areas.

6.36 In terms of quantity, analysis areas 1, 3 and 5 have a provision below the minimum recommended level of provision, which reveals a need to protect all existing provision in these areas.

6.37 Where there are deficiencies in natural greenspaces, consideration should be given to the value and the provision of other types of green space (or those which have additional value as a secondary purpose. For instance, amenity greenspace sites are identified within the specific typology sections in this report).

6.38 Analysis area 1 shows deficiencies in natural greenspace in parts of Walton North and Walton Central. Map 6.2 below identifies significant resources of other forms of green space within this area. The residential areas of Walton are well provided for in terms of parks and gardens, including Riverhouse Gardens (Site ID 16), Walton Memorial Garden (Site ID 663) and Stompond Lane Memorial Garden (Site ID 669). A large proportion of Walton would have access to these parks and gardens, alleviating the identified deficiency.

6.39 In addition, the area which is deficient in natural greenspace has full coverage by amenity greenspace. Therefore, the natural greenspace deficiency in analysis area 1 is not considered to be a priority for improvements.

*Map 6.2 Deficiencies of natural greenspace – Analysis Area 1*
6.40 An analysis of area 2 identifies two important green spaces which address accessibility deficiencies in Claygate and in Esher. Claygate Recreation Ground (Site ID 457) is a large amenity greenspace site alleviating natural greenspace deficiency in Claygate. Esher Civic Centre Garden (Site ID 745), located in the Esher town centre, is a high quality park and garden providing an open space for residents. The area of deficiency in the southern margin of map 6.3 is dissected by the railway, a physical barrier to all forms of green space. This barrier means that it is difficult to improve greenspace provision in this area.

6.41 It is also important to note that this area of deficiency is in fact rural Green Belt, therefore providing visual and landscape benefits to the Esher population. Therefore, seeking new provision of natural greenspace in this area is not a priority.

Map 6.3 Deficiencies in natural greenspace – Analysis Area 2

6.42 Map 6.4 shows the residential area of St George’s Hill Estate (analysis area 3) is currently outside of the catchment area of any natural greenspace. Overall, analysis area 3 appears to be deficient in natural greenspace. However, St George’s Hill Estate is a residential area characterised by private residences with provision in the form of private gardens, providing a greenspace function for residents.

6.43 South of St George’s Estate is St George’s Hill Golf Club (Site ID 559), a private outdoor sports facility that serves the St George residents. This large expanse of open space (over 121 ha) also functions as greenspace as a result of the green vegetation, scrub and tree plantings that make up sections of the golf course.
Map 6.4 Residential area of St George’s Hill Estate – Analysis Area 3

Map 6.5 Deficiencies in natural greenspace – Analysis Area 4

6.44 Map 6.5 above, shows the area of deficiency in the Hersham residential area. Hersham Green (Site ID 531) is a multi-functional amenity green space site, which alleviates any accessibility shortfall in this area.

6.45 Map 6.6 shows a large area of urban settlement in Molesey North and South outside the accessibility catchment of natural greenspace. The area is well provided for in other forms of natural open space through the existence of Hurst Park. Hurst Park is divided primarily into natural greenspace (Hurst Meadows area, Site ID 204, site area 10.43ha) and park and garden (Hurst Park Open Space, Site ID 5, site area 12.5 ha). Hurst Park Open Space runs adjacent to the River Thames, therefore provides residents with important access to a natural river environment and its surrounding green space. The River Thames provides a wide range of recreational opportunities and is a significant environmental asset for the borough.
6.46 Within analysis area 6, the Fairmile residential area appears deficient in terms of access to natural greenspace. The area in question is also deficient in terms of parks and gardens and amenity greenspace.

6.47 Within the urban area there are a number of outdoor sports facilities. These sites are inappropriate sites for enhancing and developing natural greenspace, therefore there is little potential for alleviating the deficiency in natural greenspace.

6.48 However, in terms of overall provision, analysis area 6 has the highest level of provision of all the analysis areas (37.98 ha per 1,000 population). As shown in Map 6.7, this is due to the existence of significantly large Commons such as Fairmile Common (Site ID 399, site area 125.87 ha), which serve the wider Fairmile/Cobham residential population.

6.49 As shown in Map 6.8, within analysis area 6, the Oxshott residential area shows a small area of deficiency in terms of access to natural greenspace. Within the affected urban area there is significant amenity greenspace provision at Danes Way amenity greenspace (Site ID 312, site area 6.09 ha). The site may provide some natural greenspace function, alleviating the accessibility deficiency.
SECTION 6 – NATURAL GREENSPACE

Map 6.8 Deficiencies in natural greenspace - Oxshott

6.50 In addition to the natural greenspaces there are significant areas of established Green Belt. These lie outside and between the urban settlements of the borough. These areas serve a primary function to natural greenspaces, providing the residents of Elmbridge with visual, recreational and landscape benefits. One of the principal functions of the Green Belt is to act as a natural barrier to urban sprawl in the south west of London. Many of the natural greenspace sites are themselves located within the Green Belt.

6.51 In general, from an accessibility catchment perspective, the local authority area is well provided for in terms of natural greenspace. Where deficiencies are identified, other forms of open space can fulfil this function. Issues surround the quality of existing sites and therefore priorities should lie with the enhancement of sites rather than the provision of more.

Value assessment – identifying specific sites

6.52 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.

6.53 42% of natural greenspace sites were identified as having high/significant usage levels, 56% scored ‘often’ for usage with 2% scoring ‘low/insignificant’.

6.54 15 natural greenspace sites scored ‘high’ for quality, usage and accessibility. These sites should be protected and should set the benchmark for quality of other natural greenspaces:

- Arbrook Common (Site ID 490).
- Ditton Common (Site ID 768, 770)
- Esher Common (Site ID 409)
- Fairmile Common (Site ID 331)
- Hurst Meadows Main Area (Site ID 204)
- Littleheath Common (Site ID 422)
• Littleworth Common (Site ID 751)
• Molesey Heath (Site ID 32)
• Ockham Common (Site ID 322)
• Old Common (Site ID 360)
• Oxshott Heath (Site ID 410)
• Walton Common (Site ID 568, 569)
• Weston Green Common (Site ID 771, 772)
• West End Common (Site ID 498)
• Weybridge Heath (Site ID 600, 573, 598).

6.55 A number of natural greenspace sites in the borough have a nature conservation designation. As such they have an additional layer of protection, also increases the importance of these sites being appropriately managed.

6.56 Special nature conservation and protection measures are required at the Special Protection Areas (SPA), such as The Thames Basin Reservoirs in Elmbridge and also at Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which covers part of Esher Common, West End Common, Fairmile Common and Oxshott Heath.

6.57 Three natural greenspace sites were identified as being of high quality and high usage, with low accessibility. These sites must have their accessibility issues addressed as a priority in order to maximise the value to the local community:

• Elvedon Road NSN (Site ID 356)
• Hersham Riverside Park (Site ID 508)
• Whiteley Village NSN (Site ID 783).

6.58 Whiteley Village NSN (Site ID 783) provides access to local residents only and while it benefits those living in the immediate vicinity, non-residents are restricted from using this area.

6.59 15 natural greenspace sites scored low for quality, high for usage and low for accessibility. Quality and accessibility should be enhanced where possible, which will in turn increase user satisfaction and experience. These open spaces must be protected as their value is high because of the high usage by the local community:

• Brickfield Copse (Site ID 324)
• Broadwater Close NSN (Site ID 539)
• Desborough Island (Site ID 644)
• Eriswell Road NSN (Site ID 544, 546)
• Franklyn’s Ex-Tip (Site ID 22).
• Hawkshill Close NSN (Site ID 501)
• Middleton Road (Site ID 292)
• Old Parks Copse (Site ID 277)
• Queens Park NSN (Site ID 588, 589)
• Seagrave Close NSN (Site ID 606)
• Templmere NSN (Site ID 674)
• The Quillot NSN (Site ID 545)
• Walton Lane NSN (Site ID 640).

Summary

6.60 Consultations suggest that there is a good level of provision of natural and semi-natural green space. Similarly there were more respondents to the household survey who felt that the existing level of provision was about right or more than enough compared to those who felt that there is nearly enough/not enough.

6.61 In general, the borough is well provided for in terms both quantity and accessibility of natural greenspace. Where deficiencies are identified, other forms of open space can fulfil this function.

6.62 Issues surround the quality and accessibility of existing sites and therefore priorities should lie with the enhancement of sites rather than the provision of more natural greenspace.

6.63 The quantity standard has been purposefully developed to ensure the existing provision of natural open space throughout Elmbridge is protected and hence there is a high value placed on all natural greenspace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSN 1</th>
<th>Protect and enhance all areas of natural greenspace.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSN 2</td>
<td>Protect and enhance all sites of high value to the community. Accessibility to these sites should be enhanced and their primary function further promoted to improve the potential for increased use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 3</td>
<td>Investigate and improve (where appropriate) access to sites of low accessibility, such as Elvedon Road and Hersham Riverside Park, in order to maximise values of high quality and high usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 4</td>
<td>Investigate and improve (where appropriate) the natural greenspace function of Hurst Meadows area and improve recreational access to the River Thames within the adjacent residential area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSN 5</td>
<td>As a priority, protect and enhance public access to highly used sites that are low in quality, and low in accessibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 7

AMENITY GREENSPACE
Amenity greenspace

Definition

7.1 This type of open space is most commonly found in housing areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and green spaces in and around housing, with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancing the appearance of residential or other areas.

Figure 7.1 – Churchfield Road AGS, Weybridge (Site ID 613)

Consultation

7.2 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues:

• 62% of respondents to the household survey believe amenity greenspace to be very important

• members of the public also stressed the importance of amenity greenspace for a 'sense of community' as well as a visual need

• 46% of survey respondents suggested that the amount of amenity greenspace in Elmbridge is about right

• only 4% of respondents suggested that amenity greenspace is the open space typology they visit most frequently. 21% use amenity greenspace on a weekly basis and 14% on a daily basis

• from the household survey, litter problems were identified as the most significant

• members of the public were generally satisfied with the current amount of amenity greenspace in the borough but were concerned about the impact of further re-development and new housing.
Current position

7.3 There are 147 amenity greenspaces in Elmbridge Borough. Sites range in size from 0.04ha to 14.34ha.

7.4 Amenity greenspace may provide a secondary purpose as informal children’s play, depending on the site. They also provide the opportunity for re-designation or intensification of use to provide more formal facilities where required.

Setting provision standards

7.5 In setting local standards for amenity greenspace there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices G, H and I.

Quantity

7.6 The audit of amenity greenspace identified 220.25 ha across the borough. The current provision of amenity greenspace equates to 1.81 ha per 1,000 population.

7.7 Overall, views on provision of amenity greenspace in the borough were mixed, with 46% believing provision to be about right and 21% not enough. The consultation in analysis areas 3, 4, 5 and 6 suggests that the concern relates primarily to a view that new residential developments lack new amenity greenspace provision. Therefore, this mixed perception of a lack of amenity greenspace is related to development pressure in these particular analysis areas.

7.8 The only national standard for amenity greenspace is by the *Rethinking Open Space* report, which provides an average of all local authority applicable standards at 2 ha per 1,000 population.

7.9 Other national standards make reference to amenity greenspace, including the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), which states 2 acres (0.8 ha) per 1,000 population for ‘playing spaces’. However this is not directly comparable to the amenity greenspace typology as it specifically refers to informal areas for children.

7.10 There is a significant resource of natural greenspace within Elmbridge borough overall, and in some cases, this will contribute to the amenity greenspace resource in areas of deficiency. The accessibility standards will highlight locational deficiencies in terms of local amenity greenspace.

7.11 The recommended standard for amenity greenspace is therefore set at the existing level of 1.81 ha per 1,000 population. This will ensure the existing level of provision is protected and that this level of provision is continued within the open space provided in new housing developments. This standard also takes into consideration the large resource of natural greenspace in not setting the standard higher than the existing provision. This standard is also in line with other local authority standards and therefore reflects a realistic level of provision.
Quality

7.12 There are no national or local quality standards for amenity greenspace.

7.13 The average site assessment ratings for amenity greenspaces were good, with only a few scores of ‘poor’ for ancillary accommodation. The lowest scoring site was The Dell, Lonsdale Road (Site ID 604) with a score of 36%. The following sites all scored 100% for quality:

- Caesars Camp (Site 346)
- Cricket Green (Site ID 591)
- Churchfield Road (Site ID 613)
- Hersham Road Open Space / Rydens School (Site 715/6).

7.14 The majority of amenity greenspace sites generally provide structural and landscaping benefits, a ‘sense of place’ and social inclusion and health benefits.

7.15 From the household survey, the highest rated aspirations for amenity green spaces were: clean and litter free, well kept grass, litter bins, seating, flowers, trees and shrubs.

7.16 Litter and dog fouling are seen as significant quality issues through the consultations. This view is supported by the household survey, where 74% of respondents considered litter to be a problem (48% significant and 26% minor) and 70% considered dog fouling to be a problem (37% significant and 33% minor).

7.17 Anti social behaviour and vandalism were also considered to be an issue with 63% of respondents considering anti social behaviour to be a problem (27% significant and 32% minor) and 75% considering vandalism and graffiti to be a problem (27% significant and 38% minor).

7.18 Churchfield Road AGS (Site ID 613) is considered to be a local example of good practice encouraging informal recreation. The quality standard is intended to reflect the good practice of this site.

7.19 The recommended local quality standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing amenity greenspace to achieve in terms of enhancement.

LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD

“A safe, clean and well-maintained green space site with minimal litter, well-kept grass and vegetation. The site should be easily accessible and large enough to accommodate informal play. Sites should have appropriate ancillary accommodation (benches, litter bins etc) and landscaping that enhances the appearance of the local environment.”
Accessibility

7.20 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards.

7.21 The amenity greenspaces in Elmbridge have been assessed on their accessibility and different access factors (general, transport and information and signage). However the validity of this will vary according to how large the site is and whether the primary purpose of this site is actual use or visual amenity. Therefore the scores stated for these sites will only inform the set recommendation where applicable.

7.22 The majority of sites rated ‘good’ for accessibility, with an average rating of 69%. The three highest rated sites for access were Hersham Recreation Ground (Site ID 535 97%), Cricket Green (Site ID 591) and Giggs Hill Field (Site ID 66) both with 93%.

7.23 The lowest scoring sites for access, with 37% were:

- Waterside Drive AGS (Site ID 21)
- Belgrave Close AGS (Site ID 537)
- Oatlands Drive AGS (Site ID 657)
- Finart Close AGS (Site ID 698).

7.24 The household survey generated a low response in relation to amenity greenspace and the statistics are drawn from a relatively small baseline sample (37). However, where applicable, there is high satisfaction with accessibility to sites, particularly with 90% of respondents stating they are satisfied or very satisfied with accessibility on foot.

7.25 88% of respondents to the household survey expected to walk to amenity greenspace, while 81% of people currently walk. This is in line with amenity greenspace’s role as a local amenity.

7.26 The 75% threshold and the most common travel time for this typology borough-wide, is 10 minutes walk. As such the standard has been set at this level.

7.27 A straight line distance of 480m has been used to create the catchments. This is based on PMP’s average walking speeds (3mph), reduced by 40% as people do not walk in a straight line to access open spaces. This 40% factoring is based on information in the National Playing Fields Association Six Acre Standard, which has been worked out from a trial of 4-14 year olds and the distance they travelled. Although natural greenspace areas offer facilities for all ages, by applying this reduction, all expectations will be covered.

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

7.28 In order to identify important geographical areas and those areas with local needs we apply the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards while the accessibility standards help to determine where those deficiencies are important.
7.29 The quantity standards for amenity greenspace of Elmbridge have been set at the current level of provision. This will protect the existing level of provision and will enable substantial new areas of amenity greenspace to be provided with residential development in Elmbridge.

7.30 When we consider the geographical spread of the amenity greenspace sites and apply the agreed catchment of 480 metres this starts to show a different picture. Initially looking at a borough wide level (as shown in map 7.1 overleaf), there is a good distribution of amenity greenspace but that there are pockets of the residential areas which lie outside the catchment areas.
Map 7.1 Overview of amenity greenspace provision in Elmbridge
7.31 In most deficiency areas, these areas are predominantly industrial land or rural Green Belt. Whilst the rural areas are considerable in size, the population and therefore the demand for amenity greenspace is limited owing to the land use in these areas. For example, land south of the M25 in Hatchford, May’s Green and Pointer’s Green is predominantly rural Green Belt with limited residential population. In terms of other forms of open space, the area is well provided for with large natural greenspaces such as Ockham Common (Site ID 322, site area 69.34 ha).

7.32 In the Green Belt, for areas that lie outside the amenity greenspace catchments, it is also important to emphasise the importance of multi-functional open spaces. For example, open spaces such as football pitches are classified under outdoor sports facilities as their primary purpose. In a number of instances, however, pitches do provide an amenity greenspace function in areas where there are limited amenity green spaces and this must be taken into account within the analysis.

7.33 The provision of amenity greenspace does show a clustering of sites in some places within Elmbridge. This supports the notion that the level of provision is adequate in some analysis areas. Amenity greenspace should be considered a primary resource in meeting deficiencies in other typologies. An example of clustering of sites is demonstrated in Hersham in map 7.2 below:

*Map 7.2: Provision of amenity greenspace in Hersham – clustering*

7.34 There are a small number of localised areas that are outside of the accessibility catchments. These areas are:

- Cobham/Fairmile
- Esher
- Long Ditton
- Molesey
- Oxshott
- St George’s Estate
- Walton.
7.35 Map 7.3 shows the residential area in the eastern outskirts of Esher, south of Sandown Park, which is currently outside the catchment area of an amenity greenspace. However, there is a multitude of other open spaces that would provide some of the amenity greenspace functions. For example Littleworth Common (Site ID 751) provides an accessible natural green space to the east, and Sandown Park (Site ID 753) to the north is an accessible greenspace with a range of facilities acting as a visual and functional amenity area.

Map 7.3 Residential area of Esher

7.36 Map 7.4 shows the residential area of St George’s Hill (analysis area 3), is currently outside of the catchment area of an amenity greenspace. St George’s Estate is an affluent Elmbridge community, where the residential area is characterised by private, secure and gated homes. Owing to the characteristics of this area, most private residences have open space provision in the form of private gardens and high quality, privately maintained amenity greenspace within their estate boundaries. When the amenity value of these private open spaces are taken into account, there is no gap in provision for the St George’s Hill area.

Map 7.4 Residential area of St George’s Estate
7.37 Map 7.5 shows the Oxshott residential area as having a significant gap in provision of amenity greenspace. However, the area is well provided for in terms of natural greenspace, which provides a secondary function as amenity greenspace. For example, Oxshott Heath (Site ID 410) provides visual amenity and functional open space for the Oxshott residents outside the catchment area.

Map 7.5 Oxshott Residential Area

7.38 Similarly, Map 7.6 shows residential areas in Cobham/Fairmile that lie outside the catchment of an amenity greenspace. However, other open space sites can be identified which fulfil this identified deficiency. For example, the residential areas lie within the catchment of Littleheath Common (Site ID 422), a natural green space site which provides a wide range of open space functions including amenity value for residents.

Map 7.6 Residential area of Fairmile

7.39 Map 7.7 shows that there is a significant area of amenity greenspace deficiency in the Long Ditton urban area. The residential population is very well provided for in terms of multi-functional outdoor sports facilities such as Long Ditton Recreation Ground (Site ID 819) and Thames Ditton and Esher Golf Club – (Common Club) (Site
ID 765). These sites serve to provide visual amenity to residents as their secondary purpose, therefore potentially fulfilling any gaps in provision. However, opportunities for improving the provision of pocket parks and smaller amenity greenspaces that provide functional greenspace for activities such as dog walking and informal kickabout areas still need to be investigated to serve the residents of Long Ditton.

**Map 7.7 Deficiencies in amenity greenspace provision in Long Ditton**

7.40 There is an identified amenity greenspace deficiency within northern parts of the Walton Ambleside urban area, as shown in Map 7.8 below. However, the residential area is entirely surrounded by rural Green Belt and bordered by the Queen Elizabeth II and Island Barn reservoirs, including the natural greenspace site Franklyn’s Ex-tip (Site ID 22). These areas serve to provide visual amenity benefits to residents. The Council seeks to improve and encourage recreational use of the reservoirs where appropriate, and will require reinstatement of any existing recreational uses of reservoirs if suspended during gravel extraction. These significant areas of natural greenspace alleviate the deficiencies in amenity greenspace for the urban population.

**Map 7.8 Deficiencies in amenity greenspace provision in Walton Ambleside**
Value assessment – identifying specific sites

7.41 Many amenity greenspace sites offer a visual benefit in addition to providing space for informal recreation. It would normally be relevant to assess the level of use in conjunction with the quality and accessibility of the site in order to determine the overall value as the accessibility, and in particular the quality, are more important especially from a visual and general amenity perspective.

7.42 There are 149 amenity green space sites across Elmbridge. The majority of these sites were rated as having ‘high/significant’ or ‘often’ usage. This highlights the value that should be placed on these sites across the borough.

7.43 Amongst the high/significant usage sites there is a wide range of quality and accessibility. The average quality score is 74% and the average accessibility score is 69%. Only 20% of amenity greenspaces have quality and accessibility scores below the borough average. These sites need to be protected but also need to be prioritised for improvements in quality and access factors:

- Belgrave Close AGS (Site ID 537)
- Bridgeway AGS (Site ID 371)
- Drakes Close AGS (Site ID 746)
- Oatlands Drive AGS (Site ID 657)
- Oatlands Avenue (Site ID 797)
- The Dell, Lonsdale Road AGS (Site ID 604).

7.44 11% of amenity greenspace has a below average access score whilst being rated above average for quality. These sites need to be protected in the first instance and increased in value by improving the access factors. The sites requiring immediate attention are:

- Church Way AGS (Site ID 633)
- Darwley Park AGS (Site ID 630)
- Finnart Close AGS (Site ID 698)
- Hurst Meadows Minor Area (Site ID 205).

7.45 The following sites require quality improvements to increase their value as amenity greenspaces. They are significant sites which have good access but fall below the average quality score:

- Mountwood AGS (Site ID 210)
- Severn Drive AGS (Site ID 721)
- Weldon Drive South AGS (Site ID 2).
7.46 Sites of high value, considered to be an example of good practice owing to the site scoring highly in terms of both quality and access, and which should set the benchmark for all other amenity greenspace sites, include:

- Churchfield Road AGS (Site 613)
- Cricket Green (Site 521)
- Halfway Green (Site 725)
- Monument Green AGS (Site ID 625).

7.47 Consideration should be given to improving the quality and access of sites highlighted for prioritisation, alternatively, assessing whether these sites are appropriate for re-designation or disposal may be appropriate. Similarly, the value of those sites that have not been rated for usage also need to be considered.

**Summary**

7.48 The main quality issues with amenity greenspace tend to be with anti social behaviour and dog fouling on sites.

7.49 Respondents to the household survey indicated a fairly even split between respondents who felt that there is too much and respondents who felt that there is not enough.

7.55 The quantity standard is set at the current level of provision and the accessibility standard is set at a 10 minute walk time to reflect the fact that it is a localised facility.

7.56 The level of provision of amenity greenspace sites is relatively high compared with other authorities and there is some clustering of amenity greenspace catchments, suggesting an over provision in some areas.

7.57 On the whole, sites are generally considered to be highly valued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGS1</th>
<th>Protect and enhance amenity greenspace sites that are of high value.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGS2</td>
<td>Protect highly used sites and prioritise improvements in quality and access for the sites listed as requiring immediate attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGS3</td>
<td>Consider those sites that have not been rated for usage for improvements or re-designation to parks and gardens, where deficiencies in this typology exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGS4</td>
<td>Enhance amenity value and recreational access of reservoirs where and when appropriate. Areas of reservoir that are designated as Special Protection Areas should not be considered appropriate for increased public access.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 8

PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Provision for children and young people

Definition

8.1 This type of open space includes areas such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for play and social interaction involving children and young people.

Figure 8.1 – Cricket Way Open Space play area (Site ID 148)

Strategic context and consultation

8.2 Elmbridge Borough Council has a corporate commitment to provide a range of services for 5-18 year olds and improved children’s play facilities, as detailed within the Corporate Plan and Best Value Performance Plan 2005/06.

8.3 Key aims and actions as outlined in the Community Strategy include supporting young people through various means such as consideration of provision of youth shelters, multi-use games areas (MUGAs), skate areas and other similar approaches to provide attractive and safe areas for young people to meet.

8.4 The Best Value Review of Green Spaces includes a key recommendation to review the best options for the contracts relating to grounds maintenance and children’s play. This would involve a review of the current provision, 30 playgrounds, for 0-12 years olds and for young people’s facilities (11-18 years).

8.5 The Best Value Review for Young People 1999 recommends "an audit of facilities/activities/services for young people to identify gaps in provision for the 11-18 year age group". It also recommends future refurbishment of play areas to consider issues of social integration, including provision of seats, tables and hang out shelters for youth.

8.6 Adequate provision for children and young people is therefore a clear strategic priority for Elmbridge Borough Council.
Current position

8.7 There are 39 play areas for children and young people in the Borough of Elmbridge. A full list is provided in Appendix K.

8.8 There is a general perception that play areas are of high quality and are well maintained, but that there is still a need for more, specifically shelters for young people and teenagers. There are a number of skate parks and basketball courts available for young people, such as Lower Green Recreation Ground Skate Park (Site ID 805), Churchfields Recreation Ground Skate Park (Site ID 49) and Long Ditton Recreation Ground Skate Park (Site ID 71).

8.9 From the usage assessment undertaken for each play area, the majority of sites are used often or very frequently.

Setting provision standards

8.10 In setting local standards for Provision for Children and Young People there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices G, H and I.

Quantity

8.11 There is 3.88 hectares of ‘playing space’ for children and young people across the borough. This equates to a provision of 0.03 ha per 1,000 population.

8.12 In terms of national standards, the NPFA advocates the Six Acre Standard (2.43ha) per 1,000 population for 'playing space'. This consists of 2 acres (ie 0.81 ha) per 1,000 population for children's playing space, which includes areas designated for children and young people and casual or informal playing space within housing areas. This can be broken down to a requirement of 0.2-0.3ha for children's playgrounds.

8.13 The Elmbridge Replacement Local Plan 2000 sets out a minimum standard of 0.8 ha per 1,000 for children's play space, broken down to include 0.3ha equipped play space and 0.5ha casual play space. The current overall provision is significantly less than the minimum standard of 0.8 ha.

8.14 The household questionnaire gave a strong indication that respondents did not feel that there is enough provision of facilities for both children and young people. 55% of respondents felt that provision was ‘nearly enough/not enough’, whereas 35% considered there to be ‘more than enough/about right’ provision.

8.15 There was a mixed response from other consultations, with a perceived lack of facilities for some and a considered adequate provision for others.

8.16 It should also be noted that whilst this is a strong local message, this response is reflected in public opinion across other authority areas and therefore is not solely a local Elmbridge issue.

8.17 In terms of locational quantitative deficiencies, the household survey revealed that those residing in Walton (analysis area 1) in particular, felt that existing children’s
play provision is inadequate. However, further analysis of the household questionnaire responses reveal that many comments of Walton residents relate to a general perception of youth 'standing on street corners', rather than a clear view on lack of provision for children and youth. This is reflected in the quantitative analysis, revealing that the Walton analysis area currently has only a slight undersupply (-0.03 ha).

8.18 A further two of the six analysis areas, Weybridge/Oatlands and Cobham/Oxshott/Stoke D’Abernon also have a current level of provision below the minimum recommended (-0.27 ha and –0.05 ha respectively). However, this is balanced out through the analysis of the borough wide level of provision. Provision in the Esher/Claygate/Dittons and Hersham and Molesey analysis areas are all above the current minimum level of provision.

8.19 Whilst the findings from the household questionnaire suggest a need for additional play facilities to address the perceived deficiency across the borough, there is already continuing improvement and commitment to the play areas in Elmbridge (as detailed in the Corporate Plan). Therefore it is considered appropriate to set the standard at the level of existing provision.

8.20 By setting a standard at the existing local provision, this will protect existing provision and ensure the same level is provided within new developments. The accessibility catchment analysis will determine whether there are areas that do not have access to youth facilities and play space sites. This standard also provides the incentive to improve and maintain the quality of existing provision. The recommended standard is therefore 0.03 ha per 1,000 population.

Quality

8.21 Local Areas of Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs) indicate some quality aspirations in terms of providing seating for adults, a varied range of equipment and teenager meeting places.

8.22 Play areas are assessed on a monthly basis and national design and safety standards are adhered to.

8.23 Consultations highlighted that vandalism, graffiti and litter are minor problems at play area sites. Overall the average quality score was 79%, which was third highest of all open space types.

8.24 Cleanliness and maintenance and vegetation scored 'good' or 'very good', whilst security and safety and ancillary accommodation scored 'good' or 'average' during the site assessments.

8.25 The highest rated site was Churchfields Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 49) with 100%. The lowest rated site was Cromwell Road Play Area (Site ID 735), which is owned by Elmbridge Housing Trust, with 51%. Play spaces for young people/teenagers were also rated as average to good.
8.26 From the household questionnaire, the highest rated aspirations for facilities for children and young people are provision of a shelter, clean and litter free, well kept grass, and events (music). The quality standard therefore reflects national standards and the views and aspirations of the local community.

8.27 The recommended local quality standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing parks to achieve in terms of enhancement.

**Accessibility**

8.28 With regards to accessibility there are national standards for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs:

- **LAPs** – aged 4-6 years; 1 minute walk or within 100 metres with a minimum area of 100m$^2$. LAPs typically have no play equipment and therefore could be considered as amenity green space.

- **LEAPs** – aged a minimum of 5 years; minimum area of 400m$^2$ or within 5 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes

- **NEAPs** – aged a minimum of 8 years; minimum area of 1000m$^2$ and should be located within 15 minutes walking time along pedestrian routes.

8.29 The accessibility assessment that is undertaken as part of the study includes general site access (entrance to the site, roads, paths and cycleway access and disabled access), transport (accessibility by foot, cycleways and public transport) and information and signage.

8.30 The average score for site access was 74% indicating the play areas within the borough have good access. On the whole, the majority of sites were scored as average to good for site access. The highest scoring sites were Lynwood Road Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 65) and Summer Road Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 69), which scored 93%. The lowest scoring site was Stoke D’Abernon Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 297) with 37%.

8.31 In general, access to play areas is reasonable with the main concern being transport links to the site, with nearly 50% of sites rated as average or poor in this respect.

8.32 Consultation has identified that a high proportion of people are satisfied with site access to play areas by walking or cycling. Levels of dissatisfaction were highest for signage.

8.33 From the household survey the general perception is that a travel time of 5-10 minutes is reasonable. The recommended catchment standard is set at 10 minutes walking distance in line with the 75% level borough-wide. This is also similar to most standards set for other authorities.

8.34 A straight line distance of 480 metres has been used rather than the pedestrian distance. This is based on average walking speeds reduced by 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in a straight line to access play facilities. This 40% reduction is based on the National Playing Fields Association Six Acre Standard (See Table 3, page 25 of NPFA Six Acre Standard), which has been worked out from a trial of 4-14 year olds and the distance they travelled.
Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

8.35 In order to identify important geographical areas and those areas with local needs we apply the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify areas where provision does not meet the minimum standard and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are important.

8.36 Consultation suggests there are some deficiencies of provision for young people and children within the borough. This is specifically evident within Weybridge/Oatlands analysis area, with existing provision falling below the minimum quantitative standard. The distribution of play areas and the spread over the borough is not as complete as many other typologies and there are more gaps in provision. However, when applying quantity and accessibility standards it is possible to see that the deficiencies are concentrated in specific geographical areas, which can be seen on Map 8.1 overleaf.
Figure 8.1: Provision for children's and young people in Elmbridge

Overview Map: Analysis Areas and Open Space Type Catchments, Young People and Children

- Hersham
- Molesey
- Walton
- St George's Hill
- Esher and Claygate
- Oxshott
- Fairmile

Catchment - Children & Young People (400m buffer)
- Children & Young People
- Analysis Areas
- Mastermap

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Mapping with Permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office (C) Crown Copyright, Map Scale 1:10,000
8.37 The local standard is set at the existing level of provision of 0.03 ha per 1,000 population. By applying the accessibility standard, drawn at 10 minutes walk/0.48km, there are some residential areas outside the recommended catchment area.

8.38 The Weybridge/Oatlands area has a current level of provision below the recommended local quantity standard (~0.27 ha per 1000 population). Three of the analysis areas have an adequate level of provision, and the remaining three analysis areas – Esher/Claygate/Dittons, and Hersham and Molesey – have a level of provision above the recommended minimum standard. As provision is equal to or slightly below in three of the six analysis areas, this highlights a need to protect all existing provision in these areas.

8.39 Residential areas with both a quantitative deficiency and outside the catchment of existing play areas are high priorities for new provision. These are Weybridge/Oatlands, Walton and Cobham/Oxshott/Stoke D’Abernon. In these residential areas, consideration should be given to the value and provision of other types of open space that may provide play as a secondary purpose, and therefore whether there is a need for new provision. For instance, amenity greenspace sites can be used for informal recreation. This is explored further below.

8.40 There is a slight quantitative deficiency in analysis area 1 (Walton) with some residential areas outside of the catchment areas. Specifically, there is limited access to play areas in central Walton. Map 8.2 below identifies resources of other forms of green space within this area. For example, Ashley Park AGS (Site ID 659) is a large amenity greenspace site (3.58 ha), which was rated as being of high quality and well used. This suggests it is an important site.

*Map 8.2 Deficiencies of children’s play provision – Analysis Area 1*
8.41 Quantitative analysis reveals that there is adequate provision in analysis area 2 (Esher). However there are also geographical deficiencies with some residential areas outside of a catchment area of an existing children’s play site (as detailed in Map 8.3). There are however, a number of amenity greenspace sites within these areas of deficiency as well as a number of outdoor sports facilities. For example, Esher Green (Site ID 789) and West End Recreation Ground (Site ID 514). These areas of open space, although not equipped with specialist children’s play provision, will provide an opportunity for informal play.

Map 8.3 Deficiencies of children’s play provision – Analysis Area 2

8.42 Although Map 8.4 highlights that there are residential areas in analysis area 3 that are not within the catchment area of a children’s play site, much of this area is made up of the St George’s Hill estate. Therefore there are limited opportunities to readdress this balance. It should be noted that analysis area 3 (Weybridge/Oatlands) is, however, the area of the borough with the greatest quantitative deficiency in terms of existing children’s play provision.
8.43 In both analysis areas 4 (Hersham) and 5 (Molesey) the existing level of provision is above the minimum recommended level. However, as evident from Map 8.5 and 8.6 there are still residential areas outside of the catchment of an existing children's play site, for example in Burwood Park and East Molesey. There are alternative open space sites that will address this balance. However, consideration should also be given as to whether there is a need to enhance the accessibility and quality of existing sites. This is explored further below. It should also be noted that Long Ditton Recreation Ground Skate Park (Site ID 71) is located in analysis area 5 and potentially serves a larger catchment than the recommended 10 minute walk time due to the nature of the facility.
8.44 There is a slight quantitative deficiency in analysis area 6 (Cobham/Oxshott/Stoke D’Abernon). This is reflected in Map 8.7 with significant residential areas outside of the catchment of an existing play site, for example in Fairmile, Oxshott and Cobham. There are however, large amounts of other green spaces in these areas, notably natural greenspace, amenity greenspace and outdoor sports facilities. All of these provide informal recreation, alleviating deficiencies in these areas.

8.45 As detailed above, the important areas for new provision are:

- Cobham/ Fairmile
- Esher
- Long Ditton
- Walton
- Weybridge/Oatlands.

8.46 These gaps in provision are highlighted above and discussed further below.

**Value assessment – identifying specific sites**

8.47 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning of provision for children and young people. This can be done by comparing value with quality or by assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites. The quality and access ratings that were undertaken as part of the study help to identify those sites that are currently considered to be of good quality and those that may need to be improved.

8.48 16 play areas for children and young people scored highly for usage, accessibility and quality. Churchfields Recreation Ground play area (Site ID 49) scored 100% for accessibility. Four sites scored over 85% for accessibility and over 82% for quality, as well as being recognised as having high usage levels:

- Claygate Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 462)
- Coronation Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 739)
• Lynwood Road Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 65)
• Summer Road Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 69).

8.49 These sites must be protected as they are of high value to the local community and should set the benchmark for existing and new play areas.

8.50 The usage assessment indicates that the level of usage of play areas and facilities for children and young people is high with all sites rating ‘high/significant’. This indicates that the existing play areas are well valued by the residents of Elmbridge.

8.51 Eight play areas scored highly for quality and usage but low for accessibility:
• Graburn Way Play Area (Site ID 73)
• Grovelands Play Area (Site ID 61)
• Hamilton Avenue Play Area (Site ID 370)
• Lower Green Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 144)
• Lower Green Recreation Ground Skate Park (Site ID 805)
• Neilsons Field Play Area (Site ID 72)
• West End Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 518)
• West Molesey Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 60).

8.52 These sites are considered to be of high value to the local community and therefore accessibility must be addressed as a priority.

8.53 Four play areas achieved high scores for usage and accessibility but low scores for quality:
• Edgehill Court Play Area (Site ID 730)
• Hersham Green Play Area (Site ID 429)
• Riverhouse Gardens (Site ID 133)
• Thamesmead Open Space Play Area (Site ID 132).

8.54 These sites are also of high value to the local community, however the quality issues must be addressed so that user satisfaction will increase and usage levels maintained.

8.55 Three play areas should be prioritised for improvement as they scored low for quality and accessibility:
• Littleheath Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 388)
• Stoke D’Abernon Recreation Ground Play Area (Site ID 297)
• Thrupps Lane Play Area (Site ID 574).
8.56 These sites still achieved a high usage score, which suggests that they are important to the local community.

**Summary**

8.57 Overall the quality of facilities for children and young people is good and the accessibility to these sites is also good. However, the consultation revealed that there is a perceived shortfall in the quantity of facilities, particularly facilities for teenagers.

8.58 The distribution of play areas is uneven over the borough, with several areas of deficiency sitting outside of catchment areas. For example, Walton, Cobham/Fairmile, Oatlands/Weybridge are all within areas where there is both a quantitative deficiency and outside an accessible catchment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CYP1</th>
<th>Protect the existing level of provision of children and young people’s open space and seek new provision (both children’s play and youth provision, for example, skate park, MUGAs) as appropriate though new residential developments.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CYP2</td>
<td>Protect high usage sites as these are important local facilities. Quality and accessibility should be enhanced as appropriate as a matter of priority to ensure that these sites deliver maximum value to the community and that high levels of usage are maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYP3</td>
<td>Sites ranked high on all counts should be recognised as examples of best practice. These sites set the benchmark for the borough’s play provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYP4</td>
<td>Sites with low accessibility and quality should have aspects improved to optimise usage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 9

SPORTS FACILITIES
Sports facilities

9.1 The assessment of sports facilities covers both outdoor sports facilities (as per the PPG17 typology) and also indoor sports facilities.

Outdoor sports facilities

Definition

9.2 Outdoor sports facilities is a wide-ranging category of open space which includes natural or artificial surfaces, publicly or privately owned, which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens, tennis courts and golf courses. The primary purpose is participation in outdoor sports.

Strategic context

9.3 The Elmbridge Borough Council’s *Strategy for Sport and Healthy Lifestyles 2004/09* strives to maintain and improve the quality of sports provision in Elmbridge. The Replacement Local Plan (adopted August 2000) aims to improve existing recreational land and facilities to achieve a more effective use of the Borough’s resources, as well as seeking to provide new facilities to enhance overall leisure provision in the Borough.

9.4 The Replacement Local Plan also seeks to enable or provide new facilities to enhance overall leisure provision in the Borough, without prejudicing either the amenities of the surrounding area or the character and appearance of the countryside.

Consultation

9.5 48% of residents felt that the general provision of outdoor sports facilities was nearly enough or not enough and 39% felt the provision was about right. The mixed response could be attributed to the perception and fear of losing sports pitches to new development.

9.6 Only 4% of respondents to the household survey suggested they use outdoor sports facilities most frequently (out of all open space types). 78% of respondents believe outdoor sports facilities to be very important or important, which is the third lowest score of all typologies and is above only churches and cemeteries (57%) and allotments (44%).

9.7 Vandalism, graffiti and anti-social behaviour were the most significant problems identified at outdoor sports facilities across the borough.

9.8 The majority of household survey respondents were satisfied with access to outdoor sports facilities on foot, less were satisfied with access by public transport and cycling.
9.9 The drop-in sessions revealed that provision for all sports should be better balanced, as the perception is that football is well provided for in the borough while there could be additional provision of other sports, therefore there is a need for other sports to have additional provision where appropriate demand exists. For example, the need for additional tennis courts in the borough was highlighted during consultation.

Current position

9.10 The audit for outdoor sports facilities identified 104 sites\textsuperscript{1} including golf courses and school pitches.

9.11 There is high demand for pitches and the current provision is currently meeting the demand. This may not be so in the future due to population changes, so all pitches must be protected from development and more provision may be required in the future. Further research and analysis would be required as this detail goes beyond the scope of this study.

Setting provision standards

9.12 When setting local standards for outdoor sports facilities, there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices G, H and I.

9.13 However a quantity standard for this typology is set for broad planning need only, as applying a quantity standard to identify surplus and deficiencies of outdoor sports facilities would be meaningless when considering the wide range and size of outdoor sports facilities from golf courses to bowling greens.

9.14 In addition, the Council will undertake a Playing Pitch Strategy in early 2006 which will guide the future provision of outdoor sports pitches (ie football, rugby, hockey, cricket).

Quantity

9.15 There are 923.69 hectares of outdoor sports facilities across the local authority area, including golf courses and school pitches. If golf courses are excluded, the total provision of outdoor sports facilities is 398.15 ha.

9.16 The current provision of outdoor sports facilities is 7.58 ha per 1,000 population. Excluding golf courses it drops 3.27 ha per 1,000 population.

9.17 National Playing Fields Association’s Six Acre Standard recommends 1.62 ha of outdoor sports provision per 1,000 population. Elmbridge Borough Council’s Replacement Local Plan supports this level of provision (1.6 ha per 1,000 population). This includes public and private pitches, greens, courts, athletics tracks and play areas. Other local authorities, where PMP have set standards, range from 0.57 hectares to 3.5 hectares per 1000 population, with most standards around 2 ha per 1000 population (excluding golf courses).

\textsuperscript{1} NB sites rather than pitches,
9.18 For a standard to be used for broad planning need only, this is to be based on the consultation undertaken as part of the study, benchmarked against other local authorities, national standards and other relevant information.

9.19 Overall opinion from the household survey identified a shortfall of outdoor sports facilities. 48% of respondents felt that there was nearly enough/not enough and 41% more than enough/about right. This appears to be connected to the three analysis areas of Esher, Molesey and Cobham/Oxshott/Stoke D'Abernon with a general perception of a lack of tennis, basketball, cricket and rugby facilities, a high demand for junior football pitches and poor quality in some outdoor sports types.

9.20 With approximately 30% of current provision accounted for by school playing fields, increasing access to schools’ facilities through community use may help to address under provision.

9.21 It is important to note that current provision of outdoor sports facilities is in fact relatively high in each of these three areas, ranging from 2.68 ha to 10.25 ha per 1,000. Such levels of provision are well above many other local authorities’ local quantity standards.

**Quality**

9.22 The NPFA suggests benchmarks for the quality for outdoor sports facilities. These include criteria such as gradients, orientation, ancillary accommodation, planting and community safety.

9.23 The highest rated community aspirations for outdoor sports facilities are: well kept grass, clean and litter free, car park, changing facilities, dog free area, facilities for young people and toilets. Residents see the main quality issues as vandalism and graffiti.

9.24 The average quality score for outdoor sports facilities is 76%, which is a high score and suggests that overall, the quality of facilities in Elmbridge is good. The highest scoring sites (100%) were:

- Brooklands Road Sports Centre (Site ID 342)
- Churchfields Recreation Ground (Site ID 48)
- Cobham RFC Sports Ground (Site ID 401)
- Feltonfleet School (Site ID 353)
- Parkside School (Site ID 279)
- Reed School OSF (Site ID 407).

9.25 Through site assessments, the majority of sites rated good or very good for quality factors such as ancillary accommodation, cleanliness and maintenance, security and safety and vegetation.

9.26 A recommended local quality standard for outdoor sports facilities should

---

**LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD**

“All outdoor sports facilities should be well kept, where dog fouling, vandalism and litter are kept to a minimum, with level and well-drained good quality surfaces. Where appropriate sites should provide good quality ancillary accommodation including changing accommodation, toilets and car parking and facilities for a variety of age groups. The site should have an appropriate management and maintenance programme to ensure community safety and effective usage”.
9.27 For outdoor sports facilities, the key points that link the quality vision and site assessments are: the provision of a welcoming, clean and litter and dog fouling free site, level and well drained surfaces, the site should be well managed ensuring community safety and appropriate, good quality ancillary accommodation (including toilets, changing facilities and car parking).

**Accessibility**

9.28 With regards to accessibility there are also no definitive national or local standards.

9.29 The site assessments indicated an overall reasonable level of site access with an average score of 76% and the majority of sites scoring above 50%. The highest scoring sites were Brooklands Road Sports Centre (Site ID 342), Reed School Playing Fields (Site ID 407) and Civic Centre OSF (Site ID 749) all of which scored 80% overall.

9.30 The lowest scoring pitch site (27%) was Milbourne Lodge Preparatory School (Site ID 479).

9.31 From the household survey there was general satisfaction with access to sports pitches by foot and visibility of the site entrance. A small percentage of respondents thought that some aspects of access were unsatisfactory, whilst a number of people stated that access by public transport and cycleways was not applicable to these types of sites.

9.32 There are several factors to consider in setting an accessibility standard for outdoor sports facilities. In particular, the range of facilities that lie within this typology makes it difficult to set a meaningful standard which can be applied across the board. The breakdown of this typology indicated that on the whole the 75% threshold level travels 15 minutes. As such, a 15 minute travel time standard is recommended.

9.33 Driving to an outdoor sports facility is often the most realistic and practical standard to set as, for example football match are usually played both home and away and it is not practical to carry golf clubs to a golf course. Whilst it is important to provide sustainable travel options, Elmbridge is an affluent borough with a higher than average car ownership, therefore it is appropriate to set a standard based on driving distance.

**Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas**

9.34 In order to identify important geographical areas and those areas with local needs we apply the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify quantitative surplus and deficiencies and the accessibility standards help determine where those deficiencies are important. For sports facilities, it is more important to apply the accessibility catchments, as the quantitative standards are set mainly for planning purposes for the new provision of sports facilities associated with housing development.
9.35 Map 9.1 overleaf provides an overview of outdoor sports provision across the borough, with all residential areas within a 15 minute drive time of an outdoor sports facility site. However, this includes school sports pitches, which are not, in the main, currently publicly accessible. A priority therefore is to secure community use of pitches with schools in areas that are deficient.

9.36 Pitches that have 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)

9.37 In addition, where it is the intention of the school to maintain access for community teams to its pitch(es) at peak times (ie evenings, weekends and/or school holidays) for the next two or more years.

9.38 A template community use agreement document is available on the Sport England website (www.sportengland.org/kitbag_cua.doc).

9.39 The continuing development of dual-use of school playing fields offers considerable potential, particularly for meeting any growth in demand from junior teams. This often needs genuine financial commitment from local authorities to improving surfaces and capacity, providing or improving changing accommodation and possibly providing revenue subsidies to users.

9.40 A Playing Pitch Strategy for the Borough will help to identify where community use of school sports pitches is most needed.
Map 9.1 Overview of outdoor sports facilities in the Borough of Elmbridge
Value assessment

9.41 Assessing quality and value is fundamental to effective planning. This can be done through assessing all options and combinations when comparing quality, accessibility and usage of sites.

9.42 All outdoor sport facilities have high usage. The popularity and value of the existing outdoor sports facilities within Elmbridge is clear and suggests outdoor sports facilities have a vital role within the borough. Further consideration should be given to sites that are currently inaccessible to the local community (ie school based provision) and to opportunities to enhance the values of these sites.

9.43 There are a number of sites which have been rated high for both quality and accessibility and have high usage levels. Three of these sites scored 100% for quality and accessibility. They are:

- Brooklands Road Sports Centre (Site ID 342)
- Civic Centre OSF (Site ID 749)
- Reed School OSF (Site ID 407).

9.44 All of these must be protected from development and should set the benchmark for all existing and new provision.

9.45 A number of high/significant sites have good accessibility but relatively poor quality. These sites are valuable and therefore should be protected in addition to being listed as priority sites for quality enhancement. The sites are:

- Bell Farm Junior School (Site ID 713)
- Cleves School (Site ID 555)
- Cobham Recreation Ground (Site ID 374)
- Convent Lane Sports Ground (Site ID 350)
- Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club (Site ID 120)
- Manby Lodge County Primary School (Site ID 784)
- Strenue Sports Club (Site ID 744).

9.46 In contrast, other high/significant use outdoor sports facilities are regarded as good quality but have relatively poor access. These sites are valuable and should therefore be protected in addition to being prioritised for access improvements where appropriate. The sites are:

- Claremont Park Golf Club (Site ID 485)
- Molessey Football Ground (Site ID 27)
- Surbiton Golf Course (Site ID 803)
- West Molesley Recreation Ground (Site ID 14).
9.47 Ten sites scored low for quality and accessibility, and high for usage:

- Grovelands Recreation Ground (Site ID 59)
- Milbourne Lodge Preparatory School (Site ID 479)
- Old Johnions Football Club (Site ID 775)
- PD United Sports Ground (Site ID 561)
- Stoke D'Abernon Recreation Ground (Site ID 275)
- Stompond Lane Sports Ground (Site ID 670)
- Thames Ditton and Esher Golf Course (Site ID 765, 767)
- The Wilderness OSF (Site ID 45)
- Walton Lane Recreation Ground (Site ID 643)
- Walton Lane Tennis Courts (Site ID 638).

9.48 These sites should be prioritised for improvements to access and quality, so as to maintain and improve the usage levels and public satisfaction.

**Summary: outdoor sports facilities**

9.49 Although overall opinion from the household questionnaire identified, by a very small margin, not enough provision of outdoor sports facilities, the audit revealed that Elmbridge is actually well provided for.

9.50 A minimum provision standard of 7.58 ha per 1,000 population (including golf courses) is recommended borough wide, reflecting the strategic importance of outdoor sports facilities. If golf courses are excluded current provision is 3.27 ha per 1,000 population.

9.51 There are no significant accessibility deficiencies. All areas of the borough are within the catchment of an existing outdoor sports facility. It should be noted however that the accessibility catchments include school pitches, for which greater access to the public should be considered where appropriate. In addition, there is a wide range of outdoors sports facilities included within this category (eg bowling greens, tennis courts, football pitches etc).

9.52 Generally the quality, usage and accessibility of sites of this type is good throughout the borough. The Council should work towards maintaining these standards into the future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OSF1</th>
<th>Protect and enhance the existing level of provision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSF2</td>
<td>Encourage dual use of school facilities where possible and formalise dual usage through community use agreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSF3</td>
<td>Seek to achieve the quality standard for all outdoor sports facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSF4</td>
<td>Prioritise for improvement those sites which have high usage but low quality or access issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSF5</td>
<td>Undertake a Playing Pitch Strategy for the borough to address needs for football, rugby, cricket and hockey in more detail and identify where community use of school sports pitches is most needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indoor sports facilities

Definition

9.53 Indoor sports facilities include the main leisure centres, sports halls, swimming pools and health and fitness studios. An assessment of indoor facilities is slightly different to other PPG 17 typologies in that specific demand modelling can be undertaken in line with Sport England parameters.

Picture 9.2 – Hurst Pool

Indoor leisure assessment

9.54 We have undertaken an audit of certain types of indoor sports facilities in the borough. The indoor sport and recreation facility types that have been audited for this study are:

- indoor tennis and indoor bowls
- sports halls
- swimming pools.

9.55 The borough boundary has been used as the study area but we have also considered a one kilometre buffer around the Borough to take into account facilities on the periphery and cross-boundary movements. We have assumed that the number of people travelling out of the borough will roughly equal those travelling in. This buffer is used solely as a basis for analysis; it does not suggest that people will not travel from further than one kilometre away.

9.56 Elmbridge Borough Council owns and manages facilities including seven public halls, swimming facilities at Walton Pool and Hurst Pool and a wide range of facilities at Elmbridge Leisure Centre opening on 14 August 2006.

9.57 The development of a new state of the art leisure facility on the current site of Elmbridge Leisure Centre, Waterside Drive, Walton-on-Thames is a fantastic opportunity for sport in the borough. It will provide a focus for sport in Elmbridge with modern facilities and improved transport to the new centre. It is due to open on 14
August 2006. The scheme comprises refurbishment of the old leisure centre and two storey extensions of 5,098 m² to form a new centre of 11,780 m². Facilities include a 25m eight lane indoor swimming pool, a learner pool of 200m² with moveable floor, three squash courts, an eight court sports hall, a three rink indoor bowling hall, a climbing wall, changing rooms, sauna and a steam room.

The audit has included the type, size and number of facilities at each site and type of access (ie public, private, dual or club use). All information has been stored in an Access 2000 database.

**Demand modelling**

Demand modeling for sports halls and swimming facilities was carried out using PMP’s *Mapping the Future*™ (MtF). MtF models indicate the surplus or undersupply of facilities. The full set of parameters and assumptions relating to the models are set out in detail in Appendix J.

For the purposes of this report, the terms private, public, club and dual use are defined as follows:

- **public** – public leisure centres with unrestricted public access
- **private** – venues where there is no pay and play access for the general public and membership is required. Not included in the model.
- **dual use** – leisure facilities that only allow public access during out of school hours and holidays. In the model, supply is reduced by 25% to reflect this
- **club use** – facilities that can only be hired out as a whole to clubs and associations, usually on a block booking system. Such facilities do not provide staff or any other support and are not included in the model.

Findings from the audit and modelling are set out on the next few pages.

**Sports halls**

There are 21 sports halls in the borough. Of these nine are public, four are private, seven are dual use and one is for club use. Most of the sports halls in the Borough are greater than two badminton courts in size. There are an additional six sports halls within the one kilometre buffer zone. The location of all sports hall sites are illustrated on Map 9.2 overleaf – this also includes, for reference purposes only, facilities just outside of the one kilometre buffer zone. The majority of sports halls within the Borough and the one kilometre buffer are publicly accessible.

When applying the demand model, there is a demand equivalent to 34 badminton courts in the borough, which indicates an oversupply equivalent to five badminton courts.

Looking forward to 2010, based on known planning details and population projections, there is likely to be an oversupply equivalent to six badminton courts. If Game Plan targets are taken into consideration and assuming that these are achieved (ie 50% participation in 2010 and 70% in 2020) with sports hall activities increasing proportionately to the increase in participation, this oversupply reduces significantly resulting in an unmet demand equivalent to two badminton courts.
9.65 Looking at the borough and the buffer zone together there is a current unmet demand equivalent to 16 courts, decreasing to six courts by 2010. Using the Game Plan adjusted figure the unmet demand rises again to the equivalent of 18 badminton courts.

9.66 The Council should consider liaising with schools in the borough that have sports hall facilities, to put in place formal community (dual) use agreements, which would ensure that existing facilities are accessible to the local community. As detailed in paragraph 9.38, Sport England have developed a template community use agreement that can be downloaded from the website at http://www.sportengland.org/kitbag_cua.doc

9.67 A formal community use agreement between a school and local authority will ensure access for the local community typically between the hours of 9am until 11pm at weekends and school holidays and 6pm until 11pm weekdays during term time. This therefore means that the sports facilities of the school will be available (when not required by the school) for use by the local community, which meets with Sport England’s aim in providing participation in sport and encouraging provision of sports facilities and fits with the Council’s strategic priority to increase participation in sport and leisure activities.

9.68 There are management issues inherent in formulating and managing dual-use agreements. Further advice and guidance can be obtained from Educational Facilities: Management of Community Use (Sport England, 1995) and Open all Hours: Managing Community Sports Facilities on School Sites (Sport England, 1999) which advise on the opportunities to develop community use of school sports facilities and looks at the different management options and offers a practical checklist for managers. These publications can be obtained at http://www.sportenglandpublications.org.uk
Map 9.2 Sports halls in Elmbridge borough and surrounding 1km buffer

1. Brooklands Technical College
2. Halliford School
3. Thamesmead School
4. Feltonfleet School Sports Hall
5. Hinchley Wood School
6. Reeds School
7. Claremont Fan Court School
8. Esher College
9. Notre Dame Senior School
10. Rydens School
11. Southborough School
12. Feltonfleet School Sports Hall
13. Cleves School
14. David Lloyd Leisure
15. St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club
16. Club Motivation
17. Holmes Place Sunbury
18. American Community School
19. Meadhurst Sports Club
20. The Pavilion Sports & Fitness Club
21. Elmbridge Leisure Centre
22. Chessington Sports & Leisure Centre
23. King Georges Hall
24. Ansell Hall
25. Elmbridge Hall
26. Hersham Village Hall
27. Holy Trinity Church
28. Mole Hall
29. Weybridge Hall
30. Vine Hall
31. Playhouse
32. St Paul's Catholic School
33. Sunbury Leisure Centre
34. Bishop Wand School
35. The Hollyfield School

Key:
- Elmbridge Borough
- 1 km Buffer
- Public Facilities
- Private Facilities
- Dual-use Facilities
- Club-use Facilities
- Planned Facilities

Green Space, Sport and Recreation Study - Elmbridge Borough Council
Swimming pools

9.69 As shown in Map 9.3 overleaf, there are two public swimming pools in the borough with a further 11 private or dual use facilities.

9.70 One of the current public pools, Walton Swimming Pool, is due to close in July/August 2006. This is around the same time that the new Elmbridge Leisure Centre will be completed. This centre will provide a 25 metre eight lane pool, along with a learner pool.

9.71 The demand for swimming can be determined by applying sports participation rates (by age and gender) to the population profile within the study area. The propensity to participate in swimming in the Borough is slightly higher than the national average, with 26.1% of the population expressing an interest in swimming, compared to 23% nationally.

9.72 The ‘at one time capacity’ (the capacity in any peak session) can then be used to establish the level of supply needed to cater for the demand. This is based on Sport England parameters including peak hours, proportion of visits during peak times, average visit duration and pool area. This approach ensures that supply is sufficient to cater for the maximum demand at any point in time.

9.73 The current level of demand in the borough is equivalent to 1,224m² of water space showing a small oversupply equivalent to 35m² reducing to 34m² by 2010. When considering Game Plan predictions, this decreases substantially resulting in an unmet demand of 248m² by the year 2010. This unmet demand is of 248m² is equivalent to constructing a new six lane 25m swimming pool.

9.74 All of the school sites in the borough with swimming provision are currently dual facilities and therefore provide access for the local community. The Council should work with the schools in ensuring that the formal community (dual) use agreements are in place to secure long term community access to facilities and maximise use of the facility outside of the school requirements. This will help to alleviate the future unmet demand of water space in the borough. Further details on community use agreements and guidance on management of dual facilities are provided in paragraphs 9.66 to 9.68.
Map 9.3 Swimming pool provision in Elmbridge borough and 1km buffer

1. Halliford School
2. Feltonfleet School
3. Reeds School
4. Walton Leigh School
5. Notre Dame Senior School
6. The Pavilion Sports & Fitness Club
7. David Lloyd Leisure
8. St George's Hill Lawn Tennis Club
9. Club Moativation
10. Holmes Place Sunbury
11. Imber Court
12. Colets Health & Fitness Club
13. American Community School
14. Cannons Health Club
15. Colets
16. Walton-on-Thames Swimming Pool
17. Hampton Pool
18. Hurst Pool
19. Elmbridge Leisure Centre
20. Bishop Wand School
21. Sunbury Leisure Centre

Key:
- Elmbridge Borough Boundary
- 1 km Buffer
- Public Facilities
- Private Facilities
- Dual-use Facilities
- Planned Facilities

© Crown copyright 2005. All rights reserved. Licence number 100021062 © 1994-2005 ACTIVE Solutions Europe Ltd
Indoor tennis and indoor bowls

9.75 There are nine indoor tennis facilities in the Borough of which one is public, two are dual use and six are private.

9.76 The propensity to participate in tennis in the Borough is slightly higher than the national average, with 9.4% of the population expressing an interest in tennis, compared to 5.1% nationally.

9.77 There are currently no indoor bowls facilities in the Borough but there is one planned facility at the new Elmbridge Leisure Centre.

Map 9.4 Indoor tennis and indoor bowls facilities in Elmbridge borough